

# FINE FEATHERS

by WEBSTER DENISON

NOVELIZED FROM EUGENE WALTER'S DRAMA BY THE SAME NAME

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## SYNOPSIS.

Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds move into their new bungalow—\$500 down, balance same as rent—on Staten Island. Mrs. Collins, a neighbor, calls before the household gods are set in order.

## CHAPTER II—Continued.

"Oh, you little dear!" Lifting the pup from the box, she pressed its soft coat to her cheeks. "I've just been crazy for a dog, Dick; and isn't it a beauty?"

She put it on the floor, stooped and called: "Here, Dick; here, Dick! That's what we'll name him, won't we, Bob?"

"Honored beyond words," said the donor. "Why not Bob?"

"No; look at his eyes. They're blue just like yours, Dick, and he's so cunning!"

Meade bent down and patted the pup's head.

"Well, I'm glad she likes you, old top, since there's such a resemblance."

"You'd better feed him, Jane," Bob suggested. "I want Dick to see the garden so we'll prow around a while till dinner."

Reynolds' guest showed general enthusiasm over the progress of his friend's agricultural venture. For an amateur Reynolds had displayed skill as well as zeal. The space he had allotted to his garden comprised about a fourth of his half-acre lot. This he had divided into little rectangular plots about thirty feet deep and fifteen wide. Narrow paths ran between so that each could be cultivated and watered without treading on the bed itself.

"You must have had some expert opinion here, Bob," Dick ventured. "I never saw a more orderly garden. Looks like you had laid it out with a rule and square. Where did you get the idea?"

Jane helped out a lot and then I added government bulletins. They told me what to do for the soil. It wasn't much better than a lot of sawdust when we came, Dick. It was good for some things, but not for others. I looked all that up, and so there is different treatment of the ground in different beds; lime, potash, bone and plain fertilizer. That's modern-day farming, my boy; the way your despised trusts would do things if they were trying to raise beans and cabbages. You see, there is system for the little man as well as the capitalist if he will only take advantage of it. I'll bet you I get twice as much out of that garden as my friend Collins down the street, and he's had two years' start of me."

"Great; I hope you do. But where in the world did you find the time for all the work you've put into this patch?"

"Got up with the sun and put in an hour before breakfast. The novelty of it all took the edge off the toil and I've really enjoyed it."

They heard Jane calling them to dinner and went in.

"Where is my namesake?" Dick inquired.

"Asleep in the kitchen. The little dear had nearly half a pint of milk and I guess he's done for the night."

"The evening, you mean," said Bob. "Just wait till his digestive organs have had a chance. He's got one of the cutest little soprano voices you ever heard and we're in for plenty of midnight soles till he becomes acclimated. I've raised pups before."

"So have I, Bob," their guest replied, "and one thing I know, you mustn't humor him. Pups and babies are just the same; if they cry, let them have it out. Better stay awake all night than stuff or amuse them."

"Very well, Richard. Thanks for the lore, Dick, Jr., shall wall in peace, but I think the hen house would be far better for his lungs."

"Bob!" Jane exclaimed.

Dick waved his napkin aloft. "Truce, truce," he cried with a laugh, "or I shall blame myself for having brought trouble to Elysium. I will return the pup and bring you a turtle dove."

"You will not," said Jane quickly. "Dick is mine and you're wasting your time discussing him. He's going to be one of the family."

Her husband laughed and salaamed toward the kitchen door. "Dog, thy future is assured. The queen has spoken and great shall be thy power in the land."

"Amen," said Dick. "'Twas ever thus."

Jane served coffee from a shining aluminum percolator, which she in-

formed her husband and Dick was the culmination of heroic efforts to supply her with tobacco coupons.

"Isn't it a dandy?" she asked, "and it makes perfectly fine coffee in two minutes."

"And it's a godsend, Jane," Dick answered, "for now I may smoke real tobacco. For months I've battled with My Lady Nicotine in her vilest forms to find brands that furnished the most green tickets. You know my sentiments concerning kings and princes, but I have quashed them and paid homage to the rulers of four thousand years, from the first Ramesses to the last George."

