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We Join Ourselves to no Party that Does not Carry the Flag and Keep Step to the Music of the Whole Union.

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DESPERATE DEBORAH.

Mr. Jones and I were chatting about refractory paupers.

"You don't remember 'Desperate Deborah'?" asked the Relieving officer.

"But you would not, though," he added.

"She was before your time. A beautiful creature she was, most certainly. I never had to deal with one like her, and I sincerely trust such another may not arrive while I'm Relieving Officer."

"What's become of her?"

"Oh, she married at last, and is now living quite a lady, over in Tarnsey yonder. Her poverty was brought to a close in a singular manner."

"Well, sir, it's not a very long one."

"Desperate Deborah was the daughter of a very humble shopkeeper in Bramblestone, a widow. Who John Tomkinson was, and where he came from, nobody ever knew. He was an elderly man, very reserved and very cross. Only one man ever had the boldness to ask him for particulars of himself, and Tomkinson replied by exclaiming the man by the throat, and nearly strangling him. No one after that put to Tomkinson any similar question."

"Well, Deborah was his daughter. She was a wonder in two ways. First, she was a perfect giantess, fully six feet high, and broad in proportion, and her arms were like a strong blacksmith's. Secondly, her temper was most violent; you can imagine. The least thing set her in a frenzy, and she would lay about her, right and left, in a way to demolish everything around her. She and her father quarrelled fearfully. All the people in the town knew and dreaded her, and she came to be called 'Desperate Deborah.'"

"I scarcely think there was a man in the place who would so have styled her within her hearing."

"The father died, Deborah was left destitute. One day she made her appearance at the Union office. I was out. Mr. Flack attended to her."

"I want relief."

"Sorry it's come to that, Deborah," replied the Assistant mildly; you must appear before the Board on Thursday. Do you need anything in the meantime?"

"Of course I do. I want bread and meat and beer. Do I look as though I lived on air?"

"Can't say you do, Deborah," replied Mr. Flack. "Well, I'll give you a half-quartern loaf just for the present, and when Mr. Jones—"

"Give me a half-quartern loaf!" screamed the young lady. "What's the good of that? Come, I must have half-a-crown!"

"Now, Deborah!" urged Mr. Flack, gently, for there was no help handy, and he was but a little man, he was reasonable. "Take the bread, and as I've told you, when Mr. Jones—"

"Give me the loaf," she interrupted.

"There, there's a nice one," said Mr. Flack, with a sickly smile, taking one from off a very high shelf, which he reached by a ladder, and handing it to her.

"Thank you; I am so grateful," was Deborah's reply; and as she uttered it, with one bound she was over the counter.

"That thief wants an ornament," cried the gentle member of the fair sex. It shall have one; and in an instant she had Mr. Flack in her arms, and had deposited him on the shelf where he had taken the bread. And there, as she had moved the ladder, and found him on my return in the course of a few minutes, nervously peeping over, after the manner of a very young kitten, not yet able to jump.

But this was only the beginning. Deborah the Desperate had now declared war against the Union authorities, and she carried it on with vigor. Her mode of conducting war had this leading characteristic:—Strike the enemy at all times, and under all circumstances. She no longer caught sight of anybody having any connection with the Union, than she made after him; and as a battle with her was not to be contemplated, if it could be avoided, the enemy invariably sought safety in flight. I remember my extreme astonishment at seeing on the Wednesday prior to the Thursday on which she was to be examined by the guardians, a highly respectable, guarding, named Tourneville, a Frenchman, trotting along a street, gasping, groaning, and ejaculating in a manner quite frightful. I tried to stop him, inquiring the cause of his perturbation.

"Go away, go away," he shouted vehemently. "Not stop me, dear Mr. Jones, not stop me," and he plunged forward like a madman.

I looked round and saw Deborah in the distance, and I don't deny, owing to a look out of the way in two seconds, I had an appointment with Mr. Tourneville that afternoon at the Union House. Instead of keeping it, he sent me a note, which ran thus:—

DEAR SIR: I am quite precluded by circumstances from coming to you. Please come to me. You will find the back gate open. Truly yours, J. TOURNEVILLE.

"Very odd!" thought I, as I trudged over. "Why should I go the back way, I wonder?"

The moment I was in the house, its master clutched me by the arm.

"Haven't been out, not one yard, since the morning," he said in a subdued tone. "Not ill, I hope," I said.

"No, not sick," he replied; "but, but, look here—see what you see."

I looked from the front window, and, far off, I descried at the terrible Deborah, evidently keeping a lynx eye upon the house.

"Just you read," said Mr. Tourneville, and he put into my hand a dirty scrap of paper. "This was left here this day."

