

People Like That eBook

People Like That

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KATE LANGLEY BOSHER

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the house of happiness. Frontispiece. Post 8vo
Mary Cary. Frontispiece. Post 8vo
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TO

LUCY BOSHER JANNEY

CHAPTER I

One of the advantages of being an unrequired person of twenty-six, with an income sufficient for necessities, is the right of choice as to a home locality. I am that sort of person, and, having exercised said right, I am now living in Scarborough Square.

To my friends and relatives it is amazing, inexplicable, and beyond understanding that I should wish to live here. I do not try to make them understand; and therein lies grievance against me. Because of my failure to explain what they are pleased to call a peculiar decision on my part, I am at present the subject of heated criticism. It will soon stop. What a person does or doesn't do is of little importance to more than three or four people. By Christmas my foolishness will have ceased to cause comment, ceased to interest those to whom it doesn't matter really where or how I live.

I like living in Scarborough Square very much. After many years spent in the homes of others I am now the head of half a house, the whole of which is mine; and even though it is situated on the last square of respectability in a part of the town long forgotten by the descendants of its former residents, I am filled with a sense of proprietorship that is warm and comforting, and already I have learned to love it—this nice, old-fashioned house in which I live.

Until very recently Scarborough Square was only a name. There had been no reason to visit it, and had I ventured to it I would have seen little save a tiny park bounded on four sides by houses of shabby gentility, for the most part detached, and of a style of architecture long since surrendered to more undesirable designs. The park is but an open space whose straggly trees and stunted shrubs and dusty grass add dejection to the atmosphere of shrinking respectability which the neighborhood still makes effort to maintain; but that, too, I have learned to love, for I see in it that which I never noticed in the large and handsome parks up-town.



As a place of residence this section of the city I am just beginning to know has become very interesting to me. No one of importance lives near it, and the occupants of its houses, realizing their social submergence and pecuniary impotence, have too long existed in the protection of obscurity to venture into the publicity which civic attention necessitates, and on first acquaintance it is not attractive. I agree with my friends in that. I did not come here because I thought it was an attractive place in which to live.

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They cannot say, however, even my most protesting friends, that I am not living in a perfectly proper neighborhood. The front of my house faces, beyond the discouraged little park, a strata of streets which unfold from lessening degrees of dreariness and dinginess to ever-increasing expensiveness and unashamed architectural extravaganzas, to the summit of residential striving, called, for impressiveness, the Avenue, but behind it is a section of the city of which I am as ignorant as if it were in the depths of the sea or the wilds of primeval forest. I have traveled much, but I do not know the city wherein I live. I know but a part of it, the pretty part.

There was something Mrs. Mundy wanted to say to me to-night, and did not say. I love the dear soul. I could not live here without her, could not learn what I am learning without her help and sympathy and loyalty, but at times I wish she were a bit less fond of chatting. She is greatly puzzled. She, too, cannot understand why I have come to Scarborough Square to live, and I am quite certain she thinks it strange I do not tell her. How can I tell that of which I am not sure myself—that is, clearly and definitely sure?

I am not trying to be sure. It is enough that I am here, free to come and go as I choose, to plan my day as I wish, to have time for the things I once had no time for, and why must there always be explanations and reasons and justifications for one's acts? The daily realization each morning, on awaking, that the day is mine, that there are no customs with which to comply, no regulations to follow, no conventions to be conformed to, at the end of two weeks still stirs and thrills and awes me a little, and I am constantly afraid it is not true that I am here to stay. And then again with something of fear and shrinking and uncertainty I realize my bridges are burned and I must stay.

"It's pleased you are with your rooms, I hope, Miss Dandridge?" Hands on her hips, Mrs. Mundy had looked somewhat anxiously at me before going out. "If it's a home-looking place you're after, you've got it, but when you first come down to Scarborough Square it made me feel queer inside to think of your living here, really living. If you think you can be satisfied—"

"I am sure I can be satisfied. Why not?" I smiled and, going over to the window, straightened the curtain which had caught and twisted a fern-leaf growing in its box. "I am a perfectly unincumbered human being who—"

"But an unincumbered woman ain't much of a human being." Mrs. Mundy dropped the afternoon paper she had brought up and stooped to get it. "I mean a woman is made for incumbrances, and if she don't have any—" She hesitated, and looked around the room with its simple furnishings, its firelight and lamplight, its many books and few pictures, its rugs and desk and tables, the gifts of other days, and presently she spoke again. "Being you like so to look out the windows, it's well this house has two front rooms opening into each other. If it's comfortable and convenient that you want to be, you're certainly that, but comforts and conveniences don't keep you company exactly."

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"I don't want company yet. You and Bettina are all I need. I haven't said I was to live here a thousand years, or that I wouldn't get tired of myself in less time, but until I do—"

There was a ring at the front-door bell and Mrs. Mundy went to answer it. The puzzled look I often saw in her eyes when talking to me still filled them, but she said nothing more except good night, and when I heard her footsteps in the hall below I went to the door and locked it. This new privacy, this sense of freedom from unescapable interruption, was still so precious, that though an unnecessary precaution, I turned the key that I might feel perfectly sure of quiet hours ahead, and at my sigh of satisfaction I laughed.

Going into my bedroom, which adjoined my sitting-room, I hung in the closet the coat I had left on a chair, put away my hat and gloves, and again looked around, as if they were still strange—the white bed and bureau, the wash-rugs, the muslin curtains, the many contrasts to former furnishings—and again I sighed contentedly. They were mine.

The house I am now living in is indeed an old-fashioned one, but well built and of admirable design. The rooms are few—only eight in all—and four of them I have taken for myself—the upper four. The lower floor is occupied by Mrs. Mundy and Bettina, her little granddaughter. When I first saw the house its condition was discouraging. Not for some time had it been occupied, and repairs of all kinds were needed. To get it in order gave me strange joy, and the weeks in which it was being painted and papered and beautified with modern necessities were of an interest only a person, a woman person, can feel who has never had a home of her own before. When everything was finished, the furnishings in place, and I established, I knew, what I no longer made effort to deny to myself—that I was doing a daring thing. I was taking chances in a venture I was still afraid to face.

CHAPTER II

Kitty came to see me yesterday. Her mortification at my living in Scarborough Square is poignant. Not since she learned of my doing so has her amazement, her incredulity, her indignation and resentment, lessened in the least, but her curiosity is great and her affection sincere, and yesterday she yielded to both.

She was on her wedding journey when I left the house in which for many years we had lived together, and, knowing it would spoil her trip did I tell of what I had done, I did not tell. Two days ago she got back, and over the telephone I gave her my new address.

"But I can't understand—" During most of her visit Kitty was crying. She cries easily and well. "I can't take it in, can't even glimpse why you want to live in such a horrid old place. It's awful!"

“Oh no, it isn’t. It’s a very nice place. Look how the sun comes through those little panes of glass in those deep windows and chirps all over the floor. I never knew before how much company sunshine could be; how many different things it could do, until I came to Scarborough Square. This is a very interesting place, Kitty.”

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"It's fearful!" Kitty shuddered. "The sun shines much better on the Avenue, and you might as well be dead as live in this part of the town. When people ask me where you are I'm—"

"Ashamed to tell them?" I laughed. "Don't tell them, if the telling mortifies you. Those who object to visiting me in my new home will soon forget I'm living. Those to whom it does not matter where I live will find where I am without asking you. I wouldn't bother."

"But what must I say when people ask me why you've come down here? why you've made this awful change from living among the best people to living among these—I don't know what they are. Nobody knows."

"They are perfectly good people." I took a pin out of Kitty's hat and tried the latter at a different angle. "The man on the corner is named Crimm. He's a policeman. The girl next door makes cigarettes, and her friend around the corner works at the Nottingham Overall factory. The cigarette-girl has a beau who walks home with her every evening. He's delicate and can't take a job indoors. Just at present he's an assistant to the keeper of Cherry Hill Park."

Kitty stared at me as if not sure she heard aright. The tears in her big blue eyes disappeared and into them came incredulity. "Do you know them—the cigarette-girl, and the overall-girl, and the policeman?" Her voice was thin with dismay and unbelief. "Do you really know people like that?"

"I do." I laughed in the puzzled and protesting face, kissed it. "To every sort of people other people not of their sort are 'people like that.' Our customs and characteristics and habits of thought and manner of life separate us into our particular groups, but in many ways all people are dreadfully alike, Kitty. To the little cigarette-girl you're a 'person like that.' Did you ever wonder what she thought of you?"

"Why should I wonder? It doesn't matter what she thinks. I don't know her, never will know her. I can't understand why you want to know her, to know people who—"

"I want to know all sorts of people." Again I tilted Kitty's hat, held her off so as to get a better effect. "You see, I've wondered sometimes what they thought of us—these people who haven't had our chance. Points of view always interest me."

"What difference does it make what they think? You're the queerest person I've ever known! You aren't very religious. You never did go to church as much as I did. Are you going in for slums?"

"I am not. I wouldn't be a success at slumming. I'm not going in for anything except—"

"Except what?"

“My dear Kitty,” I picked up the handkerchief she had dropped and put it on the table, “I wouldn’t try to understand, if I were you, why people do things. Usually it’s because they have to, or because they want to, and occasionally there are other reasons. I used to wonder, for instance, why certain people married each other. Often now, as I watch husbands and wives together, I still wonder if, unmarried, they would select each other again. I suppose you went to the Bertrands’ dinner-dance last night?”

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"I went, but I wish I hadn't. Billy didn't want to go, and we came away as soon as we could. Everybody asked about you. I haven't seen any one yet who doesn't think it very strange that you won't live with me. That beautiful little Marie Antoinette suite on the third floor is all fixed for you, and you could use the automobiles as much as you choose. It's wicked and cruel in you to do like this and not live with me. It looks so—"

"Peculiar." I nodded in the eyes as blue as a baby's. "But a person who isn't peculiar isn't much of a person. You see, I don't care for things which are already fixed for me. I like to do my own fixing. And I don't want to live in anybody else's home, not even yours, though you are dear to want me. I am grateful, but I prefer to live here. My present income would make an undignified affair of life among the friends of other days. I'd feel continually as if I were overboard and holding on to a slippery plank. Down here I'm independent. I have enough for my needs and something to give—. That's a good-looking hat you have on. Did you get it in Paris?"

Kitty shook her head. "New York." Otherwise she ignored my question. Hats usually interested her. She talked well concerning them, but to-day she would not be diverted from more insistent subjects.

"It must have cost a good deal to fix up this old house. Anywhere else it would look very well." Her eyes were missing no detail. "You'd make a pig-sty pretty, but it takes money —"

"Everything takes money. I sold two or three pieces of Aunt Matilda's jewelry for enough to put the house in order. She expected me to sell what I did not wish to keep. In her will was a note to that effect."

"She had more jewelry than any human being I ever saw." Into Kitty's face came dawning understanding. "It was the only way she could leave you any of—"

"Your father's money," I nodded. "Not until after her death did I understand why she used to take all of your father's gifts in jewelry. I know now."

"It was a good investment. I wish she'd bought twice as much. She had so little else to leave you," Kitty was looking at me speculatively. "How on earth are you going to live on a thousand dollars a year? Our servants cost us twice that. Billy says it's awful, but —"

"It is if you can't afford it. You can. I believe all people ought to spend every dollar they can afford, and not a cent they can't. That's what I do. Aunt Matilda thought I was impractical, but I'm fearfully prudent. I live within my income and I've deposited with a trust company, so I can't spend it, a sum of money quite large enough to care for me through a spell of illness in the greediest of hospitals, if I should be ill. And if I should die I'm prepared for all expenses. It's a mistake to think I don't look ahead. I thought

once of having a stone put up in the cemetery so as to be sure I had not forgotten anything, but I guess that can wait."

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Kitty, still staring at me, got up. "I never expect to understand you. Neither does father. He's mortified to death about your coming down here to live. He knows people are talking; so do I; and we don't know what to say."

"Oh, people always talk! And don't say anything. No one escapes criticism. It's human pastime to indulge in it. To prefer Scarborough Square to the Avenue may be queer, but at present I do prefer it. That's why I'm here. You can say that if you choose."

"You've got no business preferring it." Kitty snapped the buttons of her glove with tearful emphasis. "Mrs. Jamieson said last night that a person with eyes and eyelashes like yours had no right to live as you are living, with just an old woman to do things for you. She came down to see why you were here, but you wouldn't tell her. She can't understand any more than I can."

I kissed Kitty good-by, but I did not try to make her understand. I no longer try to make people understand things. Many of them can't. Kitty is a dear child, adorably blue-eyed and pink-cheeked, and possessed of an amount of worldly wisdom that is always amazing and at times distressing, but much that interests me has, so far, never interested her. Refusing to study, she has little education, but she has traveled a good deal, speaks excellent French, dances perfectly, dresses admirably, and has charming manners when she wishes. I love her very much, but I no longer feel it is my duty to live with her.

I am not living in Scarborough Square because I feel it is my duty to live here. Thank Heaven, I don't have to tell any one why I am here!

CHAPTER III

Kitty's mother had been dead only a year when Aunt Matilda, who had adopted me several years earlier on the death of my parents, married her father. I was twelve and Kitty eight when the marriage took place, and with canny care I tried to shield her from the severity of Aunt Matilda's system in rearing a child. I had been reared by it.

I owe much to Aunt Matilda. She sent me to good schools, to a good college; took me with her on most of her trips abroad, and at twenty presented me to society, but she never knew me, never in the least understood the hunger in my heart for what it was not in her power to give. I never told her there was hunger in my heart. I rarely told her of anything she could not see for herself.

In childhood I had learned the fixedness of her ideas, the rigidity of her type of mind, the relentlessness of her will; and that independence on my part survived was due to sturdy stubbornness, to a refusal to be dominated, and an incapacity for subjection. But this, too, she failed to understand.

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That I would not marry as she wished was a grievous blow to her. I had no desire to marry, and it was when refusing to do so that certain realizations came to me sharply, and all the more acutely, because I had so long been seemingly indifferent to them. On the morning following the night in which I had faced frankly undeniable facts I went to Aunt Matilda's room and told her I could no longer be dependent, told her of my purpose to earn my own living. I was strong, healthy, well educated. There was no reason why I should not do what other women were doing.

As I talked her amazement and indignation deepened into anger, and had I been a child I "would undoubtedly have been punished for my impertinence and audacity in daring to desire to go out into the world to earn what there was no necessity for my earning. Socially, a woman could be autocratic, I was told, but in all things else she should be dependent on the stronger sex.

"But there is no stronger-sex person for me to be dependent upon, even were I willing to depend," I said, and made effort to keep back what I must not say to her, but surely would have said to others. For years I had been the recipient of her bounty, the object of her care, and she still thought of me as something to be protected. That I should prefer to work, prefer to take my place in the world of women-workers, was beyond her grasp.

