

# SHORT STORY

## DIANE

By ELLA CLINE

Hillside, N. Y.,

Dear Horace:

I delayed writing to you for I was devoting every daylight hour I could possibly spare in helping Diane Feurflam sell tickets for an afternoon bridge at her grandmother's home. It was sweet of her to ask me to assist her and it has been loads of fun. We are ready to entertain about a hundred guests and have sold not less than three hundred tickets at double the usual price.

Mrs. Deborah Feurflam has donated the prizes; Bridget has baked bushels of her delicious cookies and plans to make gallons of iced punch; everything is in readiness for the party tomorrow afternoon. The weather forecast promises fair and slightly cooler so that we can place tables on the shaded lawns. This is an excellent time to have a sisterly chat with you and to tell you how very welcome are the cards you sent me while on your walking tour through old New England.

While you were loitering by Walden Pond, communing with the spirit of Thoreau; or, strolling about Concord, refreshed by the recollection of the wisdom that flowed from Emerson, Diane and I were acting as veritable pillars of the little congregation here, setting an example for other young folk to emulate. And that is not all. If our venture proves successful, as well as those that will follow, the anxiety that has recently shadowed Deborah Feurflam's delicate face will be lifted.

Diane came to visit her grandmother and found her somewhat upset. Deborah would not admit that anything was the matter; but Bridget, maid, confidant, friend to Deborah for thirty years and longer, told Diane privately that a committee of representative men of the community had called recently and asked Mrs. F. to make good the difference between the possible income and the irreducible budget of the congregation for the coming year. They were dismayed at her refusal and there was an unfriendly reaction in the small community toward Mrs. F., who is not accustomed to unfriendly reactions. In a small place one senses such things intuitively, as it were. She also told Diane of certain entries in the little black account book of which the town, also Diane, were ignorant, and implored the girl to put her mind to it to relieve the situation for it was just too bad that a heavenly saint, if ever that was one, a perfect angel from heaven with a heart of pure gold like Mrs. F. should be so miserably misunderstood.

most of the tickets to out-of-town people anyway. She began her selling campaign by making a list of all the expensive summer resorts within a radius of fifty miles she heard her mother mention having friends guests there. Deborah told us that her husband used to peddle among the farmers in those varied places before there were any resorts there and related several touching stories of those early days. Grandma would be pleased to hear those tales, but you are more interested in Diane.

So we spent the pleasant summer days driving through the fragrant pine forests, visiting luxurious camps and ritzy hotels on shores of sparkling lakes. Diane's charming personality, her super-smart roadster, the impressive list of names she casually mentioned, had the desired effect. Soon we would be amiably chatting with a group of women. Diane would tell about her last school year and the coming one and the social activities her mamma liked best, while the women discussed their own young daughters and the confusing problems of the younger generation which probably would have been greatly lessened if every young daughter had such entrancing disciplines and as good business sense as Diane. By the time tickets for good cause entered the conversation, each woman felt she must help the dear child, even if just to please her fortunate mother, and though few promised to attend. The comparatively few men about bought with hardly a struggle. On a portly egg-and-butter sort of person offered to buy four but was given five in exchange for his five dollar bill, the fifth for a kibitzer. Diane explained sweetly with a flashing smile. Diane's ambition was to sell five hundred tickets and we did sell nearly three hundred. She claims it three hundred worth while to face her dear mamma's wrath for much less.

### Where the Money Went

While driving she told me about the little black account book in which her grandmother keeps track of her varied and many benefactions. She devoted her surplus income to doing good and many are helped but only the little account book knows of it. During the last two years she had lavishly helped refugees, signed so many affidavits, made so many promises to help young people get a start in life, that she had to refuse the committee's request and could not very well explain. Deborah believes that the unfortunate people she signed for are of superior character and mentality, and bearing unavoidable misfortune, will make good. If she errs, much of the Feurflam fortune will go to make good her many signatures.

part of pure gold like Mrs. F. should be so cruelly misunderstood. Bridget's blue Irish eyes blazed and misted with tears as she poked. Diane promised to get busy right away.

### The Family Fortune

One must not blame the people here for being hurt and bewildered by Mrs. Feurflam's point blank refusal. It is common knowledge that the still considerable Feurflam fortune brings in a much greater income than two old women, Deborah and Bridget, could possibly require. It is also well known that Mr. Theodore Feurflam, a successful nerve specialist in New York, has asked his mother not to add to the principal, but to use what surplus there should be in philanthropic work she loves so dearly. Why let a struggling congregation be terribly handicapped for the lack of a thousand dollars or more? It did not seem right to ask the younger folk to carry that burden, with homes to furnish, babies to care for, with incomes far from cured.

