

## CHAPTER VII

### PATSY MAKES PROGRESS

Meantime Patsy was in the thick of the fray. The druggist was a deep-dyed Democrat, and sniffed when she asked him what he thought of Forbes for Representative.

"He's no politician at all--just an aristocrat," declared Latham, a dapper little man with his hair slicked down to his ears and a waxed moustache. "And he's got fool notions, too. If he stopped the advertising signs I wouldn't sell half as many pain-killers and liver-pills."

"He's my cousin," said Patsy, mendaciously; for although they called themselves cousins there was no relationship even of marriage, as Patsy's Aunt Jane had merely been betrothed to Kenneth's uncle when he died.

"I'm sorry for that, miss," replied the druggist. "He's going to be badly beaten."

"I think I'll take two ounces of this perfumery. It is really delightful. Some druggists have so little taste in selecting such things."

"Yes, miss, I do rather pride myself on my perfumes," replied Latham, graciously. "Now here's a sachet powder that gives fine satisfaction."

"I'll take a couple of packets of that, too, since you recommend it."

Latham began doing up the purchases. There was no other customer in the store.

"You know, miss, I haven't anything against Mr. Forbes myself. His people are good customers. It's his ideas I object to, and he's a Republican."

"Haven't you ever voted for a Republican?" asked the girl. "Don't you think it better to vote for the best man, rather than the best party, in a case like this?"

"Why, perhaps it is. But in what way is Mr. Forbes the best man?"

"He's honest. He doesn't want to make any money out of the office. On the contrary, he's willing and able to spend a good deal in passing laws that will benefit his district."

"And Hopkins?"

"Don't you know Mr. Hopkins?" she asked, pointedly.

"Yes, miss; I do." And Latham frowned a little.

"As regards the advertising signs," continued the girl, "I've heard you spoken of as a man of excellent taste, and I can believe it since I've examined the class of goods you keep. And your store is as neat and attractive as can be. The fight is not against the signs themselves, but against putting them on fences and barns, and so making great glaring spots in a landscape where all should be beautiful and harmonious. I suppose a man of your refinement and good taste has often thought of that, and said the same thing."

"Why--ahem!--yes; of course, miss. I agree with you that the signs are often out of place, and--and inharmonious."

"To be sure; and so you must sympathize with Mr. Forbes's campaign."

"In that way, yes; of course," said Mr. Latham, puzzled to find himself changing front so suddenly.

"Mr. Hopkins has taken a lot of money out of this town," remarked Patsy, examining a new kind of tooth wash. "But I can't find that he's ever given much of it back."

"That's true. He buys his cigars of Thompson, the general store man, and I keep the finest line ever brought to this town."

"Oh, that reminds me!" exclaimed Patsy. "Mr. Forbes wanted me to purchase a box of your choicest brand, and have you just hand them out to your customers with his compliments. He thinks he ought to show a little cordiality to the men who vote for him, and he said you would know just the people to give them to."

Latham gasped, but he assumed an air of much importance.

"I know every man that comes to this town, miss, as well as any you'll find," he said.

"The best brand, mind you, Mr. Latham," said the girl. "How much will they be?"

"Why, the very best--these imported perfectos, you know--are worth six dollars a box of fifty. Perhaps for election purposes something a little cheaper--"

"Oh, no; the best is none too good for the friends of Mr. Forbes, you know. And fifty--why fifty will scarcely go around. I'll pay for a hundred, Mr. Latham, and you'll see they go to the right persons."

"Of course; of course, miss. And much obliged. You see, young Forbes is well liked, and he's quite a decent fellow. I wouldn't be surprised if he gave Hopkins a hard fight."

"I'll tell you a secret," said Patsy, sweetly. "Mr. Forbes is bound to be elected. Why, it's all arranged in advance, Mr. Latham, and the better element, like yourself, is sure to support him. By the way, you won't forget to tell people about those signs, I hope? That the fight is not against advertising, but for beautiful rural homes and scenes."

"Oh, I'll fix that, Miss--"

"Doyle. I'm Miss Doyle, Mr. Forbes's cousin."

"I'll see that the people understand this campaign, Miss Doyle. You can depend on me."