"Mr. Chesmond understood when I married him—it is part of our marriage contract—that you were to have the same advantages as his daughter. He has very willingly given you these. If you no longer care to accept his protection, you can marry. Opportunities such as come to few girls have come to you. A home of your own is yours for the taking. In my day—"

"But this is not your day!" I bit my lip. When Aunt Matilda's face got a certain shade of red and her breath became short and quick, I was uneasy. The doctor had warned us of the seriousness of her condition. She was pitifully afraid of death—it was the only thing she was afraid of—and death might come at any time. To prevent excitement there must be with her no discussion, and, as far as possible, no opposition to her will.

"Your day and mine are very far apart." I made effort to speak quietly. "Women no longer have to be adjuncts to men because they don't know how to be anything else. They can stand up now by themselves. Conditions have forced them to face life much more—"

"Face fiddlesticks!" Aunt Matilda's hands made an impatient gesture. "Women have no business doing what many of them are doing today. They are forgetting the place to which they were appointed by their Creator. But even if you were at liberty to carry out your silly ideas, what could you do? How could you earn your living? You play well, paint a little, read books that do you no good, and hardly enough of the new novels to discuss them. All this sociological stuff, those scientific things I see in your room, are

absurd for a woman to bother with. Men dislike women who think too much and know too much. You are well educated and clever enough, but what could you do if you were suddenly left without means of support?"

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"I don't know what I could do. It's what I want to find out. Half of my life has been spent in school and college, and during these years I was taught little that would be of practical service in case of need. I'd like to use part of my time trying to make educators understand they don't educate. For cultural purposes, for acquiring knowledge of facts, their system may be admirable, but for the pursuit of a happy livelihood—"

I stopped. Aunt Matilda was looking at me as if I were suffering from an attack of some kind. Marriage to her was the divinely arranged destiny for a woman, and she had neither patience nor sympathy with my refusal to accept the opportunity that was mine to fulfil the destiny of my sex and at the same time become the wife of the man she had long wished me to marry. The power of money was dear to her. She understood it well, and my failure to appreciate it properly was peculiarly exasperating to her. Discussion was useless. It never got farther than where it started. If I said that which I wanted much to say, it would merely mean hearing again what I did not want to hear. Concerning the pursuit of a happy livelihood we were not apt to agree.

For a half-minute longer I hesitated. Should I make the issue now or wait until there had been time for her to realize I meant what I said? Before I could speak she did that which I had never seen her do before. She burst into tears.

"You must never mention such a thing as this again." Her words came stumblingly and her usually firm and strong hands trembled badly. "With my health in its present condition I couldn't get on without you. You are all I have to really love, and I need you. Don't you see what you have done? You have made me ill. Ill!"

She was strangely upset and in her eyes was a confused and frightened look that was new to them, and quickly I went toward her, but she motioned me away.

"Give me my medicine, and don't ever speak of such a thing again—such a thing as you have just spoken of! You have always been beyond my comprehension."

She swallowed the medicine I brought her in nervous gulps, the tears running down her face as they might have done down a child's, but she would not let me do anything for her, insisting only that she wanted to be quiet. Seeing it was best to leave her, I went to my room and locked the door, and for hours I fought the hardest fight of my life.

The one weapon she knew she could use effectively, she had used. If she needed me I could not leave her, but her complete self-reliance made it difficult to feel that any one was necessary to her. I was indignant at the way she had treated me. I was not a child to be disposed of, and yet of my future she was disposing as though it were a thing that could be tied to a string, and untied at will. Were she well and strong, I would take matters in my own hands and make the break. Surely I could do something! I had no

earning capacity, but other women had made their way, and I could make mine. If she were perfectly well—

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But she was not well. Through those first hours, and through most of the hours of the night that followed, the knowledge of the insidious disease that was hers was the high, hard wall against which I struck at every turn of thought, at every possibility at which I grasped, and in the dawn of a new day I knew I must not go away.

It was not easy to surrender. Always my two selves are fighting and I wanted much to know more of life than I could know in the costly shelter, controlled by custom and convention, wherein I lived. I had long been looking through stained glass. I was restless to get out and see clearly, to know all sorts of people, all conditions of life, and the chance had seemed within my grasp—and now it must be given up.

There are times when I am heedless of results, when I am daring and audacious and count no cost, but that is only where I alone am concerned. When it comes to making decisions which affect others I am a coward. I lack the courage to have my own way at the expense of some one else; and though through the night I protested stormily, if inwardly, that I was not meant for gilded cages, but for contact, for encounter, I knew I should yield in the end.

The next day I told her I would not go away. She said nothing save she hardly thought I had entirely lost my senses, but the thing I am gladdest to remember since her death is the look that came into her eyes when I told her. For two years longer I lived with her, years for her of practical invalidism, and for me of opportunity to do for her what she had never permitted me to do before. Two weeks after Kitty's marriage she died suddenly, and at times I still shiver with the cold clamminess that came over me as I stood by her in her last sleep and realized my aloneness in the world. My parents had died in my early childhood. I had no brothers or sisters, no near relatives, save an uncle who lived abroad and some cousins here in town. Mr. Chesmond was very kind, but I could not continue to accept what he had willingly given his wife's adopted child, and Kitty no longer needed me. It is a fearful feeling, this sense of belonging to no one, of having no one belonging to you. Lest it overwhelm me, I went at once to work upon the house in Scarborough Square left me by Aunt Matilda, together with an annuity of a thousand dollars. Already it means much to me. For a while, at least, it is a haven, a shelter, a home. What it may prove—

I have been thinking much to-day of Aunt Matilda. Perhaps it is because Selwyn was here last night. She was afraid I would marry him.

CHAPTER IV

I did not tell Selwyn I was coming to Scarborough Square to live. I told no one. The day after I reached here I sent him a note, giving him my new address.

His answer was short and stiff. He was leaving town on a business trip and would see me on his return, he wrote, and as I read what was not written between what was I was glad he was going away. It would give him time to cool off. I am beyond Selwyn's comprehension. We should not be friends, we are so apart in many matters. But compatible people must find life dull. Selwyn and I are never dull.

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When he first called I was out, and last night he called again. As Mrs. Mundy, with his coat and hat, closed the door behind her, he held out his hand.

“Well?” He looked at me, but in his eyes was no smiling.

“Well?” I shook hands and smiled.

For a half-moment we said nothing, and frowningly he turned away. Always he radiated the security that comes of fixed position, a past without challenge, a future provided for; but tonight I was conscious only of the quiet excellence of his clothes, his physical well-being, the unescapableness of his eyes, and the cut of his chin. He is a most determined person. So am I—which perhaps accounts for our rather stormy friendship.

“Don’t you think I have a very nice home?” I took my seat in a corner of the big chintz-covered sofa in front of the fire and close to the long table with its lighted lamp and books and magazines, and motioned him to sit down. “I’m entirely fixed. I hope you like this room. I love it. I’ve never had one of my very own before.”

“It’s very pretty.”

Selwyn took his seat without looking around. He did not know whether it was pretty or not. He was not at all interested in the room.

For a moment he looked at me with eyes narrowed and his forehead ridged in tiny, perpendicular folds. Presently he leaned forward, his hands between his knees and fingers interlocked.

“How long do you propose to stay down here?” he asked.

“I really do not know. I thought you were going to congratulate me upon living the life I want to live.”

“I do. Until you get this thing out of your system—”

“What thing?” I, too, leaned forward. The tone of his voice made something in me flare. “What thing?” I repeated.

Selwyn’s shoulders shrugged slightly. He sat up, then leaned back, his hands in his pockets. “Why discuss it? You’ve long wanted to do something of this sort. Until it was done you would never be content. What you want to do, I doubt if you know yourself. Are you slumming? Uplifting?”

“I am not. I’m neither a slummer nor an uplifter. A slummer helps. I’m just looking on.” I threw the cushion behind me to the other end of the sofa. “I thought it might be

interesting to see for myself some of the causes which produce conditions. I've read a good deal, but one doesn't exactly sense things by reading. I want to see."

"And after you see?" Selwyn made an impatient movement with his hand. "A thousand years from now humanity may get results from scientific management in social organization, but most of your present-day methods are about as practical as trying to empty the ocean with a teaspoon or to pick a posy out of swamp grass."

"What do you know of present-day methods?"

"Very little. Beating the air doesn't interest me. Most people seem to forget the processes of nature; seem to imagine that certain things can be brought to pass quickly which can only be accomplished slowly. From the first struggle of the human race to stand upright, to articulate, to find food, to strike fire, to paddle in water, to wear covering, to forage, explore— What is the matter?"

Page 11

“Nothing.” I leaned back in the corner of the sofa, my hands, palms upward, in my lap, my eyes on them that he might not see their smiling. “I was just wondering what that had to do with certain present-day conditions, certain injustices and inequalities, certain —”

“It explains them to some extent. From the earliest days of dawning thought, from the first efforts at self-expression, humanity has grouped itself not only into families, tribes, communities, nations, or what you will, but in each of these divisions there have ever been subdivisions. Ignorance and knowledge, strength and weakness, power and incapacity, find their level, rise or fall according to their proper place. If you have any little dreams of making all human beings after one pattern—”

“I haven’t. It would be as uninteresting as impossible. But it is queer—”

“What is queer?” Selwyn stooped forward and broke a lump of coal from which sprang blazing reds and curling blues of flame. “Why did you stop?”

“I was thinking it was queer you should know so much of the history of the human race and so little of its life to-day. As a shrugger you stand off.”

“For the love of Heaven don’t let’s get on that!”

With swift movement he took a cigar from one pocket, a match-case from another. “May I smoke?” he asked, irritably, and as I nodded he struck a match and held it to the cigar in his mouth, then threw it in the fire. Presently he looked at me.

“Why didn’t you tell me you were coming here—for a while?”

“It would have meant more argument. You would not have approved.”

“I most assuredly would not. But that would have made no difference. My disapproval would not have prevented.”

“No. I should have come, of course. But I was tired, and useless discussion does no good. We would have said again the same old things we’ve said so often, and I didn’t want to say them or hear them. One of the reasons why I came down here was to talk with people who weren’t born with made-up minds, and who don’t have high walls around their homes.”

“There are times when I would like to put them around you! If you were mine I’d do it.”

“No, you wouldn’t. You know perfectly well what I would do with walls. That is the kind you think should be around a woman. But we won’t get on that, either. Were you ever in Scarborough Square before?”

Selwyn nodded and looked, not at me, but at the spirals of smoke from his cigar. “My grandfather used to live on the opposite side of the Square, and as a kid I was brought occasionally to see him. I barely remember him. He died thirty years ago.”

“It’s difficult to imagine this was once the fashionable part of the city, and that gorgeous parties and balls—” I sat upright and laughed. “I went to a party last night. It was a wonderful party.”

“You did what?”

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Selwyn's cigar was held suspended on its way to his lips. "Whose party? Where was it?"

"Two doors from here. The girl who gave it, or rather, to whom it was given, is named Bryce—Evelyn Bryce. She is a friend of Mrs. Mundy's and is a printer. I never knew a girl printer until I came down here."

Selwyn's look of amazed disapprobation had its usual effect. I hadn't intended to mention the party, and instantly I went into its details.

"All kinds of people were at it and every woman had on a dress which entirely covered her. When I was a child I adored a person named Wyman, who used to give performances in which all sorts of unexpected things happened. Last night was a sort of Wyman night."

"I did not know you were going to parties." Selwyn's tone was curt.

"I am not—to your sort." My face flushed. "I said this girl was a printer. I should have said she used to be. Two years ago she was caught in some machinery at the place where she worked and has never been able to stand up since. On her birthday her friends give her a party that she may have a bit of brightness. I went over to play that they might dance. She is fond of music and an old piano has recently been given her by—by some one interested in her."

For a moment there was silence, then throwing his cigar in the fire, Selwyn got up and stood looking down at me. In his eyes was strange worry and unrest.

"I beg your pardon." He bit his lips. "I've been pretty ragged of late and I'm always thoughtless. For two weeks I've seen no one—that is, no friend of yours or mine who hasn't asked me why you have done so inexplicable a thing as to leave everybody you know and go into a part of the town where you know nobody and where—"

"It's because I want to know all sorts of people." Something in Selwyn's face stopped me, and, getting up from the sofa, I went over to the window and raised it slightly. My heart was pounding. I could laugh away the questions of others and ignore their comments, but with Selwyn this would be impossible. An overwhelming sense of distance and separation came over me demoralizingly as I pretended to rearrange the curtain, and for a moment words would not come.

I knew, of course, that Selwyn had neither patience nor sympathy with my desire to know more of life than I could learn in the particular world into which I had been born, but the keener realization to-night made between us a wide and separating gulf, and I felt suddenly alone and uncertain, and dispirited and afraid.

In our love of books, of digging deep into certain subjects, of historic questing and speculative discussions we are closely sympathetic, but in many viewpoints we are as apart as the poles. Perhaps we will always be.

Selwyn by heritage and training and natural inclination is conventional and conservative. I am not. To walk in beaten tracks is not easy for me. I want to explore for myself. He thinks a woman has no business in by-paths. Our opposing beliefs do not make for placid friendship.

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It is Selwyn's indifference to life, to its problems and struggles and many-sidedness, that makes me at times impatient with him beyond restraint. In his profession he is successful. His ambition makes him work, but a weariness of things, of the unworthwhileness of human effort, the futility of striving, the emptiness of achievement, possesses him frequently, and in his dark days he pays the penalty of his points of view. If only he could see, could understand—.

I turned from the window and again sat down in my corner of the sofa and motioned him to take his seat.

"Don't let's argue to-night. I'm pretty tired and argument would do no good. We'd just say things we shouldn't. You said just now you doubted if you knew why I was here. I may not be sure of all my reasons, but one of them is, I wanted to get away from—there." My hand made motion in a vague direction intended for my former neighborhood.

"Do you find this section of the city a satisfactory change?" Selwyn's tone was ironic. He looked for a moment into the eyes I raised to his, then turned away and, hands in his pockets, began to walk up and down the room. When he spoke again his voice had changed.

"Don't mind anything I say to-night. I shouldn't have come. I'm a bit raw yet that you should have done this without telling me. You have a right to do as you choose, of course, only—. Besides getting away from your old life—were there other reasons?"

"Not very definite ones." Into my face came surge of color, and, turning, I cut off the light in the lamp behind me. "When one is in a parade one can't see what it looks like, very often doesn't understand where it is going. I want to see the one I was in, see from the sidewalk the kind of human beings who are in it, and what they are doing with their time and energies and opportunities and knowledge and preparedness and—oh, with all the things that make their position in life a more responsible one than—than the people's down here."

"Was it necessary to come to Scarborough Square to watch—your parade? One can stand off anywhere."

"But I don't want just to stand off. I want to see with the eyes of the people who look at us, the people who don't approve of us, though they envy us. We're so certain they're a hard lot to deal with, to do for, to make anything of—these people we don't know save from charity contact, perhaps,—that I've sometimes wondered if they ever despair of us, think we, too, are pretty hopeless and hard to—to wake up."

“And you imagine the opinions and conclusions of uneducated, untrained, unthinking people will give you light concerning the valuation of your class? It matters little what they think. They don’t think!”

“Do you know many of these people of whose mental machinery you are so sure?” I smiled in the eyes which would not smile into mine. “Know them personally, I mean?”

