

CHAPTER XI

THE HONER'BLE OJOY BOGLIN

One morning while Patsy was alone in her office, busied over her work, the door softly opened and a curious looking individual stood before her.

He was thin in form, leathery skinned and somewhat past the middle age of life. His clothing consisted of a rusty black Prince Albert coat, rusty trousers to match, which were carefully creased, cowhide shoes brilliant with stove polish, a tall silk hat of antiquated design, and a frayed winged collar decorated with a black tie on which sparkled a large diamond attached to a chain. He had chin whiskers of a sandy gray color and small gray eyes that were both shrewd and suspicious in expression.

He stood in the doorway a moment, attentively eyeing the girl, while she in turn examined him with an amusement she could not quite suppress. Then he said, speaking in a low, diffident voice:

"I'm lookin' for the editor."

"I am the editor," asserted Patsy.

"Really?"

"It is quite true."

He seemed disconcerted a moment, striving to regain his assurance. Then he took out a well-worn pocketbook and from its depths abstracted a soiled card which, leaning forward, he placed carefully upon the table before Patsy. She glanced at it and read: "Hon. Ojoy Boglin, Hooker's Falls, Chazy County."

"Oh," said she, rather surprised; "are you Mr. Boglin?"

"I am the Honer'ble Ojoy Boglin, miss," he replied, dwelling lovingly upon the "Honer'ble."

"I have not had the honor of your acquaintance," said she, deciding she did not like her visitor. "What is your business, please?"

The Hon. Ojoy coughed. Then he suddenly remembered he was in the presence of a lady and took off his hat. Next he slid slowly into the vacant chair at the end of the table.

"First," he began, "I want to compliment you on your new paper. It's a good thing, and I like it. It's what's been needed in these 'ere parts a long time, and it's talked about all over Chazy County."

"Thank you," said the editor briefly, for the praise was given in a perfunctory way that irritated her.

"The only other papers in this senatorial deestric', which covers three counties," continued the visitor, in impressive tones, "air weeklies, run by political mud-slingers that's bought up by the Kleppish gang."

"What is the Kleppish gang?" she asked, wonderingly.

"The supporters o' that rascal, Colonel Kleppish, who has been occupyin' my berth for goin' on eight years," he said with fierce indignation.

"I fear I do not understand," remarked Patsy, really bewildered. "What was your berth, which Colonel Kleppish has--has usurped?"

"See that 'Honer'ble' on the card?"

"I do."

"That means I were senator--state senator--which makes any common man honer'ble, accordin' to law, which it's useless to dispute. I were elected fer this deestric', which covers three counties," he said proudly, "an' I served my country in that capacity."

"Oh, I see. But you're not state senator now?"

"No; Kleppish beat me for the nomination, after I'd served only one term."

"Why?"

"Eh? Why did he git the nomination? 'Cause he bought up the newspapers--the country weeklies--and set them to yellin' 'graft.' He made 'em say I went into office poor, and in two years made a fortune."

"Did you?" asked the girl.

He shuffled in his seat.

"I ain't used to talkin' politics with a girl," he admitted; "but seein' as you're the editor of this paper--a daily, by Jupel--you've probably got a head on you and understand that a man don't get into office for his health. There's a lot of bother in servin' your country, and a man oughter be well paid for it. I did jest like the others do--like Kleppish is doin' right now--but the reg'lar voters don't understand politics, and when the howl went up about graft, backed by Kleppish's bought-up newspapers, they turned me down cold. I've been eight years watchin' for a chance to get in again, an' now I've got it."

"This is very interesting, I'm sure," remarked Patsy; "but our paper doesn't go much into local politics, Mr. Boglin, and I'm very busy

to-day."

"Honer'ble Ojoy Boglin," he said, correcting her; but he did not take the hint to leave.

Patsy picked up her pencil as if to resume her work, while he eyed her with a countenance baffled and uncertain. Presently he asked:

"Has Kleppish got this paper too?"

"No," she coldly replied.

"I thought I'd likely head him off, you being so new. See here, Editor--"

"I am Miss Doyle, sir."

"Glad to know you, Miss Doyle. What I was about to remark is this: The election for senator comes up agin in September and I want this paper to pull for me. Bein' as it's a daily it's got more power than all of Kleppish's weeklies put together, and if you work the campaign proper I'll win the nomination hands down. This is a strong Republican deestic', and to git nominated on the Republican ticket is the same as an election. So what I want is the nomination. What do you say?"

Patsy glared at him and decided that as far as appearances went he was

not a fit candidate for any office, however humble. But she answered diplomatically:

"I will inquire into the condition of politics in this district, Mr. Boglin, and try to determine which candidate is the most deserving. Having reached a decision, the Millville Tribune will espouse the cause of the best man--if it mentions local politics at all."