We know better now. You should know too, brother dear, for I am quite certain that Phi Kappa Beta is suspended from a slender golden chain about Diane's graceful neck is the same that all of us, our dear Grandmamma to little little, were so delighted to have awarded to you.

But to return to our party, Diane began her campaign by asking her grandmother to let her and Bridget use the many-roomed house for a tourists' accommodation home for a month to raise funds for a worthy cause, and to give Diane some interesting work before she must join her mamma some swank summer resort. Deborah, startled and suspicious, said Diane suggested several other ways she could pass the time and earn some money, but received no encouragement and was told to use her surplus energy in tennis. Finally they compromised on an afternoon bridge, Diane convincing her grandmother that a hundred could be entertained and that she could sell several times that many tickets at double the usual afternoon bridge price; but it must be done quickly, before her mother hears of it, for she would be furious.

The comparatively young Mrs. Feurflam, having been her husband's secretary before he married rather late in life—insists on maintaining rigid social barriers; little Deborah, a dyed-in-the-wool aristocrat, takes her prestige for granted and is greatly amused by her daughter-in-law's social aloofness. Diane often cashes in on the sultan fireworks—

### She Goes to Work

I was asked to assist Diane and find that certain rules must be kept. One was that Diane must be home each day for dinner. It is more amusing than a circus to work with Diane. The Sisterhood promised to co-operate, but were a bit doubtful about charging a dollar for an afternoon bridge. Diane assured them it would be worth it and that she hoped to sell

make good her many signatures.

Now I begin to understand why we have more than our normal share of refugees in this small town; now I know what gave those two refugee high school girls their bright courage: Mrs. Feurflam had promised to pay for their vocational training. Even the mystery of Itchi has been adequately solved.

Itchi drove his decrepit truck into an equally aged touring car and sent an entire family to the hospital. He admitted to the judge that he knew that his brakes were bad, but that he had no money, or credit, for necessary re-

pairs and had to drive his truck to make a living for his family. In scathing language the judge told him what he thought of him. Itchi was ordered to pay the hospital bills, the bills for the repairs of the touring car, and five hundred dollars to the injured family for their mental and physical suffering. Itchi looked at the judge with consternation. If he did not have enough to repair his own brakes as he just told His Honor—and who wants to drive with bad brakes?—how could he lay his hands on such a fortune? But he was informed sternly that unless the case was settled, he would not be allowed to drive. Those who heard of it were deeply concerned, but our few organizations were in no financial position to do much about it. But in a few days after the verdict, Itchi was seen driving his truck, with repaired brakes, trying to earn the meagre living for his family.

It seems Itchi and members of the injured family that could be about met quietly with Mrs. Feurflam, discussed the matter, settled for hospital bills and absolutely needed repairs for the touring car—forgot the five hundred—Mrs. F. signed a check, made an entry in the little black account book, and asked all parties to keep the matter secret. But Bridget, with her Irish up in arms that her dear mistress should be misunderstood told Diane.

And then there was the case of

the poor and incurable T. B. patient who was convinced that he would be cured in Colorado. To cut the story short, if the congregation wants its deficit met, it will have to do it somehow itself. Diane is showing the way, and other parties are already being planned; even the men are planning to run an affair. Beside helping this small group carry on for another year, these parties are creating gaiety and good will, which is a worth while project in itself.

Your advice to have the article on Czarist Russia that Ian and Irving wrote sent out under Albert Leder's byline is good and acceptable to the three co-workers. If it should see print, the chief at the Inland Bridge and Dam would have no reason to believe that the boys have any other ambition in life but to build better and bigger bridges and dams. But the boys fear that Mr. Leder may develop a new complex and one which will be harder to cure: he will consider himself an author! I will tell you the complications as they come to the surface.

Why don't you continue your walking tour to the Adirondacks? About two hundred miles, via the Berkshires. Take a bus now and then so that you can get here while Diane is still visiting her grandmother. Better yet, borrow the family car and come right away, before Mrs. Theodore Feurflam discovers that her darling daughter has been peddling tickets all

over the map. This may be your last chance of seeing Diane or your P. K. B. pin either. Diane may be incarcerated in a convent, or something, for life!

My love to all the family.

Aufwiedersehen,  
Elsa.