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"I do not." Selwyn's tone was irritable. "My business dealings with them have not inspired desire for a closer acquaintance. To get as much money as possible from the men who employ them and give in return as little work as they can, is the creed of most of them. You can do nothing with people like that. I know them better than you will ever know them."

"As a corporation attorney, yes. As a division of the human race, as working people, you know them. As beings much more like yourself than you imagine, you don't."

Selwyn again stopped. "You'd hardly expect me to find them congenial—the beings you refer to."

"I would not." I laughed. "They are generations removed from you in education and culture, in many of the things essential to you, but some of them see more clearly than you. Both need to understand you owe each other something. And how are you going to find out what it is, see from each other's point of view, unless you know each other better? Unless—"

"For the love of Heaven, get rid of such nonsense! That particular kind of sentiment has gone to seed. Every sane man recognizes certain obligations to his fellow-man, every normal one tries to pay them, but all this rot about bringing better relations to pass between masters and men through familiarity, through putting people in places they are not fitted to fill, is idle dreaming based on ignorance of human nature. To give a man what he doesn't earn is to do him an injury. Most men win the rewards they are entitled to. You're a visionary. You always have been—"

"And am always going to be! Life would hardly be endurable were it not for dreaming, hoping, believing. I could stand any loss better than that of my faith in humankind." I sat upright, my hands locked in my lap. "I'm not here to do things for the people you have so little patience with. I told you I wanted to see what sort of people we are. You're perfectly certain those who live in Scarborough Squares don't make a success of life. Do you think we do?"

Again Selwyn stopped, stared at me, but before he could answer a queer, curdling, smothered sound reached us faintly from the street below. A cry low, yet clear and anguished, followed. Then a fall and hurrying footsteps, and then silence. Selwyn sprang to the window and opened it.

"My God!" he said. His face was white. "What was that?"

CHAPTER V

I was out of the door before Selwyn had left the window. Quickly he followed me, however, and on the front porch, where Mrs. Mundy was already standing, we stood for a half-moment, looking up and down the street.

The small arc of light made by the corner gaslamp lessened but little the darkness of the seemingly deserted street, and for a while we could distinguish nothing save the shadows cast by the gaunt trees of the Square. Then I saw Selwyn start.

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"Go inside." He was his steady self again. "It is too cold out here. I think some one has been hurt. Go in."

I ran in Mrs. Mundy's room and to her wardrobe. Getting a coat and an old cape, I threw the latter over my shoulders, and, coming back to the porch, went down its steps and across the street to where Mrs. Mundy and Selwyn were bending over a young woman who stirred as they came up.

"Put this on." I threw the coat to Mrs. Mundy. "Who is it?"

"I don't know." Mrs. Mundy knelt on the ground. "Are you hurt?" she asked. "There—that's better." With skilful movement she helped the girl, who seemed dazed, to steady herself. As the latter sat up she put her hand to her face and brushed back her hair.

"Where am I? Has he gone?" Her face was dropped in her hands. "If he just would kill me and end it—end it!"

"Who hurt you?" Selwyn's voice was the quiet one that was ever his when something was to be done, and, leaning over her, he took the girl by the arm and lifted her to her feet. "Can you tell what has happened?" He looked at Mrs. Mundy. "It's too cold out here for her to stand—she's pretty faint still."

"Bring her over to me." Mrs. Mundy put her coat around the shivering girl, and, slipping her hand through one arm, motioned Selwyn to take hold of the other. "Run ahead," she nodded to me, "and fix up a dose of that aromatic spirits of ammonia what's on the second shelf of the closet in my bedroom. And pull the couch up to the fire."

Dazedly, and dragging her feet as if they were powerless to move, the girl entered the warm and cheerful room, but at her entrance understanding seemed to give her strength. With a shuddering, shivering, indrawing breath she drew back and leaned against the door-frame.

"I must go. I—I can't come in there. I'm better now. I must go."

"You can't go." Selwyn's voice was decisive. "You'll be all right presently, but you'll have to—to rest, first." Firmly she was led to the couch and pushed upon it. Taking the medicine from my hands, he held it to her lips. "Take this."

Hesitating, partly defiant, partly afraid, the girl raised her eyes to his. Then, with hand that shook badly, she took the glass and drank part of its contents, the rest was spilled in her lap.

"If it were prussic acid I'd be glad to drink it." The voice was bitter, and again the eyes, pale yet burning, were raised to his, and in them was what seemed frightened but guarded recognition. Quickly she dropped them and glanced around the room, as



though looking for escape, and again her hands made convulsive pressure, again she started to get up.

“I must go. I tell you, I must. I—I can’t stay here.”

“Very well.” Mrs. Mundy looked toward Selwyn and away from me. “When you’re steady you can go. Mr. Thorne will telephone for a cab and I will take you—home.”

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"Oh no!" The girl's face became the pallor that frightens, and on either side of her a hand was dug in the couch on which she was sitting. "I'm all right now. I don't want a cab. I just want to go, and by myself. Please let me go!"

The last words were lost in a sob, and coming close to her I sat beside her, and, putting my hand on her face, turned it slightly that I might better see the big, black bruise on her forehead, partly hidden by the loose, dark curls which fell across it. Her hair was short and thick and parted on the side, giving her a youthful, boyish look that was in odd contrast to the sudden terror in her eyes, and for the first time I saw how slight and frail she was, saw that about her which baffled and puzzled me, and which I could not analyze. She wore no hat, and the red scarf around her neck was the only touch of color in her otherwise dark dress. The lips of her large, sweet, sensuous mouth were as colorless as her face.

"You have been hurt." I put my hand on her trembling ones. "Did some one strike you or did you fall?"

She shook her head and drew her hands away. "I wasn't hurt. I—I slipped and fell and struck my head on the pavement. Don't let anybody telephone. I can go alone. Please—please let me go! I must go! I can't stay here."

"But you mustn't go alone." I turned to Selwyn. "Mr. Thorne will go with you. Do you live far from here?"

"Not very. It's close enough for me to go by myself. He mustn't go with me." The words came stumbingly, and again I saw the quick, frightened look she gave Selwyn, a look in which was indecision and appeal, as well as fear, and I saw, too, that his face flushed as he turned away.

With quick movement the girl got up. From her throat came a sound hysterical and choking, and, putting her hand to it, she looked first at me and then at Mrs. Mundy, but at Selwyn she did not look again. "I'm going. Thank you for letting me come in." Blindly she staggered to the door, her hands outstretched as if to feel what she could not see. At it she turned and in her face was that which keeps me awake at night, which haunts and hurts and seems to be crying to me to do something which I know not how to do.

"You poor child!" I started toward her. "You must not go alone." But before I could reach her she fell in a heap at the door, and as one dead she lay limp and white and piteously pretty on the floor.

CHAPTER VI

I don't understand Mrs. Mundy. She acts so queerly about the girl we found on the street last night. She put her to bed, after she had recovered from her fainting spell, on a cot in the room next to her own, but this morning she told me the girl had gone, and would tell me nothing else.

When Selwyn, who had picked her up and laid her on the couch, asked if he should not get a doctor, Mrs. Mundy had said no, and said it so positively that he offered to do nothing else. And then she thanked him and told him good night in such a way he understood it was best he Should go.

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At the front door he called me. With his back to it he held out his hands, took mine in his, crushed them in clasp so close they hurt.

“Danny,” he said, “why do you torment me so? You don’t know what you’re doing, living where such things are possible as have taken place tonight; where any time you may be —”

His voice broke, and in amazement I looked at him. Horror and fear were in his face.

“Do you think it is so awful a thing to see a poor little creature who has been hurt and needs help?” I drew my hands away. “You talk as if I were a child, Selwyn.”

“You are a child in your knowledge of—of certain phases of life. If I could only marry you tomorrow and take you away from here you should never know them!”

“Well, you can’t marry me to-morrow!” I made effort to laugh, but Selwyn’s face, his manner, frightened me. “I want to stay down here and—and stop being as ignorant as a child of things women should know. Behind the shelter of ignorance most women have already shirked too long.” I held out my hand, “If you stay a bit longer, Selwyn, I’ll say things I shouldn’t. Goodnight.”

With a shrug of his shoulders he went down the steps, and as I watched him, for a moment I felt tempted to call him back. It was not unusual for us to part indignant with each other. We invariably clashed, disagreed, and argued hotly if we got on certain subjects, but to-night I did not want him to leave angrily. Something had made me afraid and uncertain and uneasy. I could not define, could only feel it, and if Selwyn should fail me— Shivering, I stood in the doorway, and as I started to go in I noticed a young fellow across the street under a tree, who seemed to be watching the house. He was evidently nervous and moved restlessly in the small circle of the shadow cast by the bare branches. Selwyn apparently did not see him, and, crossing the street, was close upon him before he knew he was there. To my astonishment I saw him start and stop, saw him take the man by the arm.

“What in the name of Heaven—” In the still, cold air I could hear distinctly. “Why are you down here this time of night? Where are you going?”

If there was answer I could not hear it, but I could see the movement of the young man’s shoulders, could see him draw away and turn his back to Selwyn. Putting his hands in his pockets, he started toward the corner lighted by the flickering gas-jet, then turned and walked to the one on which there was no light. Had I known him, I could not have recognized him in the darkness, but he was evidently well known to Selwyn, for together they went down the street and out of sight. I wonder who he was.



For the first time since I came to Scarborough Square, Mrs. Mundy has not been to-day her chatty self. She does not seem to want to talk—that is of the girl I want to talk about. When, in my sitting-room this morning, I asked her the girl's name she said she did not know it, did not know where she lived, or what had happened to her, and at my look of incomprehension at her seeming disregard, she had turned away and busied herself in dusting the books on the well-filled table.

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"She was pretty nervous." Mrs. Mundy's usually cheerful voice was troubled. "To talk to her, ask her questions, would just have made her more so. They won't tell you anything if they can help it—girls like that—and I didn't try to make her tell. I gave her something to quiet her and stayed with her until she was asleep, but when I went in the room this morning she was gone. Bettina said she heard some one unbolt the door very softly, but she thought 'twas me."

"Do you suppose she lives in this neighborhood? Her people must have been very anxious."

Mrs. Mundy turned and looked at me queerly. She has tremendous admiration for what she calls my book-learning, and sees no incongruity in my ignorance of many things with which she is familiar. My ignorance, indeed, she thinks it her duty to conserve, and already we have had some differences of opinion as to what I should know and not know of the life about us. There are a good many things I have got to make Mrs. Mundy take in more definitely. She thinks of me still as a girl. I am not. I am a woman twenty-six years old.

"Half the girls you've seen coming home from work, half who live around the Square, haven't any people here. What they have is a room in somebody's house. Many are from the country or from small towns. Over sixteen thousand work in the factories alone. You don't suppose they all have homes, do you?—have some one who waits up for them at night, some one who cares when they come in?"

Before I could answer she stopped her dusting and, head on the side and hands on her hips, listened. "There's the iceman at the kitchen door," she said, relievedly. "I'll have to go and let him in."

It is this I cannot understand, this unusual evasiveness on Mrs. Mundy's part. She is the least mysterious of persons, is, indeed, as open as the day, and it is unlike her to act as she has done. From childhood I have known her. Up to the time of Aunt Matilda's marriage to Mr. Chesmond she made my clothes, and for years, in all times of domestic complications has been our dependence. When I decided to live for a while in the house once owned by my grandfather, I turned to her in confidence that she would care not only for my material needs, but that from her I could get what no one else could give me—an insight into scenes and situations commonly concealed from surface sight.

Her knowledge of life is wide and varied. With unfailing faith and cheerful courage and a habit of seeing the humorous side of tragic catastrophes, she has done her work among the sick and forsaken, with no appeal to others save a certain few; and only those who have been steadied by her strong hands, and heartened by her buoyant spirit, and fed from her scant store, have knowledge or understanding of what she means to the section of the city where the poor and lowly live. Bit by bit I am learning, but even yet it is difficult to make her tell me all she does, or how and when she does it.

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It was partly because of certain talks with her that I decided to come to Scarborough Square. If I could make but a few understand what she understands—so understand that the sending of a check would not sufficiently relieve them from obligation, from responsibility. But how can I make clear to others what is not clear to me?

It will not be Bettina's fault if I do not become acquainted with my new neighbors in Scarborough Square. By the calendar's accounting Bettina's years are only thirteen, but in shrewdness of penetration, in swiftness of conclusion, and in acceptance of the fact that most people are queer she is amazingly mature. Her readiness to go with me anywhere I wish to go is unfailing, but save on Saturdays and Sundays we can only pay our visits in the afternoon. It is late when she gets from school, and dark soon after we start, but with Bettina I am safe.

Outside and inside of the house our roles are reversed. Concerning my books and my pictures, concerning the people who ride in their own automobiles, who go to the theatre whenever they wish, to the fine churches with beautiful music and paid pews; the people who give parties and wear gorgeous clothes and eat mushrooms and terrapin—which she considered inexplicable taste—she will ask me countless questions; but outside of the house she becomes the teacher and I the taught. Just what I am learning she hardly understands. Much that is new to me is commonplace to her; and she does not dream that I often cannot sleep at night for remembering what the day has shown me. To-morrow we are going to see a Mrs. Gibbons, whose little boy, eleven years of age, is the head of his mother's house—the support of her family.

CHAPTER VII

Hands in her pockets, Bettina looked at me disappointedly. "It's very cold," she said. "Why don't you wear your fur coat?"

"I like this one better. It's warm and not so heavy."

"Your fur coat is the only one in Scarborough Square. A sure-enough fur one, I mean. There're plenty of imitations. Mrs. Crimm's got an imitation. You look awful grand in that fur coat—look like a princess person. Grannie says you don't want to seem different from the people down here. How are you going to help it?"

"I don't know. I mean—" It was silly that my face should flush before Bettina's unblinking scrutiny, but flush it did. "I don't want to seem different. People are much more alike than they imagine. If we didn't think so much of our differences—"

"Bound to think of them when they're right in your face. You don't suppose you're anything like Evie May Poore, do you? or Roberta Wicks, or Mrs. Clay Burt? Every time I see Evie May Poore I wish I was an Indian so I could tomahawk her hair. Most of her



money goes in hair and chewing-gum. Mr. Crimm says he thinks girls who dress like Roberta Wicks ought to be run in, but there ain't any law which lets him do it. Mr. Crimm's going to a big wedding to-night. Did you know it?"

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I shook my head. In my mouth were the pins with which my veil was to be fastened. Hands on my hat, I straightened the latter before putting on the veil.

"Well, he is. Funny, ain't it, that all these swells have to have a plain-clothes man at weddings so the people what come to 'em won't take any of the presents? That's Mr. Crimm's chief business nowadays, looking out for high-class crooks. He says you ain't as strong-colored as some the ladies he sees up-town, but he never did see a face with more sense and soul in it than what yours has got. At the last wedding he went to he told grannie some the ladies didn't have on clothes enough to wad a gun. Are you ready? It gets dark by five o'clock."

"I'm ready." Taking up my muff, I followed Bettina down the steps and into the street to the corner, on which was the little shop wherein were sold goldfish and canary-birds, and fox-terriers and white rabbits; and from there we turned in the direction which led to Mrs. Gibbons's. The day was cold and clear, but the ground was slippery with sleet, and, holding on to my arm, Bettina made valiant effort to pilot me aright.

