

up as high as she could the fifty pounds of anguished femininity, and was rewarded by a howl of disappointment.

"No, it's no use! You're too little! I can't even reach the top board with my hands."

Miss Mather set her down quickly and leaned, panting, against the fence, her old face very pale.

"I'm afraid you will have to do without, this time, dear," she said, surveying with a hopeless intensity of pity the damp heap of misery on the sidewalk. There is no too deep for consolatory words, and in a compassionate silence the old lady moved away.

Still breathing heavily, she faltered along until she came to a bench in a dusty, unkempt "people's park." She sank down on this and unloosed her bonnet-strings wearily. She looked very tired and old and sad.

Suddenly she began to laugh. Although the passers-by stared curiously at the solitary old woman laughing to herself, she did not stop. High and sweet her cracked old mirth tinkled in the sunny air.

But her eyes were full of tears.

*Dorothy Canfield*

## The Unhappy Pair

RICHARD is the most bashful person I have ever met, excepting myself. It is so easy for any girl to embarrass him, and, of course, especially easy for me. There is a good deal of Richard, and when he is embarrassed he frowns and pinks up and looks perfectly lovely. So I was very much disappointed to see that he didn't pink up a bit when I first told him that they had decided on a day to announce our engagement.

By "they" I mean my family—Aunt Justina and Aunt Gertrude and Bess, who have been running Richard's and my engagement ever since he told Aunt Justina that he had to marry me or die.

"Well, let 'em announce it," he said. "What do we care?"

"But you don't see," I explained. "They are going to give an afternoon reception to pet and patronize."

"Pet who?" asked Dick.

I noticed by his grammar that he was beginning to be scared.

"Pet us, you goose!" I said.

"Must I be on hand?" said he.

I tried to freeze, the way Aunt Justina does in church.

"I didn't know, Polly," he said, crest-fallen and nice. "I have never been announced before. Why can't we be engaged and announced and married all by ourselves and let everybody else go to the——"

"Richard!" I shouted, just in time; but he finished the sentence in his mind, and I guess I did.

You will hardly blame us when you understand about Northover, where I live. It is a sleepy, beautiful village, and it hasn't much to do except to look at the views and discuss pronunciation. There are lots of girls in Northover, and also girls who have grown up and never been married. This makes it rather awful to be engaged in Northover.

Northover people are dear and generous and neighborly. If you have a great trouble, they all pitch in to help you with it. And if you have a great happiness, they all pitch in to help you with it, too, until you want to scream.

After the engagement was decided, and Dick had gone back to New York, Aunt Justina and Aunt Gertrude and Bess were very angelic about it. We all four were absolutely happy. When we had finished crying, we had dinner, and there was a tomato soup.

"Richard likes clear green turtle, Polly," said Aunt Gertrude, with a mechanical smile. "I will give you a recipe."

She meant to be pleasant, I knew, but I had a little shiver on my backbone, just the same. I could feel those pleasantries coming along at every meal.

Almost immediately, too, they began to talk about presents. "Uncle Jerry will probably give you this, if we mention it to him, and Cousin Miranda that, and I must suggest to Margaret Tweedie——" Oh! They joked me about Dick's letters—the same solemn, dutiful jokes every morning for breakfast. It got on my nerves like anything. I always did hate to be patronized by older people who seem to imagine they know more about me than I do.

If I could only have seen Richard often, everything would have been all

right, but his engineering business in New York allowed him to come to Northover very seldom. I don't think that Richard is particularly fond of anybody in Northover, excepting me. He once said that Northover is too nosy.

## II

THAT I should let myself be bothered so by my dearest family made me ashamed of my horrid, bashful disposition, and also made me afraid of Northover after the engagement was announced.

The night before the announcement-reception, Richard came and stayed at the Northover Hotel. Our guest-rooms were full of relatives—Uncle Jerry, and Mrs. Uncle Jerry, and Cousin Miranda. Richard was introduced, and pinked up splendidly.

"Polly, we are a pair of childish fools," said Richard. "That party tomorrow can't last so very long."

"It will last fifty times longer," I said, "than the family introduction did to-night."

"That fresh clerk at the hotel has given me one shot already," growled Dick. "I wanted to punch his face."

In the forenoon, the only sign of Richard was an enormous box of roses. I had a terrible fright when it occurred to me that he might be ill, or that he might have a telegram to go to New York. I couldn't eat any lunch, and my backbone shivered without a moment's rest. The afternoon tea was at five o'clock, and at three I cried, and told Aunt Justina that I was going to lie down. Aunt Justina looked at me queerly and felt my temples. I didn't know it until afterward, but it seems that my mother's sister used to have hysterics, and once walked in her sleep.

Well, I locked myself in my bedroom and just circled around like a bat. At five o'clock Bess knocked on the door to tell me that Richard hadn't come or sent any word. I heard carriages crunching on the driveway, and company voices. For a minute I must have gone crazy with the desire to run, like people in a panic, for when I recovered my senses I was outside of my window, on the sloping roof of the side piazza, and I couldn't get back!

