

The Daily Novelette

The Dill Pride  
By CLARISSA MACKIE

CLEMENTINE DILL watched her aunt's flying fingers as they flitted in and out of the scarlet yarn. Miss Emily Dill was knitting a sweater for Clementine.

"I am glad I chose scarlet," said Miss Dill, tapping Clem's smooth head with her ivory needles.

"It is pretty," agreed Clem, dreamily.

"It will give you some color, child. You are as pale as war berries. I am going to call on Dr. Brown."

"Aunt Emily, please," Clementine looked distressed. "I am quite all right, only I don't get out of doors as much as I used to; but I will take a long walk every day after this."

Miss Emily looked intently at the girl she had reared as her own daughter. She had always meant well by Clementine, and they had always been as happy together in the old red brick house—happy, that is, until Jerry Landers had come a-wooing.

"Jerry Landers? No!" announced Miss Emily coolly.

"Clementine Dill, Emily Dill's niece? No!" shouted Ebenezer Landers fiercely as he rode toward the plantation of young spruces that his men were setting out on the north slope.

"Why?" asked Clementine, with wonder in her big blue eyes.

Emily Dill blushed and looked very handsome with her crown of silver hair piled high above her still youthful face.

"Why?" she repeated. "Because I do not approve of the Landers, and I am sure you would not marry in opposition to my wishes."

Clementine made no reply. Secretly she believed her aunt's reason was absurd—it sounded like a sentence from some early Victorian novel. She had always been an obedient child, so now she meekly accepted the verdict and hopefully waited for Emily Dill to change her mind.

On this pleasant winter afternoon several months afterward, while Clementine sat by the fire and idly watched Miss Emily as she knitted the red sweater that was to bring color to a girl's pale cheeks, Fate in the prosaic shape of Augusta Barnes was hurrying through the snowy paths to the Dill house.

"You two are cosy as cats and cream," breezed Augusta as she swept into a chair and tossed her cape and hat to Clem and shuffled her rubbers off and put them near the hearth to dry. "Well, some folks can be happy and agreeable and others quarrel and fight—it's just as the good Lord makes 'em, I suppose."

"I suppose so, Gussie. Now, Clem, my dear, suppose you bring in some tea and cup cakes—"

As the girl left the room Miss Dill laughed and shook her head disapprovingly at her caller.

"More gossip, Gussie? You are incorrigible!"

"I may be that," agreed the other bluntly, "but you must admit, Emily, that I am interestin'."

Emily Dill's eyes twinkled merrily and one could see what a pretty girl she must have been not so very many years ago by "love's sake." "You are interesting, Gussie! Who is it now? Jake Hary and Betsy?"

"White folks this time, Emily—one of your old beaux, too. They say Captain Ebenezer and Jerry have quarreled about a girl."

"A girl?" repeated Emily, growing very white.

"Yes—not over a girl. The captain hasn't looked at a woman except to scowl since you gave him the right-about-ears ago."

"You were speaking about Jerry and some girl," suggested Miss Dill, retaining all her color.

"Didn't hear who the girl's name—the one who told it to me said they heard the first of it last September; seems Jerry wanted to marry some girl and his father swore he wouldn't have it; said the girl's family was a high-handed, proud, resentful race, and he would have none of it. Then this same person, mind you, heard the captain wasn't everything; love courts and sometimes, and he was going to have his girl. That's a pretty mess, isn't it, Emily?"

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"Cream and two lumps of sugar. My those cakes are good to look at, Emily. And Gussie plunged one more into her bag of gossip and drew forth another tale to regale aunt and niece as they drank their tea. Just as she was going down the path Augusta turned her sharp nose over her shoulder. "I forgot to tell you, Emily, that Jerry Landers left town on the noon train; said he was going out West somewhere." The gate clicked sharply as she went out and the closing of the house was like a faint echo.

Emily Dill faced her niece with content. "Now, Clementine, don't be foolish. The Dills have got too much pride to wear their hearts on their sleeves. I hope—and stop your crying, child, you will make yourself sick. They were back in the sitting room again and Emily was holding Clem in her motherly arms as if she had been a little child again.

"He—he went away and never said good-by to me," sobbed the girl brokenly.

"I know—I know it is hard to bear, but have some pride about it, Clementine."

"Pride isn't everything in this world, auntie," flung out the girl. Strange expressions crossed Miss Dill's face. "Pain and wonder and regret—then determination. Suddenly she arose and placed Clem on the old

rough before the fire, picked up two kittens from a basket and dropped them in the girl's arms and hurried into some outdoor garments. "I will return in a little while," she said, and hurried out the back door and across lots.

She met Captain Ebenezer Landers at his own back door. "I am calling on you, Ebenezer," she announced.

"Yes, Emily," said the dark-browed captain as he led the way into his sitting room. "Sit down."

"Where is Jerry? Never mind telling me, I know. I've heard it all; and although I said I'd never forgive you, I will and I beg you to give your consent to his marrying Clementine. I beg this of you, Ebenezer."

"No, no, you mustn't do that," he said huskily. "It's my temper; the boy's right; he's upstairs getting ready to go. Will you tell him, Emily?"

She sped through the room and up the stairs to Jerry's room. Two seconds later a young whirlwind flew through the sitting room, caught Ebenezer into its embraces and departed, doors slamming. Emily came down, tears on her cheeks.

Ebenezer put his hand on her unresisting one. "Jerry and Clem can have this house. I don't suppose you can forgive me at this late day—"

"Pride isn't everything," she quoted softly. "Love is everything, and we have missed so much. There is room in my house for you and me, my dear."

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