As we walked she talked, and the names of the occupants of various houses passed were told to me, together with the particular kind of work in which they were engaged, and the amount of wages which were earned by different members of the household. The information given me had been gained from her schoolmates, and what at first had seemed appalling frankness and freedom, I soon learned was a community custom, and a comparison of earnings a favorite subject of discussion among children of all ages. Recess, it appears, is the usual time for an exchange of facts concerning family affairs.

"Myra Blunt, who sits in front of me, says she's going in the pickle-factory as soon as she's fourteen." Bettina slipped, but caught herself, and held my arm more firmly.

"She's our ashman's daughter, and she's got a mole right on the end of her nose. It's a little on one side, but it looks awful funny, and Jimmie Rice says she'll stay in that pickle-factory all her life if she don't have that mole taken off. A boy won't have a girl for a sweetheart if her nose has got a mole on it, will he? Myra is afraid it will hurt to have it come off. She's an awful coward. This is the place. This is Ninety-two."

Mrs. Gibbons's residence was one of several small and shabby houses which huddled together as if for protection, and as we went up the steps of the shaky porch a head from the second-story window was thrust out—a head wrapped in a red crocheted shawl.

"You-all want to see Mrs. Gibbons? Well, she ain't to home. That is, I don't think she is. She told me this morning she was going down to the 'firmary to get some medicine for that misery in her back what struck her yesterday. If she ain't to home, you-all kin come up here and rest yourself if you want to. It's awful cold, ain't it?"

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Before we could express our appreciation of the hospitality offered, the door at which we had knocked was opened cautiously, and at its aperture a head was seen. There was a moment's hesitancy and then the door opened more widely.

"Is this Mrs. Gibbons?"

Bettina asked the question, and at its answer called to the woman still leaning out of the upstairs window, "She's home." Then she introduced me.

"This is Miss Heath. Miss Dandridge Heath, Mrs. Gibbons; and I'm Bettina Woll. We've come to see you. Can we come in?"

Mrs. Gibbons, who had nodded imperceptibly in my direction as Bettina called my name, motioned limply toward a room on my right, and as I entered it I looked at her and saw at once that she, too, belonged to the unqualified and unfit. She must once have been a pretty woman, but her hair and eyes were now a dusty black, her skin the color of putty, and her mouth a drooping curve that gave to her face the expression of one who was about to cry. Life had apparently for some time been more than she was equal to, and, incapable of battling further with it, she radiated a helplessness that was pitiable and yet irritating. Thin and flat-chested, her uncorseted figure in its rusty black dress straightened for half a minute, then again it relaxed.

"Take a seat, won't you?" Her voice was as listless as her eyes. "It's warmer in the kitchen. Maybe you'd better come back there. My little girl's in there. She's sick."

As we turned to leave the room I glanced around it. The windows were down, the shutters closed, but by the light which came through the broken slats and cheap lace curtains, whose ends were spread expansively on the bare floor, I saw its furnishings. A bed, covered with a white spread and with pillow-shams embroidered in red cotton, was against the side of the wall facing the windows, and close to it was a table on which lay a switch of coarse black hair. A crepe-paper lambrequin decorated the mantel-shelf, whose ornaments were a cup and saucer, a shaving-set, and a pair of conch-shells; while between the windows was a wash-stand obviously kept for ornamental purposes, as there was no water in the pitcher and the basin was cracked. Pinned on the soft plastering of the walls were florid advertisements of various necessities and luxuries of life, together with highly colored Scripture texts, and over the mantel hung a crayon of the once head of the house. The room was cold and damp. The air in it had not been changed for some time, and as Mrs. Gibbons stopped and picked up the baby, who at the sound of voices had crawled into the room, I did not wonder at its croupy cough.

Down the dark and narrow passageway Bettina and I followed our hostess, and at its end I would have stumbled over a step had I not been warned in time. The noise made by a box overturned by Bettina gave the latter opportunity to give me one more injunction.

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“Don’t promise to do too much right off.” The whisper was uncomfortably clear. “She’s the kind who’s like a sifter. You have to be right hard with people like that— Take care! There’s another step!”

CHAPTER VIII

As we entered the kitchen, a tiny room with one window in it, I glanced around it as I had done at the front room, the two seeming to complete the suite occupied by Mrs. Gibbons. My survey was quick and cautious, but not too much so for mental noting of the conservation of time and space and labor represented by an arrangement of household effects I had never seen before. Health and comfort were the principal omissions.

In one corner of the room was a bed covered with a calico quilt of many colors, and under it a pallet, tucked away for convenience in the daytime, but obviously out at night. Close to the bed was a large stove in which a good fire was burning, and from the blue-and-white saucepan on the top came forth odor of a soup with which I was not familiar. The door of the oven was partly open, and in the latter could be seen a pan of heavy-looking biscuits which apparently awaited their devouring at any time that suited the desire of the devourer. Bettina looked at them and then at me, but she said nothing—that is, nothing out loud.

“Set down.” Mrs. Gibbons, the baby still in her arms, made effort to dust one of the two chairs in the room with the gingham apron she was wearing, and, after failing, motioned me to take it. The other one she pushed toward Bettina with her foot. On the bed was a little girl of six or seven, and as we took our seats a boy, who barely looked ten, came from behind a couple of wash-tubs in an opposite corner of the room and wiped his hands on a towel hanging from a hook in the wall. To ask something concerning this boy was the purpose of our visit.

“Speak to the lady, Jimmy. Anybody would think you didn’t have no manners! No, you can’t have your supper yet.”

Mrs. Gibbons waved her hand weakly at her son, who, smiling at us, had gone to a corner cupboard with perforated tins of diamond pattern in its doors, and taken therefrom a soup-plate and cup and saucer. Paying no attention to his mother’s reference to a delayed meal, he ladled out of the big saucepan, with a cracked cup, a plate of the steaming soup, and carried it carefully to an oilcloth-covered table, on which was a lamp and glass pitcher, some unwashed dishes left from the last meal, a broken doll, and a child’s shoe. Putting down the plate of soup, he came back to the stove and poured out a cup of feeble-looking coffee.

“Goin’ to be extras out to-night and I mightn’t get back till after ten.” Again his gay little smile lighted his thin face. “Ifen I don’t eat now I mightn’t eat at all. Have one?”

He poked a plate of the health-destroying biscuits at Bettina with a merry little movement, and bravely she took one, bravely made effort to eat it. “What’s your name?” I heard him ask her, and then I turned to Mrs. Gibbons.

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"It is about your little boy I've come to see you." I moved my chair as far as possible from the red-hot stove and opened my coat. "He is too young to be at work. He isn't twelve, is he?"

The indignation I had felt on hearing of Jimmy's bondage to a bench from seven in the morning to six in the evening, with an interval of an hour for lunch, was unaccountably disappearing. With helplessness and incapacity I was not ordinarily patient, and Mrs. Gibbons was an excellent example of both. Still—"He isn't twelve yet, is he?" I repeated.

Mrs. Gibbons pushed the little girl, who was trying to get out of the bed, back in it, and shifted the whimpering baby from one arm to the other. For a moment she hesitated, looked at me uncertainly.

"No 'm, he ain't but eleven, but I had to tell the mayor that signed the papers permitting of him to work, that he was twelve. The law don't let children work lessen they're twelve, and only then if their mother is a widow and 'ain't got nothing and nobody to do for her. I don't like to tell a story if I can help it, and them what don't know nothing 'bout how things is can't understand, and say we oughtn't to do it. They'd do it, too, ifen they had to. After his father died I had to take Jimmy out of school and put him to work. There wasn't nothing else to do."

"Has his father been dead long?" I moved still further from the stove. My question was unthinking. He couldn't have been dead long.

"In days and months it 'ain't been so long, but it's been awful long to me. 'Taint been more'n a year since they brought him home to me dead, and I been plum' no 'count ever since. This baby," she put the child in her arms on her lap and shook her knees in mechanical effort to still its cries, "this baby was born while its father was being buried, and when I took in my man was gone and wouldn't never come home no more, never give me his wages on Saturday nights, and wouldn't be here to do nothing for me and the children, seems like something inside me just give out. I reckon you 'ain't never had nothing to happen to you like that, have you?"

"No, I've never had anything like that to happen to me." The last remnant of indignation was vanishing. That is, against the helpless, incapable, worn-out woman who was Jimmy's mother. Against something else, something I could not place or define or call by name, it was rising stormily. "I know you need Jimmy's help," I said, after a moment, "but he is too young to work, too small."

"Came near not getting a job 'count of not being no bigger."

His mouth filled with half a biscuit, the boy nodded at me gleefully, then putting down his spoon, he dusted his hands and wiped them on the side of his trousers. "The first place

mother and me went to, they wouldn't take me 'cause the table where I'd had to work struck me right here." His hands swiped his throat just under his chin. "But the next place was all right. They had a boys' table and the bench was made high on purpose."

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“What is it you do?” I asked, and again my voice sounded strange. “Is it a box-factory you’re in?”

“Soap and pills.” Head thrown back, Jimmy drained the last drop of coffee from his cup, then scraped the latter with a tin spoon for its last bit of sugar. “We are pasters, our gang is. We paste the paper on the boxes. There’s a boy sits next to me what’s the fastest paster in town, but I’m going to beat him some day. I can paste almost as fast as he can now.”

“He could beat him now if he didn’t play so much.” In his mother’s voice was neither scolding nor complaint. “Jimmy always would play some from the time he was born. His boss says he’s the best worker he’s got ’cepting the boy who sits next to him, and if he’d just stay still all day—”

“Oh, can he play?” I made no apology for the interruption. The child was undersized and illy-nourished, and to let him work ten hours a day seemed a crime for which I, and all others who cared for children, were somehow responsible. But if he had a chance to play—

“When old Miss High-Spy goes out the room we play.” Jimmy gave his trousers a jerk and made effort to force connection between a button and a buttonhole belonging respectively to his upper and his lower garments. “She’s a regular old tale-teller, but soon as she’s out the room we get down from our bench and rush around and tag each other. Our benches ’ain’t got no backs to ’em, and if we didn’t get off sometimes we couldn’t sit up all day. The other fellows, the big ones, don’t tell on us. They make us put the windows down from the top when she’s out.”

“Do you mean you don’t have any air in the room?” My voice was unbelieving, and at something in my face Jimmy laughed.

“Not when we’re working. The wind might blow the little pieces of paper off the table and we’d lose time getting ’em, she says. Some the boys get so sick from the heat and the glue smell they heave up their breakfast and can’t eat nothing all day. I ’ain’t fainted but twice since I been there, but Alex Hobbs keels over once a week, anyhow. Used to frighten me at first when I saw him getting green-y, but I don’t mind it now.”

With a quick turn of his head Jimmy looked at a small clock on the shelf above the wash-tubs, and got up with even quicker movement. “I forgot about the wood, and the papers will be ready ’fore I can get there if I don’t hurry. Good-by to you all,” and, slamming the door behind him, he ran down the kitchen steps into the yard, where in a moment we heard him whistling as he chopped the wood that must be brought up for the morning.

It was not often Mrs. Gibbons had a listener who had never before heard of her hardships, and after explaining to me why Jimmy was at home at that time of the day, his presence being due not to trifling on his part, but to the half-time the factory was running, she gave herself up to the luxury of telling me in detail of her many misfortunes and of her inability to get through the winter unless additional help were given her.

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"Can't you work?" I asked. "If the children are put in a day nursery they would be well looked after, and you would probably be more comfortable in a good factory than here."

"A good factory!" The inflection in her voice was one of listless tolerance for my ignorance. "I don't reckon you ever worked in one. There ain't none of 'em good. Some's better than others, but when you get up at five o'clock on winter mornings and make the fire and melt the water, if it's frozen, to wash your face with, and—"

"Does it freeze in here?" Bettina, who had by effort restrained herself from taking part in the conversation, leaned forward and dug her hands deep in her lap. "Does it really freeze in this hot room?"

"It ain't hot in here at night. Last winter it froze 'most every night for a month. Mis' Cotter was boarding with me last winter, her and her little girl both. She's the lady what rents the room between the kitchen and the front room from me. She sews on carpets and the place she works at is right far from here. She warn't well last winter—some kind of misery is always on her—and she asked me to board her so she wouldn't have to do no cooking before she goes away in the morning and when she comes back at night."

"With a swift movement of her hand Mrs. Gibbons caught the little girl, who, behind her back, was making ready to slip off the bed and on the floor, but as she swung her again in place she kept up her talking, and by neither rise nor fall was the monotone of her voice broken.

"I had to get up at five so as to have breakfast in time, for I can't get the room warm and the things cooked in less'n an hour, and she has to leave here a little after six so as to take her little girl to the nursery before she goes to her place, and they ain't noways close together. The stars are shining when she goes out and they're shining when she comes in; that is, if the weather's good. She's been so wore out lately she's been taking her meals again with me, but I don't see much of her. She goes to bed the minute she's through supper."

Bettina twisted in her chair. "Do you eat and sleep in here, too?" she asked. Her eyes were on Mrs. Gibbons. Carefully she kept them from mine. "Do you always eat in here?"

"We eat in here all the time and sleep in here in winter, because there ain't but one fire. That goes out early, which is why the water freezes. Jimmy has to bring it up from the yard in buckets, and as the nurse-lady who comes down here says we must have fresh air in the room, being 'tis all four of us sleep in it, I keep the window open at night. I don't take no stock in all this fresh-air talk. 'Taint only the water what gets froze—"

“Why don’t you cover a bucketful of it with one of those tubs?” Again Bettina’s forefinger pointed. “That would keep the wind off and the water wouldn’t freeze if it was covered up.”

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"I never thought of that. Get back, Rosie!" Mrs. Gibbons made effort to catch her little daughter, but this time the child wriggled down from the foot of the bed and came toward me, hands behind her back, and stared up into my face.

"Whatcha name?"

I told her and asked hers, and without further preliminaries she came close to me and hunched her shoulders to be taken in my lap.

"We've got to go—we're bound to go, Miss Dandridge!" With a leap Bettina was out of her chair, and, catching the little girl by the hand, she drew her from me and dangled in front of her a once-silvered mesh-bag, took from it a penny, and gave it to her; then she turned to Mrs. Gibbons.

"We're awful glad we've seen you." Bettina nodded gravely to the woman on the bed. "And of course we won't tell anybody about Jimmy not being twelve yet; but Miss Heath wants him to go back to school, and she's coming to see you soon about it. We've got to go now."

In a manner I could not understand, Bettina, who had gotten up and was now standing behind Mrs. Gibbons, beckoned to me mysteriously, and, fearing the latter might become aware of her violent movements, I, too, got up and shook hands with my hostess.

"I will see you in a few days," I said. "There's no chance for Jimmy if he doesn't have some education. He ought to go back to school."