"And if the cigars give out, don't hesitate to open more boxes. I'll call in, now and then, and settle for them."

I really think this young lady might have been ashamed of herself; but she wasn't. She smiled sweetly upon the druggist when he bowed her out, and Mr. Latham from that moment began to seek for friends of Mr. Forbes to give cigars to. If they were not friends, he argued with them until they were, for he was an honest little man, in his way, and tried to act in good faith.

So the girl went from one shop to another, making liberal purchases and seeking for every opening that would enable her to make a convert. And

her shrewd Irish wit made her quick to take advantage of any weakness she discovered in the characters of the people she interviewed.

When noon came Uncle John hunted her up, which was not difficult, in Elmwood, and together they went to the village "hotel" to get something to eat. The mid-day dinner was not very inviting, but Patsy praised the cooking to the landlord's wife, who waited upon the table, and Uncle John bought one of the landlord's cigars after the meal and talked politics with him while he smoked it.

Then Patsy went over to the general store, and there she met her first rebuff. Thompson, the proprietor, was a sour-visaged man, tall and lanky and evidently a dyspeptic. Having been beaten by Hopkins at the last election, when he ran against him on the Republican ticket, Thompson had no desire to see Forbes more successful than he had been himself. And there were other reasons that made it necessary for him to support Hopkins.

So he was both gruff and disagreeable when Patsy, after buying a lot of ribbons of him, broached the subject of politics. He told her plainly that her cousin hadn't a "ghost of a show," and that he was glad of it.

"The young fool had no business to monkey with politics," he added, "and this will teach him to keep his fingers out of someone else's pie."

"It isn't Mr. Hopkins's pie," declared Patsy, stoutly. "It belongs to

whoever gets the votes."

"Well, that's Hopkins. He knows the game, and Forbes don't."

"Can't he learn?" asked the girl.

"No. He's an idiot. Always was a crank and an unsociable cuss when a boy, and he's worse now he's grown up. Oh, I know Forbes, all right; and I haven't got no use for him, neither."

Argument was useless in this case. The girl sighed, gathered up her purchases, and went into the hardware store.

Immediately her spirits rose. Here was a man who knew Kenneth, believed in him and was going to vote for him. She had a nice talk with the hardware man, and he gave her much useful information about the most important people in the neighborhood--those it would be desirable to win for their candidate. When he mentioned Thompson, she said:

"Oh, he's impossible. I've talked with him."

"Thompson is really a good Republican," replied Mr. Andrews, the hardware man. "But he's under Hopkins's thumb and doesn't dare defy him."

"Doesn't he like Mr. Hopkins?" asked Patsy, in surprise.

"No; he really hates him. You see, Thompson isn't a very successful merchant. He has needed money at times, and borrowed it of Hopkins at a high rate of interest. It's a pretty big sum now, and Hopkins holds a mortgage on the stock. If he ever forecloses, as he will do some day, Thompson will be ruined. So he's obliged to shout for Hopkins, whether he believes in him or not."

"I think I understand him now," said Patsy, smiling. "But he needn't have been so disagreeable."

"He's a disagreeable man at any time," returned Mr. Andrews.

"Has he any political influence?" asked the girl.

"Yes, considerable. Otherwise he couldn't have secured the nomination when he pretended to run against Hopkins--for it was only a pretense. You see, he's a well known Republican, and when he sides for Hopkins he's bound to carry many Republicans with him."

But there were other important people whom Mr. Andrews thought might be influenced, and he gave Patsy a list of their names. He seemed much amused at the earnestness of this girlish champion of the Republican candidate.

"I do not think we can win," he said, as she left him; "but we ought to



make a good showing for your cousin, and I'll do my very best to help you."

As she rode home with Uncle John in the afternoon, after a day of really hard work, Patsy sized up the situation and declared that she was satisfied that she had made progress. She told Mr. Merrick of the mortgage held over Thompson by Mr. Hopkins, and the little man made a mental note of the fact. He also was satisfied with his day's work, and agreed to ride over to Fairview the next day with her and carry the war into this, the largest village in Kenneth's district.

Meantime Louise and Mr. Watson were having some interesting interviews with the farmers' wives along the Marville road. The old lawyer knew nearly everyone in this part of the country, for he had lived here all his life. But he let Louise do the talking and was much pleased at the tact and good nature she displayed in dealing with the widely different types of character she encountered.