The Hon. Ojoy gave a dissatisfied grunt.

"That means, in plain words," he suggested, "that you'll give Kleppish a chance to bid against me. But I need this paper, and I'm willin' to pay a big price for it. Let Kleppish go, and we'll make our dicker right now, on a lib'ral basis. It's the only way you can make your paper pay. I've got money, Miss Doyle. I own six farms near Hooker's Falls, which is in this county, and six hundred acres of good pine forest, and I'm director in the Bank of Huntingdon, with plenty of money out on interest. Also I own half the stock in the new paper mill at Royal--"

"You do?" she exclaimed. "I thought Mr. Skeelty--"

"Skeelty's the head man, of course," he said. "He came to me about the mill proposition and I went in with him. I own all the forest around Royal. Bein' manager, and knowin' the business, Skeelty stood out for fifty-one shares of stock, which is the controllin' interest; but I own all the rest, and the mill's makin' good money. People don't know I'm in

that deal, and of course this is all confidential and not to be talked about."

"Very well, sir. But I fear you have mistaken the character of our paper," said Patsy quietly. "We are quite independent, Mr. Boglin, and intend to remain so--even if we can't make the paper pay. In other words, the Millville Daily Tribune can't be bought."

He stared in amazement; then scratched his ear with a puzzled air.

"Such talk as that means somethin'," he asserted, gropingly, "but what it means, blamed if I know! Newspapers never turn money down unless they're a'ready bought, or have got a grouch of their own.... Say!" he suddenly cried, as an inspiration struck him, "you ain't got anything agin the mill at Royal, or agin Skeelty, have you?"

"I have, sir!" declared Patsy, raising her head to frown discouragingly upon the Honer'ble Ojoy. "Mr. Skeelty is acting in a very disagreeable manner. He has not only boycotted our paper and refused to pay for the subscriptions he engaged, but I understand he is encouraging his workmen to annoy the Millville people, and especially this printing office."

"Well--durn--Skeelty!" ejaculated Mr. Boglin, greatly discomposed by this statement. "But I'll fix all that, Miss Doyle," he added, eagerly.

"Skeelty's my partner and he's got to do what I say or I'll make trouble for him. You dicker with me for the support of your paper and I'll

guarantee a hundred subscriptions from Royal and get you an apology from Skeelty and a promise he'll behave an' keep his men to home. And all that's outside the price I'll agree to pay."

Patsy's eyes were full of scorn.

"I won't dicker with you an instant," she firmly declared. "I don't know Colonel Kleppish, or what his character is, but I'm very sure he's the better man and that the people have made no mistake in electing him in your place. No respectable candidate for office would attempt to buy the support of a newspaper, and I advise you to change the wording on your card. Instead of 'Honorable' it should read 'Dishonorable' Ojoy Boglin. Good day, sir!"

Mr. Boglin's face turned white with rage. He half rose from his seat, but sat down again with a vicious snarl.

"I've coaxed, so far, young woman," he said grimly, "but I guess it's time I showed my hand. You'll either run this paper in my interest or I'll push Skeelty on to make the town too hot to hold you. I've got power in this county, even if I ain't senator, and you'll feel that power if you dare oppose me. Take your choice, girl--either to make good money out o' this campaign, or be run out of town, neck an' crop! It's up to you to decide."

"In thirty seconds," said Patsy, her face as white as was Boglin's, "I

shall ring this bell to summon my men to throw you out."

The Honer'ble Ojoy slowly rose and put on his hat.

"Look out!" he said warningly.

"I will," snapped Patsy.

"This ain't the end of it, girl!"

"There are ten seconds left," she said.

He picked up his card, turned his back and walked out, leaving his opponent trembling betwixt agitation and righteous indignation. A few moments later Bob West came in and looked at the girl editor curiously.

"Ojoy Boglin has been here," he said.

"The Honer'ble Ojoy, if you please," answered Patsy, with a laugh that bordered on hysteria.

The hardware man nodded, his eyes reading her face.

"You were quite right to turn him down," he asserted.

"It was the only thing to do," responded the girl, wondering how he

knew.

"But Boglin is a dangerous man," resumed West. "Look out for him. Miss Doyle."

"Yes; he told me to do that, and I will," said she, more quietly. "He is Skeelty's partner."

"And you're not afraid of him?"

"Why should I be, Mr. West?"

He smiled.

"I'm justice of the peace here. If there's a hint of trouble from Boglin or Skeelty, come directly to me."

"Thank you, Mr. West. I will."

With this he nodded cheerfully and went away.