"Most noble sacrifice, my dear Dick, and please keep on. Look! I got a catalogue today. For only twelve thousand coupons I can get a piano and I need one badly."

"Holy smoke, deliver me! Bob must rent one."

"What do you think of the shack, Dick?" asked Reynolds, parrying. "Let's help Jane clear the table and then we'll take you on a tour of inspection."

The Reynolds' bungalow was one of those ingenious devices of a land company's art; pretty and alluring, but built to sell at a large profit. The exterior was attractive if not imposing. The lower half was stucco and the upper brown-stained shingles. The extending mansard roof drooped low over the veranda and gave a snug, equatty appearance to the whole.

Within, it boasted no reception room or hall. The big living-room ran the full breadth of the house, and served as a parlor, library and dining-room. On this the most pretentious efforts of the builder had been spent. On the side abutting the kitchen it had a stationary sideboard of mission effect. The entire wall was paneled half-way with a similar wood; a cheap ash, stained in imitation of mission oak.

Above the paneling on this end of the room was a narrow shelf meant to retain the usual array of steins or plates. Though not separated by door or arch, the attempt had been made to have this half conform to the requirements of a dining-room, leaving the other to serve as a library. The low windows were set with uniform simplicity; one on either side of the door and one at each end. In the living half of the room a window seat ran from door to wall, and a combination bookshelf and desk offset the buffet of the other side. This corner Jane had converted into a "comfy," home-like lounging place. Pillows of her own making were scattered plentifully along the window seat and piled high at the end against the wall. A little center table laden with books, magazines and Bob's tobacco tray was in reach, and, beside it, a big morris chair and Jane's smaller rocker. Here their evenings were spent in Bob's reading aloud while Jane sewed, or with occasional games of cribbage and pinochle.

Diversions were not plentiful and indeed there was little need of them. Bob's day in the city, his long trip home, the dinner, his hour with his garden and Jane's daily struggle with domestic duties left little energy for nocturnal pastime. An hour or two usually found them ready for the little room at the back, which, though dignified nominally as a guest's chamber, they had commandeered for sleeping purposes themselves. This room and the kitchen, with a bath between, divided the space in back of the long living room. Here the builder had recompensed himself for such extravagances as were indulged in the front. The room was of barren simplicity; severe white walls, a window, closet, and door to the bathroom with woodwork of the cheapest spruce.

The only access to the second story was the stairway in the kitchen. There were two rooms there. A long one across the front of the house, but, on account of the sloping roof, much narrower than the one below and with a lower ceiling. The other was above the guest chamber, while the space over the kitchen was left unfinished for storeroom purposes.

"Space galore," said Meade as he eyed these unused rooms. "You might take a boarder."

"Try us and see, Dick. I know one we would be glad to have, wouldn't we, Jane?" her husband answered.

"Certainly. Why don't you do it, Dick? Just think what a help you'd be, too."

"Sure. Little Tom Sawyer here would let me weed the garden and feed his hens and, maybe, if I were

real good, you'd let me wash the dishes."

"Well, I'd consider it."

"I wouldn't like anything better, Jane, but you know a newspaper man keeps rather strenuous hours. Sometimes I'm through at midnight and sometimes at four in the morning. I'd have to make a swim of it if I wanted to get across the bay at that hour. No, I guess I am doomed to the hall bedroom in Washington square."

"And the little place on the corner, Dick. Don't omit that; the place where they uncrown monarchs, divide Rockefeller's millions and drown all social ills in a flood of amber and foam. Honest, now, isn't that what you're thinking of as much as the swim across the bay? But, speaking of corners, we've got one ourselves. There's a little, fat German two blocks down the street who'd just love to talk Schopenhauer with you."

"No doubt I'll meet him, Bob. I'll need both philosophy and his merchandise as a brace for the return trip."

"You're not going back tonight, Dick," Jane announced. "Stay and go with Bob in the morning. Why, you'll miss half the fun of you don't have one of our commuters' breakfasts. Up with the birds, you know. Coffee and rolls at five-thirty and new-laid eggs—If there are any. That's the time when you get the true bucolic spirit."