I ducked behind the slope of the roof and dropped by a trellis to the ground. My dress was torn, and I was a sight. I scurried through the hedge into the back lane to our pasture. A brook runs across the pasture, and up the brook is a lovely hiding-place under the trees. There is a shaded pool, and a tiny waterfall, and a big flat rock. It is the place where Dick told me how much I loved him. I decided to walk there and tidy myself, and then to go home and trust in Providence.

A man was lying on the rock, smoking a pipe. He jumped up.

"Polly!" he said.

It was Dick.

## III

I HOPE I shall not again be so mad at anybody so long as I live.

"You—you coward!" I called him. I would have said "despicable," but I never could pronounce it.

"I know," said Dick. "I'm a coward. I'm a quitter."

This confession rather took the wind out of my sails. Besides, I had to laugh. Dick looked so ridiculous. He was dressed for an afternoon tea, but his long black coat was rumpled, and his shiny silk hat was rolling into the brook.

"Oh, your poor hat!" I said.

We both reached for it, and he caught my hand instead of the hat.

"Can you forgive me?" said Dick, sort of trembly. "I lost my sand. But, honestly, I was going to the tea after I'd smoked one pipe. How did you guess I was here?"

The whole thing was so absurd that I covered my face and shook.

"Lørd!" groaned Dick. "Don't cry, Polly!"

"I'm not," I said, choking.

"You are," said he. "You have a right to. I'm an ill-mannered idiot and boor. Let's go home and be announced. Look at your dress! All because you had to hunt me up. You witch, how did you know I'd take refuge here? I am an ill-mannered——"

"No," said I. "And if you are, I am one, too. I ran away. I didn't know where you were."

He stared and smiled, slowly; Richard has a heavenly smile, and there is plenty

of it. Then he sat down beside me on that beloved rock, and the brook did all the sensible talking that was necessary for quite a while. You can have no idea how quickly the time passed, unless you have sat on a rock under similar circumstances. When the factory whistle sounded faintly I jumped.

"Six o'clock!" I gasped. "The tea! Come on!"

"It's six-twenty," said Dick, looking at his watch. "There's a church-bell ringing."

"Must be a fire," I said. "In Northover, everybody goes to a fire."

Dick chuckled.

"That's good," he said. "The reception will be thinned out, sure. Hardly anybody will be left—we can sneak in quietly—and—"

I asked him what kind of a story we could possibly tell Aunt Justina.

"Listen," said Dick. "I'll tell the story, and take the entire blame of it, too. I happened along under your window this afternoon and asked you to walk before the reception. You came. I twisted my ankle on a boulder, and that delayed us. How's that? All right, I guess. But, best of all, Polly, we've escaped the reception—escaped the chatter, and the hand-shaking, and the announcement, and everything! It's the biggest luck I ever heard of!"

"I was so carried away by this good fortune that I forgot about my locked bedroom door. We said good-by to the brook, and decided that it was wonderfully poetic for us to have been engaged and announced on exactly the same spot. Richard began to limp so awfully that he put his arm around my shoulders for a crutch. It was pleasant walking that way, and we didn't cut through the hedge, but turned down the lane into the main street. At the corner, Dick stopped short and pointed.

"Good gracious!" I screamed.

The Northover hose-cart—Cataract, Number One—and the ladder thing—Hercules, Number Two—were in front of our house. The lawn was packed with people, like a circus-ground.

"Hurry!" said Dick, grabbing my wrist.

He tore along the sidewalk. It was the quickest cure of a sprained ankle

you ever knew. Mr. Mincer, the constable, was sitting on the ladder-truck. When he saw us, he shouted and waved his hat and rang the gong. The crowd in the yard yelled and laughed as we raced to our piazza through a little path they made for us.

On the piazza were the chief of the fire department, and the chairman of selectmen, and Sheriff Hoppock, and ever so many others. The open doors and windows were jammed with the afternoon-tea people. They cheered, too, and laughed when we ran up the steps.

"Any damage?" panted Dick.

"Damage!" said Uncle Jerry, on the broad grin. "Just as if a happy pair couldn't announce their engagement without raising a riot!"

"What do you mean, sir?" said Dick.

"Aunt Justina!" I sobbed, but I hung tight to Dick's elbow.

"Justina is just coming to," said Cousin Miranda, with a bottle of salts. "It was my fault, Polly. We broke in your door. We couldn't find you—and it was terrible—and I telephoned for police or somebody—and they must have misunderstood me—but—"

"Three cheers for Miss Polly Randall!" trumpeted the chief of the fire department.

Dick and I faced about. I never realized before what a large population there was in Northover.

"And for Mr. Richard Chapin!" belled Sheriff Hoppock.

They roared. They dinged the bells on the fire-wagons. They formed a line which reached across the street to shake our hands.