"Yes 'm, I know he ought, but he can't go." Jimmy's mother shook hands, limply. "The pickle-factory where I used to work is turning off hands every week, and I can't get nothing to do there. I don't know how to do nothing but pickles. Sometimes I gets a little sewing at home, but I ain't a sewer. The Charities sends me a basket of keep-life-in-you groceries every now and then, and the city gives me some coal and wood when there's enough to go round more than once, but I need Jimmy's money for the rent."

"If the rent were paid would you let him go back to school?"

"Yes 'm." The dull voice quickened not at all. "I'd be glad to let him go. I don't want him to work, but them that don't know how it is can't understand. You-all must come again. Good-by. Come back here, Rosie. You'll catch your death out there. Good-by."

In the open air, which felt good after the steaming heat of the bedroom-kitchen, Bettina and I walked for a few moments in silence, and then, slipping her arm in mine, she looked up at me with wise little eyes.

“Please excuse me for telling you, Miss Dandridge, but you’re new yet in the places you’ve been going to since you came to Scarborough Square, and you’ll have to be careful about taking the children on your lap and in your arms, if they’re babies. You love children, and you just naturally hold out your hands to them, but if you don’t know them very well, you’d better not. All of them ain’t healthy, and hardly any—”

Bettina stopped and, standing still, looked straight ahead of her at a man and a young woman crossing the street some little distance from us. Then she looked up at me. The man was Selwyn. The girl with him was the odd and elfish little creature who had been hurt in Scarborough Square and whom he had helped bring in to Mrs. Mundy.

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CHAPTER IX

Bettina, who had opened the door for Selwyn on his last visit, and who had informed me the next day that she had “shivered with trembles” because of his great difference to the men in Scarborough Square, for the second time looked up at me.

“What is he doing down here?” Her finger pointed in the direction of the man and woman just ahead of us. “What’s he talking to that girl for?”

I did not answer her at once. Amazement and unbelief were making my heart hot, and a flood of color burned my face. Of all men on earth, Selwyn was the last to find in this part of the town at this time of the evening, and as he bent his head to speak to the girl I noticed he was talking earnestly and using his hands in expressive gestures as he talked. Starting forward, I took a few steps and then stopped, sharply.

“I don’t know what he is doing down here. Certainly he is at liberty to come here just as we come.”

Bettina’s eyes strained in the darkness. “I can’t see her face. If we cross over we can catch up with them by the time they reach the corner where we could see her in the light.” The grip of my hand on her arm made her stop. “I mean—”

“You don’t know what you mean.”

It was silly, childish, unreasonable, that I should speak sharply to Bettina, and equally unreasonable that fear and horror and sickening suspicion should possess me, but possessed I was by sensations hitherto unexperienced, and for a moment the gaslight from the lamp on the opposite street corner wavered and circled in a confusing, bewildering way. Sudden revelations, sudden realizations, were unsteady me. Was Selwyn really some one I did not know? Was his life less single than I believed it? Hateful, ugly, disloyal questions surged tumultuously for a half-minute; then reason returned, and shame that I should insult him with doubt, cooled the flame in my face.

“It’s too late to go to the Binkers. We’d better go home. We’ll go there some other afternoon.”

I turned from Bettina’s amazed eyes. My tone of voice a moment before was still perplexing her, and unblinkingly she was searching my face. Hitherto her directness, her frankness of speech and use of words, had amused me, and I had permitted, perhaps, too great an exercise of her gift of comment; but applied personally it was a different matter.

“We’ll go to the corner and turn there,” I said. “That will be the nearest way home.”



"But don't you want to see who she is?" Scarborough Square customs were those most familiar to Bettina, and they exacted understanding of doubtful situations. "Don't you want to see what—what she looks like?"

"Why should I? Mr. Thorne knows many people I do not know." I moved toward the corner. "Come on. It's getting late."

"Gentlemen like him don't know girls like her. She lives down here somewhere, and he lives where you used to live. He couldn't be sweet on her, because—because he couldn't." She caught up with me. "He's yours, ain't he, Miss Danny? You'd better tell him—"

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I hated myself for looking across the street, but as I hurried on my eyes were following Selwyn and the girl, and when I saw the latter stop and bury her face in her hands, saw Selwyn say something to her, saw him turn in one direction and she in another, I, too, stopped; for a moment was unable to move.

We had reached the corner as Selwyn left the opposite one and came toward us. Head down, as if deeply thinking, he did not look up until close to us. Under the gaslight I waited, not knowing why, and Bettina being behind me, he thought I was alone when presently he saw me.

“Dandridge!” He stared as if stupefied with amazement. Lifting his hat mechanically, he came closer. “What in the name of Heaven are you doing here alone this time of night? Are you losing your mind?”

His entire absence of embarrassment, his usual disapproval of my behavior, his impatient anger, had an unlooked-for effect, and sudden relief and hot joy so surged over me that I laughed, a queer, nervous, choking little laugh.

“I am not alone. It is not yet six, and I have been to see a boy who is what you are not—the head of a house. I mean a house with a family in it. Have you, too, been visiting?”

His face flushed, and frowningly he turned away. “I had business down here. I had to come to it as it could not be brought to me. Where are you going?”

“Home.”

Bettina, who in some unaccountable way had managed to stay behind me, came forward and bowed as if to an audience. “I’ve been taking her to where she goes, Mr. Thorne, and grannie knows all the places. There ain’t one that’s got a disease in it, and Mr. Crimm would tell us if it wasn’t right to go to them. She don’t ever go anywhere by herself. She’s too new yet.”

Selwyn smiled grudgingly. Bettina’s fat and short little body made effort to stretch to protective requirements, and her keen eyes raised to his held them for a moment. Then she turned to me.

“Maybe he’d like to go to some of the homes we go to and see—”

“No. He doesn’t want to see.” I caught her hand and slipped it through my arm. “It’s much more comfortable not to see. One can sleep so much better. Are you going our way?” I turned to Selwyn. “If you are, we’d better start.”

For a full block we said nothing. Selwyn, biting the ends of his close-cut mustache, walked beside me, hands in his pockets and eyes straight ahead, and not until Bettina had twice asked him if he knew where Rowland Street was did he answer her.

“Rowland Street?” He turned abruptly, as if brought back to something far removed in thought. “What on earth do you know of Rowland Street?”

“Nothing—I never knew there was a street by that name until last week when I heard a girl talking to grannie, who said she lived on it. She did her hands, when she talked, just like the girl with you did.” Bettina twisted hers in imitative movements. “She didn’t keep her hands still a minute.”

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"Few girls do when they talk. They apparently prefer to use their hands to their brains." Selwyn's shoulders shrugged impatiently, then his teeth came together on his lip. Again he stared ahead and, save for Bettina's chatter, we walked in silence to Scarborough Square.

There had been few times in my life in which speech was impossible, but during the quarter of an hour it took us to reach home words would not come, and numbness possessed my body. A world of possibilities, a world I did not know, seemed suddenly revealing itself, and at its dark depths and sinister shadows I was frightened, and more than frightened. Conflicting and confusing emotions, a sense of outrage and revolt, were making me first hot and then cold, and distrust and suspicion and baffling helplessness were enveloping me beyond resistance. The happy ignorance and unconcern and indifference of my girlhood, my young womanhood, were vanishing before cruel and compelling verities, and that which, because of its ugliness, its offensiveness, its repulsiveness, I had wanted to know nothing about, I knew I would now be forced to face.

It was true what Mrs. Mundy and Aunt Matilda and Selwyn and even Kitty, four years younger than myself, had often told me, that in knowledge of certain phases of life I was unwarrantably lacking. Subjects that had seemingly interested other girls and other women had never interested me, and I took no part in their discussion. And now the protection of the past that had prevented understanding of sordid situations and polluting possibilities was being roughly torn away, and I was seeing that which not only stung and shocked and sickened, but I was seeing myself as one who after selfish sleep had been rudely waked.

Head and heart hot, I pushed back upleaping questions, forced down surging suspicion and tormenting fears, but all the while I was conscious that in the friendship that was mine and Selwyn's, the something that was more than friendship, a great gap had opened that was separating us. If he gave no explanation of his acquaintance with the girl he had just left, it must be because he could not. He knew my hatred of mystery, my insistence upon frankness between friends. Would he come in and talk as freely as he had ever done of whatever concerned him? Would he tell me—

As I opened the door with my latch-key Bettina bounded inside, and the light falling on Selwyn's face showed it white and worn. Something was greatly troubling him.

"Good night." He turned toward the steps without offering his hand. "It is useless to ask you not to go in such neighborhoods as you were in this evening, but if you knew what you were doing you would stay away."

"I know very well what I am doing. I am hardly so stubborn or wilful as you think. But if it is unwise for me to be in the neighborhood referred to, is it any less wise—for you?"

“Me?” The inflection in his voice was the eternal difference in a man’s and woman’s privileges. “It was not a question of wisdom—my being where you saw me. It was one of necessity. Moreover, a man can go where he pleases. A woman can’t. No purity of purpose can overcome the tyranny of convention.”

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“Convention!” My hands made impatient gesture. “It’s the drag-net of human effort, the shelter within which cowards run to cover. In its place it has purpose, but its place, for convenience sake, has been immensely magnified. And why is convention limited to women?”

It was childish—my outburst—and, ashamed of it, I started to go in, then turned and again looked at Selwyn. Into his face had come something I could not understand, something that involved our future friendship, and, frightened, I leaned against the iron railing of the little porch and gripped it with hands behind my back.

“Selwyn!” The words came unsteadily. “Have you nothing to say to me, Selwyn? Don’t you know that I know the girl with you to-night was the girl who—who we brought in here last night? If you knew her, why—”

Staring at me as if not understanding, Selwyn came closer. In his eyes was puzzled questioning, but as they held mine they filled with something of horror, and over his face, which had been white and worn, spread deep and crimson flush. “You don’t mean — God in heaven! Do you think the girl is anything to me?”

I did not answer, and, turning, he went down the steps and I into the house.

CHAPTER X

For the past ten days I have been a very restless person. Mrs. Mundy looks at me out of the corners of her kind and keen and cheery little eyes when she does not think I am noticing, but she asks me nothing. Mrs. Mundy is the wisest woman I know.

If only I could sleep! During the days I am busy, but I dread the long nights when questions crowd that, fight as I may, I cannot keep from asking. Selwyn is my friend. I never doubt a friend. But why does he not come to me? Why does he not make clear that which he must know is inexplicable to me?

I may never marry Selwyn, but certainly I shall marry no one else. How could we hope for happiness when we feel so differently toward much that is vital, when our attitude to life is as apart as the poles? When each thinks the other wrong in points of view and manner of living? Selwyn was born in a house with high walls around it. He likes its walls. He does not care for many to come in, and cares still less to go outside to others. Few people interest him. All sorts interest me. We are both selfish and stubborn, but both hate that which is not clean and clear, and save from his own lips I would not believe that in his life is aught of which he could not tell me.

I have never told him I loved him, never promised to marry him. To live in his high-walled house with its conventional customs, its age-dimmed portraits, its stiff furnishings, and shut-out sunshine, would stifle every cell in brain and lungs, and to



marry him would be to marry his house. I hate his house, hate the aloofness, the lack of sympathy it represents. Its proud past I can appreciate, but not its useless present. Save his brother Harrie, it is the one thing of his old life left Selwyn. At the death of his father he bought Harrie's interest and it is all his now. I would not ask him to live elsewhere, but I would choke and smother did I live in his house. And yet—

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Ten days have passed and I have neither seen nor heard from Selwyn.

I have often wondered, on waking winter mornings in my very warm bed, how it would feel to go out in the gray dawn of a new day and hurry off to work. Now I know.

For more than a week I have been up at five forty-five, and at six-thirty have been hurrying with Lucy Hobbs, who lives around the corner, to the overalls-factory, where she is a forewoman. It is dark and cold and raw at half-past six on a winter morning, and the sunrise is very different from what it is in summer.

Each morning as I started out with Lucy, and hurried down street after street, I watched the opening doors of the shabby, dull-looking houses we passed with keen interest. Ash-cans and garbage-pails were in front of many of them, and through unshuttered windows a child could occasionally be seen with its face pressed against the pane, waiting to wave good-by to some one who was leaving. Out of the doors of these houses came men and women and boys and girls, who hurried as we hurried, and with a word to some, a wave of her uplifted hand to others, a blank stare at others again, Lucy seemed leading a long procession. Around each corner and from every car that passed came more "Hands," and each morning when the factory was reached a crowd that jammed its entrance and extended half a block up and down the street was waiting for the opening of the door, out of which it would not come until darkness fell again.

For the first day or two I was noticed with indifference on the part of some, resentment on the part of others, but on the third day, as I took my place in the pushing, laughing, growling crowd that made its way up several flights of stairs to the big room where shabby clothes are changed for yet shabbier working ones, my good-mornings were greeted with less grudging acknowledgments, and now we are quite friendly, these "Hands" and I, and through their eyes I am seeing myself and others like me—seeing much and many things from an angle never used before.

They nodded to me less hesitatingly as the days went by, and at the noon hour, when I have my lunch with first one group and then another, I find them, on the whole, frank and outspoken, find they have as decided opinions concerning what they term people like that—which term is usually accompanied by a gesture in the direction where I once lived—as said people have concerning them, to whom, as a rule, they also refer in much the same manner and with the same words. With each group on either side of its separating gulf the conviction is firm that little is to be hoped for or expected from the other, and common qualities are forgotten in the realization of distinctive differences.

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"What's the most you ever made a week?" The girl who asked the question moved up for me to sit on the bench beside her, and, unwrapping a newspaper parcel, took from it a large cucumber pickle, a piece of cheese, a couple of biscuits, and half of a cocoanut pie, and laid them on a table in front of her. "Help yourself." She pushed the paper serving as tray and cloth toward me. "I ain't had much appetite lately. Hello, Mamie! Come over here and sit on our bench. What you got good for lunch? My stomach's turned back on pie. I'd give ten cents for a cup of coffee."

"Everywhere else but this old hothouse sells it for two cents a cup without, and three cents with." The girl called Mamie nodded to me and took her seat on the bench. "I don't like milk nohow, and I'd give the money glad for something hot in the middle of the day. Don't nothing do your insides as much good as something piping hot. Say—I saw Barker last night." Her voice lowered but little. "He and I are going to see 'Some Girl' at the Bijou next week. It's all make-up—his being sweet on Ceeley Bayne! That knock-kneed, slew-footed, pop-eyed Gracie Jones got that off. I'm going to get one them lace-and-chiffon waists at Plum's for \$2.98 if don't nobody get sick and need medicine between now and Wednesday. Seems like somebody's always sick at our house."

The question asked me had been forgotten, and, glad to escape the acknowledgment that I had never earned a dollar in my life, I got up on the plea that I must see a girl at the other end of the room, and walked across it. As I went I scanned each face I saw. Consciously or subconsciously I had been hoping for days that I would see a face which ever haunts me, a face I wanted to forget and could not forget. Everywhere I go, in factories or mills or shops or homes; in the streets, and at my windows, I am always wondering if I shall see her. She was very unhappy. Who is she? Why was Selwyn with her? It is my last thought at night, my first in the morning.

Yesterday I was at the box-factory where Jimmy Gibbons works. It is his last week there. On the fifteenth he starts again to school. Knowing the president of the company well, I asked that Jimmy should be my guide through the various departments, and permission was given. I wish Jimmy were mine.