I read as follows:—

"Villain!—I've you have been talking again Mr. Jones. When I see you, I'll have a little word with you."

"Servant,"

The next day she was up before the Board of Guardians. I remember there was a great discussion as to whether we should not forego seeing her; but we were ashamed of the laugh which would

arise, if, in her case, we deviated from our rule.

"Here we are, twelve men," observed the Chairman, "and there's a porter outside. Surely we can manage one woman."

So Miss Deborah was ushered in. I knew we all quaked at the sight of her. She seemed in excellent health, and had the bosom of the other sex, her vast dimensions would have excited extreme admiration. She gazed at us defiantly. Mr. Points, who was sitting close to where she stood, remembered some instructions which he ought to have given to his servant, and left us.

"Well, Deborah," cried the Chairman, good-humoredly, "what can we do for you?"

"What's the good of that sort of talk?" was the disdainful counter-quest.

"You know what I want well enough. Mind you make no game of me now; I ain't at all in the mind to bear it."

And she looked at us such a giant might look at a saucy school-boy, who was netting with him.

There, now, don't be angry, Deborah," said the Chairman, "had behaved very well. You please to talk reasonable."

replied the damsel, with dignity. "I'm as quiet as a lamb, except I'm aggravated."

"Just so, Deborah. Well now, I think if we give you two and sixpence a week, you'll be able to get on."

"Not enough!"

"Well, but, Deborah, we have heavy claims upon you: you'll earn something you know."

No work. Say three and sixpence."

Now, 'Desperate Deborah' had behaved very well to this point; and if left to be dealt with exclusively by the Chairman, would have been satisfactorily disposed of; but, unluckily, there sat in the corner, at the furthest distance of anybody from our excitable customer, a guardian of the name of Rubbles, a touchy, testy man, who must needs chime in as follows:—

"My good woman, you know you can either take the half-crown or leave it, just as you like. We can't stop here all day discussing the point with you."

The Chairman groaned audibly. "It's all up," he whispered to me. "We're in for it!"

And so we were. I saw Deborah's eyes flash. The guardians shuffled uneasily in their seats.

"And who are you, pray?" screamed the playful maiden, her arms working, her fingers twirling, and her head nodding in a manner truly ominous.

"Now, Deborah," interposed the Chairman.

"Oh yes; it's 'now Deborah,' indeed. Better call me 'Desperate Deborah,' at once. Ah! I know what you call me. And as for that, I'll tell you, I'm not there; out of this room I'll not go, until I've let him see what Deborah can do. So here goes."

"Upon my word, sir," said Mr. Jones, "it's no figure of speech to say that this scene which ensued beggared all description. The amiable young lady made a first furious plunge to reach Mr. Rubbles; and it would have served him right, for his thoughtlessness, to have surrendered him to her. But we, nevertheless, interposed and a general fight ensued. And for a minute or so the twelve men actually got the worst of it. For you see the frenzied woman, pummeled into us with her fists, while we, although writhing under her blows forbore doing more than endeavoring to restrain her. The yells from the unfortunate dozen of men building, and the shouting of the women, were a truly dreadful scene. Deborah's bare arms always slipped from our hold and then the released members inflicted blows upon her nearest foes, which would have delighted the heart of a prize fighter. At length the porter, who had come to our aid, ungalantly grasped the enemy's legs and Deborah descended to the floor with a force which shook the building. But to keep her prostrate was no small difficulty, and we despairingly were ultimately obliged, until further assistance arrived to—I am almost ashamed to say—"

"Sit upon her, I suppose, Mr. Jones."

"Well, that was actually the case."

There was no other mode of doing it.

"And what was done with her afterwards?"

"Oh! we had her up before the magistrates, with hard labor ten days imprisonment. She came out as broke as a egg, and was taken into the work house. There, one day, she found her way to the master's apartments, captured his good lady, whom she discovered alone, carried her to a coal-cellar, and looked her up; and to release her, such a contest ensued, that it really appeared that a life or two would have been lost. At length, however, Deborah found her master, and he, in turn, did so in a little while, and when you would have thought she could crush with a hug, she delivered at that time in a huge stone, a young carpenter named Spivill. He used to be called 'Lucky Frank,' from the circumstance that though not particularly clever, industrious or persevering, he jogged on in the world much more comfortably than his fellows. Good things that he never expected, seemed to be always falling into 'Lucky Frank.' This enviable person was one day standing talking to me at the Union counter, when Deborah who had been discharged from the house a few days previously, walked in. She was evidently in a mischievous mood, and the first thing she did was, as Frank was a little in her way, to take off his cap, and fling it into the street. Frank said not a word, but fetched his cap, and on Deborah's return he bestowed a slap upon her forehead, which entirely altered his fashion, without troubling the bonnet-maker