A note of irony in her tone brought Bob with a start.

"No, little rebel," he exclaimed, "you don't have to get up at five-thirty and you know it. I could fix that morning repast in two minutes if you'd let me."

"But I won't. I'd feel fine lying in bed-like some Fifth avenue beauty, with my husband puttering around with a frying pan and coffee pot. No, thank you. The day is long enough without you as it is."

Dick offered solace. "Bob isn't the only beneficiary, Jane. You know early rising is good for the complexion, and now I know the secret of yours."

She courted. "Positively, Dick, you're getting bearable. If I had to choose another husband I wouldn't scratch socialist off my eligible list at all. If there's only one egg in the morning you shall have it."

"Is that a likely contingency?"

"Ask Bob. We've been drawing lots for it for the past week. It's the season when the maternal instinct predominates the sense of domestic duty in the henery. Of course there are store eggs to piece out with, but they don't count."

They went downstairs and Jane took up her embroidery while the men tempted fortune at auction pinochle with a third hand dead.

"That's my favorite game," Bob told Dick. "Jane and I nearly always play it. We like the third hand because it kind of makes us think of some visitor who doesn't come. Callers are pretty scarce, aren't they, Jane?"

"Yes, but we make up in quality what we lack in quantity—Dick and Mrs. Collins."

"Flattered, I'm sure," laughed Dick. "Who is the lady?"

"A Staten Island beauty you'd just doze on. A sort of a Titian futurist, and so cultured. We'll have to have her and the little Herr Host of the corner around for dinner the next time you come."

She put down her work and walked to Bob, bestowing a good-night kiss. "You men can sit up as late as you want," she said, "but nine o'clock is Cinderella's hour for me. Good night, Dick. Remember the egg and get up when I call you."

"Au revoir, princess. We're both loath to have you go, but I think one more game will find us following suit." And Bob agreed.

In the morning there was great rejoicing when an early raid on the Plymouth Rocks yielded four eggs; a most unwonted but not unneeded display of energy on the part of the fowls. A hurried breakfast, and the men bade Jane good-by and were off for the city.

## CHAPTER III.

### A Cloud in Elysium.

Spring waned and summer came. The sun beat down with dull persistence, and baked the sand and shriveled up the heading lettuce in Bob's garden. It scored the scant foliage of the new-set trees and scorched the lawn he had coaxed from seed. The house offered the only shelter, and even that was hot. Jane made two or

three excursions to the beaches with Mrs. Collins, but these necessitated tiresome rides on crowded trolleys, so she abandoned them and stayed closely at home with nothing but her work, her books and idle chats with her neighbors to while away the hours of the long, hot day.

At night Bob puffed prodigiously at cheap, black cigars while he sat outside after dinner and battled with an endless host of mosquitoes. When he had smoked himself dizzy he would succumb to a superior force and join Jane inside. Lights made it more uncomfortable within, so, usually, they sat in the dark and talked until bedtime.

Friends came from the city occasionally, but their visits were not frequently repeated. It was a tremendous trip from Harlem or the Heights, where their few acquaintances lived, and one by one all but Dick dropped away. He came regularly every Wednesday.

They tried two or three trips to New York themselves, but the distance made these a hardship rather than a pleasure and there was the added expense. Once when they attempted a little dinner after a night at a roof garden they missed the last boat and had to stay at a hotel. Bob tried to conceal his misgivings as to how this would affect the week's finances, but Jane knew. They gave it up and stayed at home.

So the summer passed and fall came. Bob missed his garden. Frost nipped the tomatoes that had been so late in starting and this marked the last of their outdoor activities. The month only for both began to pall, but they hid their feelings from each other.

More and more Jane sought refuge in the futile companionship of the gossiping Mrs. Collins. They went occasionally to New York for the matinees, but more frequently to spend an afternoon in idle wandering through the stores, for the funds of each were frugal. They were returning from such a journey one evening in late October.

"Come in and rest a minute," Jane invited, as they reached her bungalow. "I know I'm tired and I guess you are."