"Miss High-Spy 'ain't got any love for on-lookers, and we'd better not stay in here long." Jimmy's voice was cautious, but his eyes merry, and, glancing in the direction of the sour and snappy person watching each movement of each worker, I agreed with him that it was not well to linger. The room was big and bare, its benches filled with white-faced workers, and the autocrat who presided over it seemed unconscious of its stifling, steamy heat and sickening smells of glue and paste. Going out into the hall, Jimmy and I went to a window, opened it, and gave our lungs a bath.

"What does she do it for? Is she crazy?"

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"Not asylum-crazy—mean-crazy." Jimmy's head nodded first negatively, then with affirmation. "She's come up from the beginning place, and used to be a fire-eater before she got to be boss of our bunch, and the men say people like that, people who ain't used to driving, drive harder than any other kind when they get the chance. She's a bully to the under ones, but the uppers—" Jimmy's eyes were lifted to mine and his lips made a whistling sound. "If Mr. Pritchard kicked her in the face, she'd lick the soles of his shoes when he was doing it, if she could. She wants to be boss of the room upstairs and Mr. Pritchard can put her where he pleases. If he don't do it, he'd better, the women say, 'count of her knowing more about him than he knows she knows. I don't know what 'tis, but I hate her. All of us hate her."

"Why doesn't some one speak to Mr. Johns? Certainly he can't know—"

"Yes 'm, he does. Joe Dickson and Bob Beazley told him once, and the next week they got a hand-out. High-Spy made Mr. Pritchard do it. Mr. Johns leaves those kinds of things to him. Swell folks like him 'ain't got time to look after folks like us. He's awful rich, ain't he?"

"He isn't poor. When are you going to have your lunch?" I looked at my watch. "Can't you go out and have it with me? I'll ask Mr. Johns. Come on, quick. I'll see the other rooms when I come back."

Jimmy shook his head. "I can't go. I ain't being docked 'count of being with you, because Mr. Pritchard sent me, but he wouldn't let me come back if I went out. I been sent down to him once to-day, and please 'm don't ask him, please 'm don't!"

In Jimmy's voice was something of terror, and his hands slipped in and out of his trousers' pockets with nervous, frightened movements. His usually merry little mouth with its pale lips quivered oddly, and in his eyes, as he turned away, were tears I could not understand.

I put my hand on his shoulder, lifted his face to mine. "What is it, Jimmy? What has happened that you don't want me to ask Mr. Johns to tell Mr. Pritchard you can go with me? Why are you afraid?"

"I ain't afraid. Yes 'm, I am. I—I've been docked once to-day. Please 'm don't ask Mr. Pritchard nothing! High-Spy makes him punish me whenever—"

"Punish you!" I straightened indignantly. "Why does he punish you? What right—"

"I don't mean licking. But he keeps me out of the room when I'm sent out, and docks me at the end of the week. Mother needs every cent. She's back in the rent. I was sent out to-day."

"But why? What were you doing?"

“Nothing—leastways I didn’t mean to. There wasn’t none of us sick this morning, and Billy Coons was acting down behind High-Spy’s back, and I tried not to laugh. She don’t let us laugh. But she said I did. I didn’t laugh—” Jimmy’s voice was protesting. “I just smiled and it—it busted.”

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"Is that why she made you go out of the room?" I turned away and looked out of the window lest the accident to Jimmy's smile be mine. "Is that why she sent you out?"

He nodded. "Mr. Pritchard kept me out an hour. Sometimes he lets me make it up at lunch. I was going to ask him to let me to-day, but—"

"I'm preventing. I'm glad of it! When are you going to eat your lunch?"

"I've done et it—" Jimmy's tongue moistened his lips. "I et it on my way here this morning. I got paid off last night and I took out five cents and gave the rest to mother, and this morning I bought a pie with it and et up every bite. It might have been hooked when I was out the room, so I'm glad I didn't save none. I got it at Heck's. He keeps the best pies in town for five cents. They're real fat."

I was paying little attention to Jimmy. At the open window I could see a young girl across the street with a baby in her arms. She had brought it from a small frame house with high steps leading to a sagging porch, in the door of which a large and kindly-faced woman was standing, arms folded and eyes watching the movements of the girl. As the latter lifted her head, on which was no hat, I leaned forward, my heart in my throat. The odd, eager young face, the boyish arrangement of the hair above it, the quick, bird-like movements of the slender body, had burned for days and nights in my brain, and I recognized her at once.

"Jimmy," I said, "come here." I drew him to the window with nervous haste, my fingers twitching, my breath unsteady. "Who is that girl with the baby? There she is, turning the corner. Look quick! Do you know her?"

Jimmy shook his head. "Never saw her. Can't see her now." He leaned far out the window, but the girl had disappeared, and the woman in the doorway had gone in and closed the door.

I must have said something, made some sort of sound, for Jimmy, turning from the window, looked at me uneasily, in his eyes distress and understanding.

"What's the matter, Miss Heath? You'd better sit down. Did the heat make you sick? You're—you're whiter than that wall."

CHAPTER XI

A sickness which Jimmy could not understand was indeed upon me, and unsteadily I leaned against the window-frame, looking at, but not seeing, him, and not until he spoke again did I remember I was not alone.

"Is it very bad? You look as if it hurts so. Wait a minute—I'll get you some water."



I caught him as he started to run down the hall, and drew him back. "I don't want any water. I am not sick." My head went up. "The smell of paste would make me ill if I stayed, however, and I'm not going to stay to-day. I'll come some other time. Run on and join the other boys. Tell your mother"—I seemed groping for words—"tell your mother I will see her before you start to school. Run on, Jimmy, and thank Mr. Pritchard for lending you to me. And laugh as much as you want to, Jimmy. Laugh all you can before—you can't!"

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Over the banister the child was leaning anxiously, watching me as I stumbled down the steps. At their foot I turned and waved my hand and laughed, an odd, faint, far-away laugh that seemed to come from some one else; and then I went into the street and found myself crossing it, impelled by surging impulse to know—

To know what? At the foot of the rickety stairs leading to the high porch from which I had seen the girl come I stopped. All I had been repressing, fighting, resisting for days past, had in a moment yielded to horror, and hurt that seemed past healing, and I was surrendering to what I should know was impossible. I must be mad!

With a shudder that was half a sob I turned away and walked down the street and into the one which would lead to Scarborough Square. As I walked my shoulders straightened. What was the matter with me? Was I becoming that which I loathed—a suspicious, spying person? I was insulting Selwyn. He knew I hated mystery, however, knew the right of explanation was mine, knew that I expected of any man who was my friend that his life should be as open as my life. If I had hurt him, angered him by my question when I last saw him, he had hurt, had angered me far more. For now I was angry. Did he imagine I was the sort of woman who accepted reticence with resignation? I was not.

At the corner Mr. Fogg was standing in the door of his little shop, holding a blue bottle up to the light and examining it with critical care. He had on his usual clothes of many colors, shabby from much wearing, but in his round, clean-shaven face, pink with health and inward cheer, was smiling serenity, and in his eyes a twinkle that yielded not to time or circumstance. His second-hand bookshelf, his canary-birds and white rabbits, his fox-terriers and goldfish are friends that never fail, and in them he has found content. His eagerness to chat occasionally with some one who cares, as he cares, for his beloved books, is not at times to be resisted, but I was in no mood to talk to-day. I wondered if I could hurry by.

“Good morning!” The blue bottle, half filled with water, in which a tiny bulb was floating, was waved toward me, and a shaggy white head nodded at me. “It’s a fine day, ain’t it?—a fine day for snow. Good and gray. I think we’ll have some flakes before night. Kinder feel like a boy again when it’s snowing. I don’t know yet which season I like best. Every one has got its glory. What you been up to to-day? Seeing some more things?”

I nodded. “I wish I could come in, but I can’t.” I shivered, though I was not cold. “I am going up-town.” A minute before I had no intention of going up-town, but to go indoors was suddenly impossible. Whatever was possessing me must be fought off alone. “I will bring you my copy of Men and Nations to-morrow. Keep it as long as you wish.”

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"Thank you, ma'am. Thank you hearty. I'll take good care of it. I suppose you haven't heard of the widow Robb? Her name's Patty, you know, and she's got a beau. He's named Cake. Luck plays tricks with love, don't it? Don't get caught in a snow-storm. You ain't"—his voice was anxious—"you ain't thinking of leaving us, are you? The girls down here are needing of you, needing sore. All of us are needing of you."

I shook my head. "Of course I'm not thinking of leaving you." I waved my hand in response to his wave of the bottle, and, not seeing where I went, I turned the corner and, head bent to keep out of my face the tiny particles of sleet and snow beginning to fall, walked for some distance before noticing where I was.

Much of my city, unknown to me a short while ago, was now familiar, but to much I was still a stranger, and presently I was wondering concerning the occupants of the houses I was passing. The shabby gentility and dull respectability of the latter was depressing, and to escape the radiation of their dreariness I turned into first one street and then another, and as I walked the girl with the boyish face walked with me, the face with its hunted fear. She had held the baby as if frightened, and when she turned the corner she was running. She was so young. Could the baby be hers? It must be hers. Nothing but a mother-face could have in it what hers had. Why was she afraid, and of what?

The streets were becoming rough and unpaved before I noticed I was nearing the city limits, and, cutting across afield, I got into the Avenue, toward the end of which was Selwyn's house. As I neared it my steps slowed. For years the Thorne property had been on the outskirts of the city, but progress had taken it in, and already houses, flagrantly modern and architecturally shameless, offered strong contrast to its perfect lines, its conscious dignity, its calm aloofness, and its stone walls which shielded it from gaping gaze and gave it privacy. The iron gates were closed, the shutters drawn, and from the place stillness that was oppressive radiated, a stillness that was ominous.

Pride was undoubtedly Selwyn's dominating characteristic. Pride in his name, in its unstained honor, in the heritage of his fathers; and in the presence of his house it seemed an ugly dream—the picture ever in my mind, the picture of Selwyn walking slowly with a young girl in the dark of a winter afternoon in a section of the city as removed from his as sunlight is removed from shadow. In his nature was nothing that could make such association imaginable. If no higher deterrent prevented, pride would protect him from doubtful situations. He was sensitive to higher deterrents, however, as sensitive as I.

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Passing the gates, on the stone columns of which the quaint, old-fashioned lamps of former days were still nightly lighted, I glanced through them at the snow-covered lawn and the square-built, lonely house, occupied now only by Selwyn and his younger brother Harrie, then again hurried on. The Avenue with its great width and unbroken length, its crystal-coated trees and handsome houses, was now deserted save for hurrying limousines and an occasional pedestrian; and safe in the fierceness of the snow, from encounter with old friends, I decided to walk home through the section of the city which was the only part I once knew well, and just as I decided I knocked into some one turning a corner as I approached it.

"Oh, Miss Heath!" The woman drew back. "The snow was so thick I didn't see you. Did I hurt you?"

"Not a bit." I wiped my face, damp with melted flakes which had brushed it. "What are you doing up here? You look as frozen as I feel. Have you got on overshoes?"

The woman shook her head. "I haven't got any. I wouldn't have come out, but I had to bring some work back to Mrs. Le Moyne. If she'd paid me I'd have bought a pair of rubbers. But she didn't pay me. She said she'd let me have the money next week."

"Next week! You need it this minute. How much does she owe you?"

"Four seventy-five for these last things, and four twenty-five for those I made last week. I don't know what I'm going to do." The woman's hands, cold and stiff, twisted nervously. "I don't reckon she's ever had to think about rent, or food, or fuel, or overshoes. People like that don't have to. I wish they did, sometimes."

"So do I. Come on; it's too cold to stop. We'll go down to Benson's and get something hot to warm us up. I forgot about lunch. Turn your coat-collar up—the snow is getting down your neck—and take my muff. I've got pockets and you haven't."

As we started off a large limousine with violets in the glass vases of its interior, upholstered in fawn-colored cloth, stopped just ahead of us, and a woman I did not know got out of it, followed by one I knew well. Fur coats entirely covered their dresses, and quickly the chauffeur opened an umbrella to protect their hats. As we passed I started to speak to Alice Herbert, but, turning her head, she gave me not even a blink of recognition. At first I did not understand; then I laughed.

"Who is that?" Mrs. Beck's voice was awed. "Ain't they grand? Do you know them?"

"No." I put my hands in the pockets of my long coat. "I used to know one of them, the feeble-minded one. We'd better go over to High Street and take a car to Benson's. The storm's getting worse. We'll have to hurry."

The street lamps were being lighted as we reached Scarborough Square, and at sight of the house, in the doorway of which Mrs. Mundy was standing, I hurried, impelled by impulse beyond defining. Mrs. Beck had left me at the corner, and as Mrs. Mundy closed the door behind me she followed me up the steps.

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"I've been that worried about you I couldn't set still long at a time, and Bettina's been up three times to see that your fire was burning all right. I knew you didn't have your umbrella or overshoes. It's a wonder you ain't froze stiff. I'll bring your tea right up."

"I've had tea, thank you." I held out first one foot and then the other to the blazing coals, and from the soles of my shoes came curling steam. "It's a wonderful storm. I'd like to walk ten miles in it. I don't know why you were worried. I'm all right."

"I know you are, but"—she poked the fire—"but I wish you wouldn't go so hard. For near two weeks you haven't stopped a minute. You can't stand going like that. I wish I'd known where to find you. Mr. Thorne was here this afternoon. He was very anxious to see you."

"Mr. who?" I turned sharply, then put my hands behind me to hide their sudden twisting. I was cold and tired, and the only human being in all the world I wanted to see was Selwyn. It was intolerable, this tormenting something that was separating us. "When was he here?" I asked, and leaned against the mantel.

"He came about three, but he waited half an hour. He didn't say much, but he was powerful put out about your not being home. He couldn't wait any longer, as he had to catch a train—the four-thirty, I think."

"Where was he going?" I sat down in the big wing-chair and the fingers of my hands interlaced. "Did he say where he was going?"

"He didn't mention the place, just said he had to go away and might be gone some time. He'll write, I reckon. He was awful disappointed at not seeing you. He asked me —" Mrs. Mundy, on her knees, unbuttoned my shoes and drew them off. "Your feet are near 'bout frozen, and no wonder. Your stockings are wet clean through, and I'm letting you sit here in them when I promised him I'd see you didn't kill yourself doing these very things. You just put your feet on the fender while I get some dry clothes. He says to me, says he: 'Mrs. Mundy, the one human being she gives no thought to is herself, and will you please take care of her? She don't understand'"—

"Oh, I do understand!" My voice was wearily protesting. "The one thing men don't want women to do is to understand. They want us to be sweet and pretty—and not understand. Selwyn talks as if I were a child. I am perfectly able to take care of myself."

"Maybe you are, but you don't do it—least-ways, not always. I promised him I wouldn't let you wear yourself out, and I promised him—"

"What?"

“That I wouldn’t let you go too far. He says you’ve lost your patience with people, specially women, who think it’s not their business to bother with things that—that aren’t nice, and you’re apt to go to the other extreme and forget how people talk.”