Her method was quite simple, and for that reason doubly effective. She sat down in Mrs. Simmons's kitchen, where the good woman was ironing, and said:

"I'm a cousin of Mr. Forbes, up at Elmhurst, you know. He's running for a political office, so as to do some good for his county and district, and I've come to see if you'll help me get votes for him."

"Law sakes, child!" exclaimed Mrs. Simmons, "I ain't got nuthin' to do with politics."

"No; but you've got a lot to do with Mr. Simmons, and that's where we need your help. You see, Mr. Forbes thinks Mr. Simmons is one of the most important men in this district, and he's very anxious to win his vote."

"Why don't you see Dan, then? He's out'n the rye field," replied the woman.

"It's because I'm only a girl, and he wouldn't listen to me," replied Louise, sweetly. "But he takes your advice about everything, I hear--"

"He don't take it as often as he orter, don't Dan," interrupted Mrs. Simmons, pausing to feel whether her iron was hot.

"Perhaps not," agreed Louise; "but in important things, such as this, he's sure to listen to you; and we women must stick together if we want to win this election."

"But I don't know nothin' about it," protested Mrs. Simmons; "an' I don't believe Dan does."

"You don't need to know much, Mrs. Simmons," replied the girl. "What a pretty baby that is! All you need do is to tell Dan he must vote for Mr.

Forbes, and see that he agrees to do so."

"Why?" was the pointed query.

"Well, there are several reasons. One is that Mr. Hopkins--Mr. Erastus Hopkins, you know, is the other candidate, and a person must vote for either one or the other of them."

"Dan's a friend o' 'Rastus," said the woman, thoughtfully. "I seen 'em talkin' together the other day."

"But this isn't a matter of friendship; it's business, and Mr. Forbes is very anxious to have your husband with him. If Mr. Forbes is elected it means lighter taxes, better roads and good schools. If Mr. Hopkins is elected it does not mean anything good except for Mr. Hopkins."

"I guess you're right about that," laughed the woman. "'Rast don't let much get away from him."

"You're very clever, Mrs. Simmons. You have discovered the fact without being told."

"Oh, I know 'Rast Hopkins, an' so does Dan."

"Then I can depend on you to help us?" asked the girl, patting the tousled head of a little girl who stood by staring at "the pretty lady."

"I'll talk to him, but I dunno what good it'll do," said Mrs. Simmons, thoughtfully.

"I know. He won't refuse to do what you ask him, for a man always listens to his wife when he knows she's right. You'll win, Mrs. Simmons, and I want to thank you for saving the election for us. If we get Mr. Simmons on our side I believe we'll be sure to defeat Hopkins."

"Oh, I'll do what I kin," was the ready promise, and after a few more remarks about the children and the neatness of the house, Louise took her leave.

"Will she win him over?" asked the girl of Mr. Watson, when they were jogging on to the next homestead.

"I really can't say, my dear," replied the old lawyer, thoughtfully; "but I imagine she'll try to, and if Dan doesn't give in Mrs. Simmons will probably make his life miserable for a time. You flattered them both outrageously; but that will do no harm."

And so it went on throughout the day. Sometimes the farmer himself was around the house, and then they held a sort of conference; Louise asked his advice about the best way to win votes, and said she depended a great deal upon his judgment. She never asked a man which side he favored, but took it for granted that he was anxious to support Mr.

Forbes; and this subtle flattery was so acceptable that not one declared outright that he was for Hopkins, whatever his private views might have been.

When evening came and they had arrived at Elmhurst again, Louise was enthusiastic over her work of the day, and had many amusing tales to tell of her experiences.

"How many votes did you win?" asked Uncle John, smiling at her.

"I can't say," she replied; "but I didn't lose any. If one sows plenty of seed, some of it is bound to sprout."

"We can tell better after election," said Mr. Watson. "But I'm satisfied that this is the right sort of work, Mr. Merrick, to get results."

"So am I," returned Uncle John heartily. "Are you willing to keep it up, Louise?"

"Of course!" she exclaimed. "We start again bright and early tomorrow morning."