"Going to the matinee from Staten Island sure does one up," Mrs. Collins acquiesced and she glanced about with a longing air as if she hoped her neighbor might offer something in the way of resuscitation.

Jane comprehended readily, but as she had nothing to offer she let the hint go unnoticed.

"The trip is certainly terrible," she agreed. "Coming home on those ferries and trolleys nearly drives me wild sometimes."

"But it's worth while after all," vouchsafed her neighbor. "I don't know what I would do if I didn't just pick up and go where I can breathe the air of Manhattan once in a while. And the matinees! I used to go two or three times a week when I had my little flat in Amsterdam avenue. I just love the theaters. Didn't you think the show this afternoon was lovely?"

"No, I didn't," Jane answered. "I just hated it. That beautiful home, those servants and those lovely gowns. As if anyone could believe that heroine could be unhappy with all she had. And it does seem as if those things were going to be out of reach forever."

The play, in so far as material environment was concerned, had presented the very antithesis of their own life. All the luxuries and indulgences that money can give were vividly portrayed, but the sequel proved the indisputable maxim, "all that glitters is not gold." Jane had an innate longing for a more lofty station in life than was hers. She believed that poverty and its petty exactions were her worst foes and that any woman, given the opportunities that money bestows, had the making of happiness within her hands. She had no sympathy or tolerance for the theory that wealth breeds discontent and woe. Mrs. Collins, on the other hand, while not gifted with an analytical mind, had a rough and ready sense of perspective. She was as fond of good things in life as one, but she was actuated in her longings by a spirit of jealousy rather than the belief that the best was rightfully hers. So she sympathized with the hot polloi and rejoiced when the wealthy heroine wept. While she did not observe the fine distinction between herself and Jane, she recognized their common bond of complaint and attempted solace.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

### Realized Responsibility.

As marriage is a serious business some indication that the parties most immediately concerned are fully alive to this fact would be generally welcome. At every Roman wedding the bridegroom, on emerging from the temple with the bride, threw a handful of nuts among the bystanders. This was to show that he considered himself a boy no longer; that the sports and fancies of youth were now entirely abandoned; that he was standing on the threshold of a new existence ready to assume all the responsibilities of a citizen.

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### RIGHT WHERE SHE BELONGED

Department Store Manager Found No Difficulty in Placing Nice Looking but Stupid Girl

"I am afraid," said the assistant manager of the mammoth metropolitan department store, "the young woman who has just inquired for a job isn't up to our standard."

"I thought she seemed like a very nice-looking person," said the manager. "You know it pays to have good-looking people back of the counter. Have you ever considered that point?"

"Yes, I have. I agree with you. But she struck me as being extremely stupid. She certainly was not very well educated."

"Could she read and write?"

"Barely."

"Did she have any knowledge of literature?"

"Apparently none whatever."

The manager's face brightened up. "She's too nice looking a person to let go by. In that case, why don't you employ her as a saleswoman in our book department?"

### Natural History.

"What is natural history?" asked the teacher of a small pupil.

"I guess," said the small pupil, "that it's the kind where people are always fighting and killing each other," was the unexpected reply.

Our idea of a smart young man is one who succeeds in taming his wild oats.

### FOUND OUT.

A Trained Nurse Discovered Its Effect.

No one is in better position to know the value of food and drink than a trained nurse.

Speaking of coffee, a nurse in Pa. writes: "I used to drink strong coffee myself, and suffered greatly from headaches and indigestion."

"While on a visit to my brothers I had a good chance to try Postum, for they drank it altogether in place of coffee. After using Postum two weeks I found I was much benefited and finally my headaches disappeared and also the indigestion."

"Naturally I have since used Postum among my patients, and have noticed a marked benefit where coffee has been left off and Postum used."

"I observe a curious fact about Postum when used by mothers. It greatly helps the flow of milk in cases where coffee is inclined to dry it up, and where tea causes nervousness."

"I find trouble in getting servants to make Postum properly. But when it is prepared according to directions on package and served hot with cream, it is certainly a delicious beverage."

Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich. Read "The Road to Wellville," in pkgs.

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The cost per cup of both kinds is about the same.

"There's a Reason" for Postum.

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