“About some things they don’t talk enough. Did—did he leave any message for me?”

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Again Mrs. Mundy shook her head. "I think he wanted to talk to you about something he couldn't send messages about."

CHAPTER XII

Selwyn has been gone two weeks. I have heard nothing from him. I do not even know where he is.

Yesterday, over the telephone, Kitty reproached me indignantly for not coming oftener to see her. Each week I try to take lunch or dinner with her, but there have been weeks when I could not see her, when I could not get away. Scarborough Square and the Avenue are not mixable, and just now Scarborough Square is taking all my time.

Daily new demands are being made upon me, new opportunities opening, new friendships being formed, and though my new friends are very interesting to me, I hardly think they would be to Kitty. I rarely speak of them to her.

Miss Hardy, the woman labor inspector for the state, a girl who had worked in various factories since she was twelve and who had gotten her education at a night school, where often she fell asleep at her desk, I find both entertaining and instructing, but Kitty would not care for her. She wears spectacles, and Kitty has an unyielding antipathy for women who wear spectacles. Neither would she care for Miss Bayne, another state employee, a clever, capable woman who is an expert in her line. It is her business to discover feeble-mindedness, to test school children, and inmates of institutions to which they have been sent, or of places to which they have gone because of incapacity or delinquency or sin of any sort; and nothing I have read in books has been so revealing concerning conditions that exist as her frank statements simply told.

In my sitting-room at Scarborough Square she comes in frequently for tea with me, and meets there Fannie Harris, the teacher of an open-air school for the tuberculosis children of our neighborhood; and Martha White, the district nurse for our particular section; meets Miss Hay, a probation officer of the Juvenile Court, and Loulie Hill, a girl from the country who had once gone wrong, and who is now trying to keep straight on five dollars a week made in the sewing-room of one of the city's hospitals. Bettie Flynn, who lives at the City Home because of epileptic fits, also comes in occasionally. Bettie is a friend of Mrs. Mundy. Owing to kinlessness and inability to care for herself, owing, also, to there being nowhere else to which she could go, she has been forced to enter the Home. Her caustic comments on its management are of a clear-cut variety. Bettie was born for a satirist and became an epileptic. The result at times is speech that is not guarded, a calling of things by names that are their own.

These and various others who are facing at short range realities of which I have long been personally ignorant, are taking me into new worlds, pumping streams of new

understandings, new outreaches, into my brain and heart, and life has become big and many-sided, and a thing not to be wasted. Myself of the old life I am seeing as I never saw before, seeing in a perspective that does not fill with pride.

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Last night I went to my first dinner-party since Aunt Matilda's death. In Kitty's car I watched with interest, on the way to her house, the long stretches of dingy streets, then cleaner ones, with their old and comfortable houses; the park, with its bare trees and shrubs, and finally the Avenue, with its smooth paving and pretentious homes, its hurrying cars of luxurious make, its air of conscious smartness. As contrast to my present home it interested greatly.

Kitty's house is very beautiful. She is that rare person who knows she does not know, and the house, bought for her by her father as a wedding-gift, she had put in the hands of proper authorities for its furnishings. It is not the sort of home I would care to have, but it is undeniably handsome, and undoubtedly Kitty understands the art of entertaining.

Her dinner-party was rather a large one, its honor guest an English writer whose books are unendurably dull; but any sort of lion is helpful in reducing social obligations, and for that purpose Kitty had captured him. She insisted on my coming, but begged me not to mention horrid things, like poor people and politics and babies who died from lack of intelligent care, but to talk books.

"So few of the others talk books, except novels, and he thinks most modern novels rotten," she had told me over the telephone. "So please come and splash out something about these foreign writers whose names I can't remember. Bergyson is one, I believe, and Brerr another, and France-Ana—Ana something France. He's a man. And there's another one. Mater. . . Yes, that's it. Maeterlinck. And listen: Wear that white crepe you wore at my wedding; it's frightfully plain, but all your other things are black. I don't see why you still wear black. Aunt Matilda hated it."

As I went up-stairs to take off my wraps I smiled at Kitty's instructions. In her room she hastily kissed me.

"Do hurry and come down. I'm so afraid he'll come before the others, and I might have to talk to him. Literary people are the limit, and this one, they say, is the worst kind. Billy refuses to leave his room until you go down; says he'd rather be sent to jail than left alone with him ten minutes. He met him at the club."

Holding me off, she surveyed me critically. "You look very well. That's a good-looking dress. It suits you. I believe you wear pearls and these untrimmed things just to bring out your hair and eyes. Nobody but you could do it."

Stopping her short, quick sentences, she leaned forward. "There he is, coming up the steps with Mr. Alexander. Come on; they're inside. We can go down now. By the way"—she pinned the orchids at her waist with unnecessary attention—"Selwyn got back yesterday. He will be here to-night. Dick Moran is sick, and Selwyn is taking his

place. At first he declined to come. For weeks he's been going nowhere, but he finally promised. Are you ready?"

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Without looking around she went out of the room, and without answering her I followed. I was conscious chiefly of a desire to get away, to do anything but meet Selwyn where each would have to play a part; but as I entered Kitty's drawing-room and later met her guests I crowded back all else but what was due her, spoke in turn to each, and then to Selwyn, as if between us there was no terrifying, unbridged gulf.

Kitty's dinners are perfect. I am ever amazed at the care and consideration she gives to their ordering. In art and letters she is not learned, but she is an expert in the management of household affairs, and her dinner invitations are rarely declined.

At the table, with its lilacs and valley-lilies, its soft lights and perfect appointments, were old friends of mine and new acquaintances of hers, and with the guest of honor I shared their curiosity. Very skilfully Kitty led the chatter into channels where the draught was light, and obediently I did my best to follow. There was much talk, but no conversation.

"Oh, Miss Heath!" A young girl opposite me leaned forward. "I've been so crazy to meet you. Some one told me that you'd gone in for slums. It must be so entrancing!"

I looked up. For a second Selwyn's eyes held mine and we both smiled, but before I could speak Kitty's lion turned toward me.

"Yes—I heard that, too." Fixing his black-rimmed glasses more firmly on his big and bulging nose, Mr. Garrott looked at me closely. "In my country slumming has become a fad with a—a certain type of restless women who have to make their living, I suppose. But I wouldn't fancy you were—"

"She isn't."

Jack Peebles, now happily married, blinked in my direction, signaled me to say nothing, then turned to the Englishman. "Miss Heath can do as she chooses, being Miss Heath, but the Turks are right. Women ought to be kept behind latticed windows, given a lute, and supplied with veils, and if they ask for anything else, they should be taken from the window."

"I don't agree with you." Mr. Garrott filled his fork with mushrooms and raised it to his mouth. "The Turks carry their restraint too far. Women should have more liberty than is given them in Turkey. They add color to life, add to its—"

"Uncertainties." Selwyn made effort to control the smile the others found uncontrollable. "In your country, now, the woman-question is interesting, exciting. There they do things, smash things, make a noise, keep you guessing. Over here their behavior is much less entertaining. Their attitude is one of investigation as well as demand. They have developed an unreasonable desire to know things; know why they are as they are; why they should continue to be what they have been. They are

preparing themselves by first-hand knowledge and information to tell what most of us do not want to hear.”

Selwyn’s eyes again for a moment held mine, and in my face I felt hot color creeping. Never before had he defended, even with satire, what he had told me a hundred times was folly on my part. He turned to Mr. Garrott.

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“Why on earth perfectly comfortable, supposedly Christian human beings should want personally to know anything about uncomfortable, unfit, under-paid ones—”

“Oh, but I think they ought to!” Again the pretty little creature in green chiffon nodded toward me. “But you won’t let Miss Heath have a chance to say anything! Some one told me such queer people came to see her. Factory-girls and working-women and—oh—all sorts of people like that. Is it really so, Miss Heath?”

“Very interesting people come to see me. They are undoubtedly of different sorts, but one of the illuminating discoveries of life is that human beings are amazingly alike. Veneering is a great help, of course. If you knew my friends you would find—”

“I’d love to know them. I always have liked queer people. I’ve been crazy to come and see you, but mother won’t let— I mean—”

“Mrs. Henderson says she met a young man when she went to see you who was the cleverest person she ever talked, to.” Gentle Annie Gaines was venturing to come to my help. “He seemed to know something of everything. She couldn’t remember his name.”

“It’s difficult to remember. He’s a Russian Jew. Schriotski, is his name.” At the head of the table I felt Kitty squirm, knew she was twisting her feet in fear and indignation. I turned to her English guest.

“I have another friend who will be so glad to know I have met you, Mr. Garrott. He is one of your most intelligent and intense admirers. He has read, I think, everything you’ve written.”

Absorbed in his salad, evidently new and to his liking, Mr. Garrott was not impressed by, or appreciative of, my attempt to follow Kitty’s instructions. With any reservations of my bad taste in talking shop I would have agreed, still, something was due Kitty. “He tells me”—I refused to be ignored—“that he keeps an advance order for everything you write; buys your books as soon as they are published.”

“Buys them!” With the only quick movement he had made, Mr. Garrott turned to me. “I’d like to meet him. I’m glad to know there’s somebody in America who buys and reads my books. Usually those who buy don’t read, and those who read don’t buy. But tell me—” Again the corners of his mouth drooped, and again his spectacles were adjusted. “Why did you go in for—for living in a run-down place and meeting such odds and ends as they say you meet? You’re not old enough for things of that kind. An ugly woman, uninteresting, unprovided for—she might take them up.” He stared at me as if for physical explanation of unreasonable peculiarities. “You believe, I fancy—”

“That a woman is capable of deciding for herself what she wants to do.”

Again Jack Peebles's near-sighted eyes blinked at me, but in his voice there was no longer chaffing. "She believes even more remarkable things than that. Believes if people, all sorts, knew one another better, understood one another better, there would be less injustice, less indifference, and greater friendship and regard. Rather an uncomfortable creed for those who don't want to know, who prefer—"

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"But you don't expect all grades of people to be friends? Surely you don't expect—"

I smiled. "No, I don't expect. So far I'm only hoping all people may, some day—be friendly."

Kitty was signaling frantically with her eyes, and in obedience I again performed as requested, for the third time turned to Mr. Garrott.

"I heard a most interesting discussion the other day concerning certain present-day French writers. I wonder if you agree with Bernard Shaw that Brieux is the greatest dramatist since Moliere, or if—"

"I never agree with Bernard Shaw."

Mr. Garrott frowned, and, taking up his wine-glass, drained it. Putting it down, he again stared at me. "I don't understand you. You don't look at all as I imagined you would."

At the foot of the table Billy was insisting upon the superiority of the links of the Hawthorne to those of the Essex club, and Kitty, at her end, was giving a lively account of a wedding-party she had come across at the station the evening before when seeing a friend off for her annual trip South, and at first one and then the other Mr. Garrott looked, as if not comprehending why, when he wished to speak, there should be chatter. Later, when again we were in the drawing-room, he continued to eye me speculatively, but he was permitted no opportunity to add to his inquiries; and when at last he was gone Kitty sat down, limp and worn at the strain she had been forced to endure.

"What business is it of his how you live and what you do?" she said, indignantly. "He's an old teapot, but you see now what I mean. I'm always having to explain you, to tell—"

"Don't do it. I'll forgive much, but not explaining. Your lion doesn't roar well, still, a lion is worth seeing—once." I turned to Selwyn. "I beg your pardon. Did you speak to me?"

"I asked if I could take you to Scarborough Square. I have a taxi here."

"Thank you, but I am spending the night with Kitty. I am not going back."

In astonishment Kitty looked at me, then turned away. I had told her I could not stay. I had not intended to stay, but I could not talk to Selwyn to-night. There would not be time and there was too much I wanted to say.

Selwyn's shoulders made shrug that was barely perceptible, and without offering his hand he said good night. In the hall I heard him speak to Kitty, then the closing of the door and the starting of the taxi, then silence.

Dawn was breaking when at last I slept.

CHAPTER XIII

I have not seen Selwyn since the night of Kitty's dinner-party. He has been back three days. If he wished to see me before he went away, why does he not come to see me now? Daily I determine I will let no thought of him come into my mind. The purposes for which I came to Scarborough Square will be defeated if I continue to think of this unimaginable happening that is with me day and night, this peculiar behavior of which he makes no explanation. I determine not to think, and thought is ever with me.

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I was silly, foolish, quixotic to hope that here, in this little world of workaday people, he might be brought to see that personal acquisition and advance is not enough to give life meaning, to justify what it exacts. I was foolish. We are more apart than when I came.

Mrs. Mundy, in her blue cotton dress, a band of embroidery in the neck of its close-fitting basque, and around her waist a long, white apron which reached beyond her ample hips to the middle of her back, lingered this morning, dust-cloth in hand, at the door of my sitting-room. There was something else she wanted to say.

"I'm mighty 'fraid little Gertie Archer is going to have what we used to call a galloping case." She went over to the window, where she felt the earth in its flower-box to see if it were moist. "She's a pretty child, and she was terrible anxious to go to one of them open-air schools on the roof, but there wasn't any room. It's too late now."

The upper ends of the dust-cloth were fitted together carefully, and, leaving the window, Mrs. Mundy went over to the door. "Do you reckon the women know, the women where you come from? And the other women, the rich, and the comfortable, and the plain ones who could help, too, if they were shown how—do you reckon they know?"

I looked up from the table where I had been straightening some magazines. "Know what?"

"About there not being schools enough for the children, and about boys and girls going wrong because of not being shown how to go right, and about—"

Mrs. Mundy sat down in a chair near the door. "Another thing I want to ask you is this: How did it come about that some men and women have found out they've got to know, and they've got to care, and they've got to help with things they didn't use to help with; and some 'ain't heard a sound, 'ain't seen a thing of what's going on around them?"

"Some people like being deaf and blind. But most people are willing to do their part if they only understand it. The trouble is in knowing how to go about things in the right way—the wise way. Women have had to stumble so long—

"They're natural stumblers—women are. That is, some of 'em. They're afraid to look where they're going. I don't like to lose heart in anything human, but I get low down in spirit when I see how don't-care so many women are. They're blind as bats when they don't want to see, and they've got a mighty satisfying way of soothing of themselves by saying some things ain't their business. That's devil's dope. Generally women who talk that way are the ones who call the most attention to the faults and failings of men. Considering men are men, I think they do wonderful. Mr. Guard says if women keep silent much longer the very stones will cry out."

"Mr. Guard? Is he the one you call the people's preacher?"

Mrs. Mundy nodded. "He preaches to them what won't go in a church. I reckon you've seen something about him in the papers. He used to have a church in a big city, but he gave it up. I don't think he thinks like the churches think, exactly, but he don't have any call to mention creeds and doctrines down here, and he just asks people plain out what kind of life they're living, not what they believe. I've been wanting for a long time for you-all to know each other."

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"I'd like very much to know him. Ask him to come to see me."

"He don't go to see people unless they need him. I've been wanting him for weeks to come to supper with Bettina and me, but he's that busy he hasn't had a night free to do it. When he does have one, would you mind coming down and taking supper with us instead of my sending yours up as usual? I'd be awful proud to have you."

