

## CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE

Florence and Dan had been married a year and were still quite happy. Though Dan enjoyed a good position with a fairly good salary, they both found it difficult to save for the rainy day. They had used up their savings in furnishing the pretty home which they now occupied. The rent was high and the winter's coal was a large item.

Each evening a great part of their discussion was in regard to the possibilities of starting a nest egg, but that is as far as it ever advanced, for current expenses used up the pay envelope of the week almost before the next arrived. They practiced the strictest economy yet without stinting. They allowed themselves but few amusements, such as an evening at a moderately priced movie. Strange to say, it was this slight diversion which later created such an eventful period in their marital relations.

On Tuesday evening they attended the Strand, a popular moving picture house of their city. To the surprise of the audience, as well as Florence and Dan, the first announcement on the screen, was that of a contest for movie patrons: to the person writing the best story which could be produced in moving pictures a prize of five hundred dollars was to be given. A second and a third prize no less tempting were also offered. Details were given and the management announced that all stories were to be sent in within the next thirty days.

Florence and Dan made some casual remarks about how fortunate the lucky person would be, but neither one intimated that he or she had the slightest inclination to compete, though both were of one mind, as if by mental telepathy, what a nice nest egg the first prize would make. Indeed it was while they were in high school and associated as editors on the school magazine, "The

Bulletin," that they became good friends. To this fact may be attributed a slight conceit that each had, that they could write, yet not a word was said about attempting to secure the much coveted prize.

It was next day that each thought out a plot and secretly started to write a scenario. Florence confided to her neighbor Mrs. McClure and Dan told Mac, her husband, who worked in the same wholesale drug firm with him. Florence called her hero after Dan's best friend, Tom while Dan named his leading lady Ann, the name of the stenographer in his office. Both were so excessively preoccupied with their new tasks that neither observed the worried look of the other. Dan was frequently late for dinner, which was contrary to usual procedure as Flo was always exact about meal times. Florence against all her traditions even let her house-work become neglected. And yet with these irregularities all was still peaceful.

It was not a great while, though, before the regular routine was restored for both manuscripts had been mailed to the contest headquarters. Mrs. McClure went over that afternoon to suggest a different ending, but Florence was already down town. Mrs. McClure thought probably Flo had not sent it in yet, scribbled a note suggesting what she thought was a better ending or a more suitable one.

It being still a half hour before Dan would be ready to leave the office, Florence bought a paper and sat in the lounging room of the department store where she had done a little shopping. Perusing the headlines of the front page her eye caught a piece about a stenographer being engaged to her employer, another piece told of a divorce suit where a man's stenographer was named as the co-respondent. She had often met Ann, Dan's stenographer, and had remarked what a clever girl she was. She consulted her wrist-watch and decided she would have ample time to

walk over to where Dan would be preparing to leave the office. Her only thought on the way over was if she could still keep the secret about sending in the story.

Most of the employees of the drug Company were filing out of the doorway when she reached the building. She returned the greetings of a few whom she knew and hurried in. Dan was reading his play over to Mac as it was now past closing time. Hearing his voice Flo ran lightly toward the door of his office to surprise him. She reached there just in time to hear her husband dramatically read the closing line of his story "Ann, I love you and cannot live without you, no one else in the world means anything to me." Fearful lest she should weaken and faint she stealthily crept away and went straight to her confidant Mrs. McClure. Incessantly interrupted by her weeping, she managed to inform her friend the cause of her broken heart. Mrs. McClure tried to persuade there was some mistake but poor Flo simply reiterated saying what she had heard were Dan's own words.

Mr. McClure having praised the story, Dan arrived home and finding no dinner prepared, went to the kitchen to see what could be the reason. Looking about he espied the note of Mrs. McClure. He opened it and read, "Dear Florence, why not have it end safe in Tom's love and have your elopement over immediately?" He stood motionless, then everything dawned upon him. Why had he not noticed it before? The unkept house. Her diversion from the regular mode of living. He termed himself an idiot for not having noticed it before. He hastily packed his bag and poor Florence from behind a curtain in Mrs. McClure's parlor watched him leave the house. She knew now the climax had come, he was leaving her for Ann.

Dan going by a cigar store met Mr. McClure coming



out. Mac enquired the cause of Dan's agitation and soon found out. He was finally convinced by reading the note. Being Dan's senior and friend he borrowed the note and went immediately home to discuss the matter with Mrs. McClure. Each defended their own sex, all the while poor Florence was listening from the couch in the den. Mr. McClure hotly declaring Dan to be innocent, produced the note proclaiming Florence to be guilty. Mrs. McClure recognizing the note seized it, explaining mean-while that it was she who wrote it. This was cause enough for her again to declare Florence's innocence and to refute Mr. McClure's argument that Flo was over-sensitive. She told him what Florence had heard in the office earlier in the afternoon. This brought forth from him an exclamation of surprise, followed by hearty laughter, peevish his wife somewhat as was evidenced by her look of disapproval. She inquired the reason for the sudden burst of mirth and he replied by asking her at what time Flo overheard the words of endearment. She told him and he explained that it was at that time that Dan was reading his scenario to him. The secret on both sides was now disclosed. They both laughed while poor sensitive Florence covered her ears and wondered how they could laugh within her hearing, when they must know her mental anguish.

McClure phoned Dan to come to his place at once, while Mrs. McClure went in the den to calm the sobbing Flo. Presently they met Dan bounding up the veranda steps. Mac made a hasty explanation. On entering, the young wife and husband greeted each other with joy. All tears dried away, Mr. and Mrs. Daniel P. Tierney left to go across to their own home, where upon entering they found their rejected manuscripts. Together they walked to the fire place where Dan applied a lighted match to the cause of all their trouble.

In silence they stood watching them burn until Mr. McClure called in to tell them, that in the excitement he had forgotten to tell that he had a message for Dan from Mr. Liggett the general manager. Mr. Leggett told Mac that he had been noticing how industrious Dan had been of late, working after hours and such and that he had decided to put him in charge of the chemical department at an increase of salary to the extent of five hundred dollars a year. Their renewed exaltation was interrupted, when Mac told them, he had a message for both from Mrs. Mclure. It was taken from a book of Father Fabian's. "Like the roots of trees, it is the nature of a misunderstanding to entangle itself as it grows. It is its instinct to outgrow the possibility of ever being explained. It is easier to cut out a cancer than to disengage from the heart, a misunderstanding which has once had time to harden there."

P. F. Hughes '22