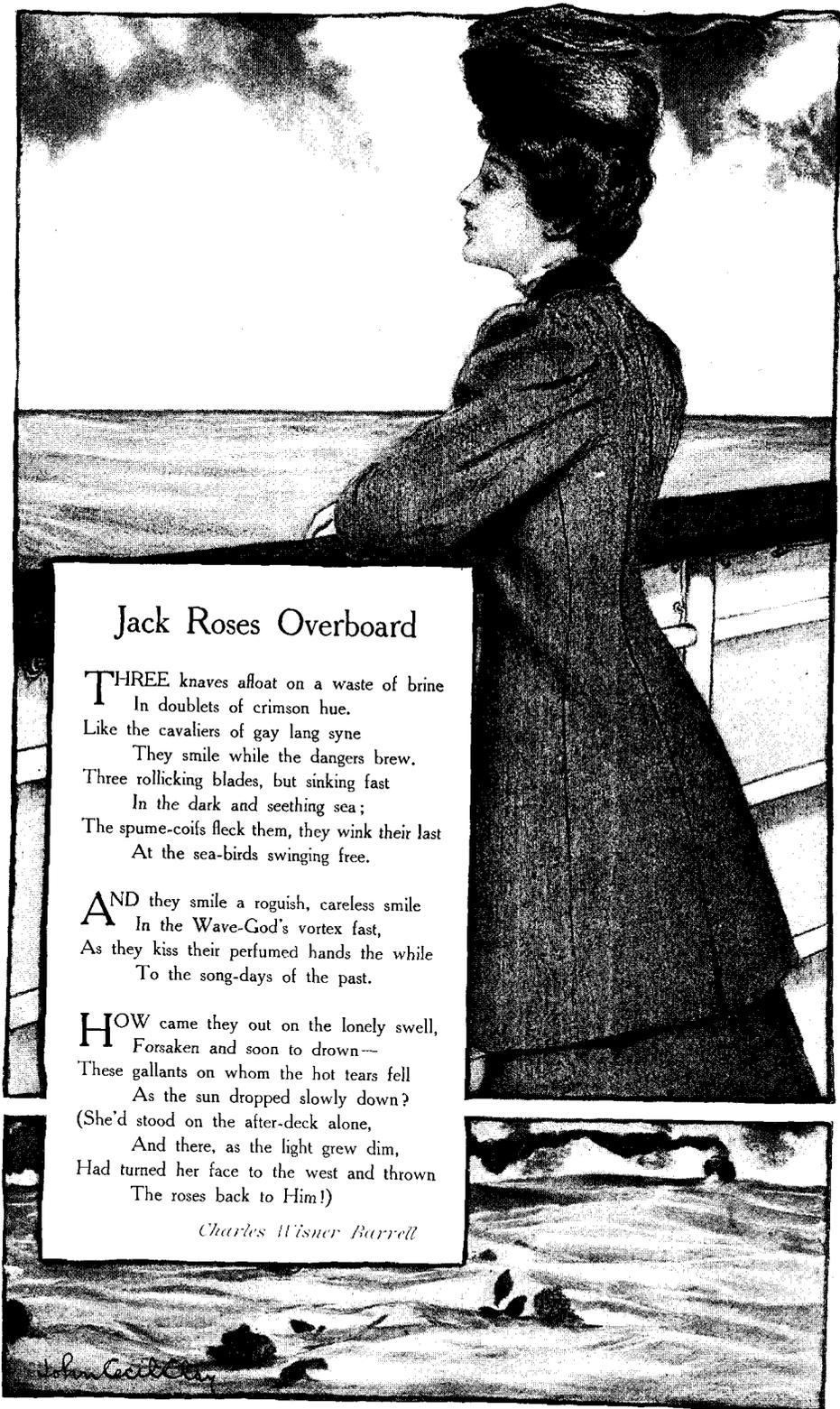
"I wonder if there's time to call out the Triumph Drum Corps," said the chairman of the selectmen.

Well, it was over at last. My fingers ached from congratulations, and Dick had pinked enough, as Uncle Jerry said, for an Alpine sunset. Aunt Justina had forgiven us. We were on the piazza in the twilight, watching Hugh, our old gardener, patch the places in the lawn where the announcement-party had cut up the turf.

"It was a lesson," I said. "I shall never blush again."

"I can't," sighed Dick.

*Edward Boltwood*



## Jack Roses Overboard

**T**HREE knaves afloat on a waste of brine  
In doublets of crimson hue.  
Like the cavaliers of gay lang syne  
They smile while the dangers brew.  
Three rollicking blades, but sinking fast  
In the dark and seething sea;  
The spume-coifs fleck them, they wink their last  
At the sea-birds swinging free.

**A**ND they smile a roguish, careless smile  
In the Wave-God's vortex fast,  
As they kiss their perfumed hands the while  
To the song-days of the past.

**H**OW came they out on the lonely swell,  
Forsaken and soon to drown—  
These gallants on whom the hot tears fell  
As the sun dropped slowly down?  
(She'd stood on the after-deck alone,  
And there, as the light grew dim,  
Had turned her face to the west and thrown  
The roses back to Him!)

*Charles Wisner Barrell*

*John Carter*