"Of course I'll come. I'd love to. Can't you get him for Friday evening? I have no engagement for Friday—"

"It's this minute I'll try." Mrs. Mundy got up with activity. "You two were meant to know each other. Both of you have your own way of doing things, and you'll have a lot to talk about. You'll like him and he'll like you. I'll let you know if he can come as soon as I find out." Closing the door behind her, she left me alone.

Taking the morning paper to the window, I drew my chair close to it, pushing back the curtains that I might have all possible light as I read. It was again snowing, and the grayness of the sky and atmosphere was reflected in the room, notwithstanding the leaping flames of the open fire, and after a while I put the paper aside and looked out of the window.

Each twig and branch of the trees and shrubs of the snow-covered Square was bent and twisted in fantastic shape by its coating of sleet, and the usual shabbiness of the little park was glorified with shining wonder; and under its spell, for the moment, I forgot all else. Here and there a squirrel hopped cautiously from tree to tree, now standing on its branches and nibbling a nut dug from its hiding-place, now scurrying off to hide it again, and as I watched the cautious cocking of their heads I laughed aloud, and the sound recalled me to the waste I was making of time.

"This isn't writing my letters, and they must go off on the afternoon mail." Getting up, I was about to turn from the window when a man and a young woman coming across the Square caught my attention and, hardly knowing why, I looked at them intently. Something about the man was familiar. He was barely medium height, and singularly slender, and though his head was bent that he might better hear the girl who was talking, I was sure I had seen him before. The girl I had never seen. She was dragging slowly, as if each step was forced, and, putting her handkerchief close to her mouth, she began to cough.

For a moment they stood still and I saw the girl had on low shoes and a shabby coat which had once been showy. On one side of her hat was a red bird, battered and bruised, and at this comic effort at dressiness, which poor people cling to with such pathetic persistence, I smiled, and then in alarm leaned closer to the window.



They had begun their walk again, and were now at the end of the path opening on to the pavement. I could see them clearly, and instinctively my hands went out as if to catch her, for the girl had fallen forward, and on the snow a tiny stream of red was dripping from her mouth. Quickly the man caught her and put his handkerchief to her lips, and with equal swiftness he looked around. He could not lay her on the snow, but she could no longer stand. The fear in his face, the whiteness of hers, were plainly visible. I raised the window.

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"Bring her over here," I called. "I'll come down and help you."

In a flash I was out of the room and down the steps. Mrs. Mundy, who had heard my hurried running, followed me to the door. "What is it?" she asked. "What's the matter, Miss Dandridge?"

Opening the front door, I started down the steps, but already the man, with the girl in his arms, was coming up them. "Go back," he said, quietly, though his breath was quick and uneven. "Go back. You'll get your feet wet."

With a swift movement Mrs. Mundy pushed me aside. "Mr. Guard?" Her voice was questioning, uncertain; then she held out her arms. "The poor child! Give her to me. Who is it? Why, it's—it's Lillie Pierce!"

"Yes." The man's voice was low, and with a movement of his head his hat fell on the floor. "It's Lillie Pierce. She has fainted. Where shall I take her?"

"In here." Opening a door at the end of the hall, Mrs. Mundy motioned Mr. Guard to enter. From the girl's mouth the blood was still dripping, and on the collar of her coat was a big round splotch of red.

"No," I said. "Bring her up-stairs. There's a room all fixed, and you have so much to do." I put my hand on Mrs. Mundy's arm. "I can take care of her. Can't we take her up-stairs?"

A swift look passed between Mrs. Mundy and Mr. Guard. "No." The latter shook his head. "It is better for her to be down here." Going inside of the little room, he laid the girl on a cot at the foot of the bed, then turned to me. "Get a doctor. Call Chester 4273 and tell Carson, if he's there, to come at once. If you can find her, get Miss White also."

I turned to leave the room, but not before I saw Mrs. Mundy and Mr. Guard at work on the girl, and already her hat and coat were off, and warm covering was being tucked around her. Mrs. Mundy knew what to do, and with feet that hardly touched the steps I was at the telephone and calling the number that had been given me. I was frightened and impatient at the slowness of Central. "For Heaven's sake, hurry!" I said. "Some one is ill. Ring loud!"

Dr. Carson was in. He would come at once. Miss White was out.

"Where is she?" I asked. "Where can I get her?"

I was told where she might be found, and, changing my slippers for shoes, and putting on my coat and hat, I came down ready to go out. At the door of the room where they had taken the girl I stopped. She was now quite conscious, and with no pillow under her head she was staring up at the ceiling. Blood was no longer on her lips, but a

curious smile was on them. It must have been this gasping, faintly scornful smile that startled me. It seemed mocking what had been done too late.

“I am going for Miss White.” I looked at Mr. Guard. “She is at the Bostrows’. The doctor—”

As I spoke he came in, a big man, careless in dress and caustic in speech, but a man to be trusted. I slipped out and in a few minutes had found Martha White, and quickly we walked back to Scarborough Square.

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"It's well you came when you did." She bent her head to keep the swirling snowflakes from her face. Martha is fat and short and rapid walking is difficult. "I was just about to leave for the other end of town to see a typhoid case of Miss Wyatt's. She's young and gets frightened easily, and I promised I'd come some time to-day, though it's out of my district. Who is this girl I'm going to see?"

"I don't know. I heard Mr. Guard and Mrs. Mundy call her Lillie Pierce. They seemed to know her. I never saw her before."

"Never heard of her." Miss White, who had been district nursing for fourteen years, made effort to recall the name. "She had a hemorrhage, you say?"

She did not wait for an answer, but went up the steps ahead of me, and envy filled me as I followed her into the room where she was to find her patient. Professionally Miss White was one person, socially another. Off duty she was slow and shy and consciously awkward. In the sick-room she was transformed. Quiet, cool, steady, alert, she knew what to do and how to do it. With a word to the others, her coat and hat were off and she was standing by the bed, and again I was humiliated that I knew how to do so little, was of so little worth.

Between the doctor and herself was some talk. Directions were given and statements made, and then the doctor came to the door where I was standing. For a half-moment he looked me over, his near-sighted eyes almost closing in their squint.

"I knew your father. A very unusual man." He held out his hand. "You're like him, got his expression, and, I'm told, the same disregard of what people think. That"—he jerked his thumb over his shoulder—"is a side of life you've never seen before. It's a side men make and women permit. Good morning." Before I could answer he was gone.

Close to the cot Mrs. Mundy and Miss White were still standing. The latter slipped her hand under the covering and drew out the hot-water bag. "This has cooled," she said. "Where can I get hot water?"

Mrs. Mundy pointed to the bath-room, then turned, and together they left the room. The girl on the cot was seemingly asleep.

As they went out the man, who was standing by the mantel, came toward me. "I am David Guard," he said. "I have not thanked you for letting me bring her in. Had there been anywhere else to take her, I would not have brought her here. I met her at the other end of the Square. We had been standing for some while, talking. There was no place to which we could go to talk, and, fearing she would get too cold, we had moved on. Last month she tried to take her life. This morning she was telling me she could hold out no longer. There was no way out of it but death."

“Who is she?”

Before he could answer I understood. Shivering, I turned away, then I came back.

“Will you come to my sitting-room, Mr. Guard? Can we not talk as human beings who are trying to find the right way to—to help wrong things?”

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CHAPTER XIV

A moment later we were up-stairs. "I don't know why I am so cold." My hands, not yet steady, were held out to the leaping flames. "Usually I love a snow-storm, but to-day—"

"They tell me you rarely have such weather as we have had of late. Personally I like it, but to many it means anything but pleasure. Is this the chair you prefer?"

At my nod he pushed a low rocker closer to the fire and placed a foot-stool properly. Drawing up the wing-chair he sat down and looked around the room. As the light fell on him I noticed the olive, almost swarthy, coloring of his skin, his deep-sunk eyes with their changing expressions of gravity and humor, of tolerance and intolerance, and I knew he was the sort of man one could talk to on any subject and not be misunderstood. His hair was slightly gray, and frequently his well-shaped hand would brush back a long lock that fell across his temple. His clothes were not of a clerical cut, and evidently had seen good service; and that he gave little attention to personal details was evidenced by his cravat, which was midway of his collar, and his collar of a loose, ill-fitting kind.

About him was something intensely earnest, intensely eager and alert, and, watching him, I realized he belonged to that little group which through the ages has dared to differ with accepted order; and for his daring he had suffered, as all must suffer who feel as well as think.

"You don't mind," the smile on his face was whimsical, "if I take a good draught of this, do you? It's been long since I've seen just this sort of thing." His eyes were on a picture between two windows. "Out of Denmark one rarely sees anything of Skovgaard's. That Filipinno Lippi is excellent, also. At the Hermitage in St. Petersburg I tried to get a copy like that"—he nodded at Rembrandt's picture of himself—"but there was none to be had. Did you get yours there?"

"Four years ago. I also got that photograph of Houdon's Voltaire there."

He looked in the direction to which I pointed, and, getting up, went over to first one picture and then another, and studied them closely. A bit of bronze, a statuette or two, an altar-piece, a chalice, a flagon, a paten, a censer, and an ikon held his attention, one after the other, and again he turned to me.

"These are very interesting. Is it as one of the faithful you collect?" A smile which strangely lighted his face swept over it.

"Oh no!" I shook my head. "The faithful would find me a most disturbing person. I ask too many questions." My hand made movement in the direction of the bookshelves around the four sides of the room, on the tops of which were oddly assorted little

remembrances of days of travel. "A study of such things is a study of religious expression at different periods and among different peoples. They've always interested me."

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"They interest me, also." Mr. Guard stood before the ikon, looked long upon it before coming back to the fire and again sitting down. For a moment he gazed into it as if forgetting where he was, then he leaned back in his chair and turned to me.

"A collection of examples of ecclesiastical art, of religious ideas embodied in objects used for purposes of worship, is interesting—yes—but a collection of re-actions against what they fail to represent would be more so, could they be collected."

"They have been—haven't they? In the lives of those who dare to differ, to break from heritage and tradition, much has been collected and transmitted. The effect of re-actions is what counts, I suppose."

"Their inevitability is what people do not seem to understand." Leaning forward, he again looked into the fire, his hands between his knees. "The teachings of Christ having been twisted into a system of theology, and the Church into an organization based on dogma and doctrine, re-action is unescapable. However, we won't get on that." Again he straightened. "Was it re-action that brought you to Scarborough Square? I beg your pardon! I have no right to ask. There was something you wished to ask me, I believe."

For a moment there was silence, broken only by the flames of the fire, which spluttered and flared and made soft, whispering sounds, while on the window-panes the snow, now turning into sleet, tapped as if with tiny fingers, and my heart began to beat queerly.

I did not know how to ask him what I wanted to ask. There was much he could tell me, much I wished to hear from a man's standpoint, but how to make him understand was difficult. He had faced life frankly, knew what was subterfuge, what sincere, and the restrictions of custom and convention no longer handicapped him. Between sympathy and sentimentality he had found the right distinction, and his judgment and emotions had learned to work together. My judgment and emotions were yet untrained.

"The girl down-stairs," I began. "You and Mrs. Mundy seem to know her. If she belongs, as I imagine, to the world down there," my hand made motion behind me, "Mrs. Mundy will think I can do nothing. But cannot somebody do something? Must things always go on the same way?"

"No. They will not always go on the same way. They will continue so to go, however, until women—good women—understand they must chiefly bring about the change. For centuries women have been cowards, been ignorant of what they should know, been silent when they should speak. They prefer to be—"

"White roses! But white roses do not necessarily live in hot-houses." I pushed my chair farther from the fire. "That is one of the reasons I am here. I want to know where women fail."

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He looked up. "One does not often find a woman willing to know. Behind the confusion of such terms as ignorance and innocence most women continue their irresponsibility in certain directions. They have accepted man's decree that certain evils, having always existed, must always exist, and they have made little effort to test the truth of the assertion. Lillie Pierce and the women of her world are largely the product of the attitude of good women toward them. To the sin of men good women shut their eyes, pretend they do not know. They do not want to know."

"They not only do not want to know, themselves—that is, many of them—but they would keep others from knowing. Perhaps it is natural. So many things have happened to life in the past few years that even clever, able women are still bewildered, still uncertain what is right to do. Life can never be again what it once was, and still, most of us are trying to live a new thing in an old way. We have so long been purposely kept ignorant, so long not permitted to have opinions that count, so long been told our work is elsewhere, that cowardice and indifference, the fear of inability to deal with new conditions, new obligations, new responsibilities, still holds us back. I get impatient, indignant, and then I realize—"

David Guard laughed. "That many are still in the child class?" His head tossed back the long lock of hair that fell over his forehead. "It is true, but certainly you do not think because I see the backwardness, the blindness of some women, I do not see the forwardness, the vision of others? Men have hardly guessed as yet that it is chiefly due to women that the world is now asking questions it has never asked before, beginning to look life in the face where once it blinked at it. Because of what women have suggested, urged, insisted on, and worked for, the social conscience all over the earth has been aroused, social legislation enacted, and social dreams stand chance of coming true. Certain fields they have barely entered yet, however. It is easy to understand why. When they realize what is required of them, they will not hold back. But as yet, among the women you know, how many give a thought to Lillie Pierce's world, to the causes and conditions which make her and her kind?"

I shook my head. "I do not know. I've never heard her world discussed."

"I suppose not. In this entire city there are few women who think of girls like Lillie Pierce, or care to learn the truth concerning them; care enough to see that though they went unto dogs, unto dogs they need not return if they wish to get away. Most people, both men and women, imagine such girls like their hideous life; that they entered it from deliberate choice. Out of a hundred there may be a dozen who so chose, but each of the others has her story, in many instances a story that would shame all men because of man." He glanced at the clock and got up quickly.

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"I'm sorry, but I've got to go. I'd entirely forgotten an engagement I'm compelled to fill. May I come again?" He held out his hand. "I've heard about you, of course. I've wanted to know you. There's much I'd like to talk to you about. When you leave Scarborough Square and go back into your world, you can tell it many things it should know. Some day it will understand." Abruptly he turned and left the room.

CHAPTER XV

The girl down-stairs, the girl named Lillie Pierce, was taken on the back porch this morning, and for the first time Mrs. Mundy left me alone with her.

"When the snow's gone and the sun shines, the cot can be rolled out, I told the doctor," Mrs. Mundy tucked the covering closely around the shrinking figure, "but chill and dampness ain't friends to feeble folks, and there's plenty of fresh air without going outdoors. It's hard to make even smart folks like doctors get more 'n one idea at a time in their heads, and in remembering benefits, they forget dangers. Are you ready, child, for a whiff of sunshine? It's come at last, the sun has."

The girl nodded indifferently, but as the cot was pushed into the porch I saw her lips quiver, saw her teeth bitten into them to hide their quivering, and I nodded to Mrs. Mundy to go inside, and I, too, left her for a moment and went down the steps to the little garden being made ready for the coming of spring. Around the high fence vines had been planted, a trellis or two put against the porch for roses and clematis, and close to the gate an apple-tree, twisted and gnarled, gave promise of blossoms, if not of fruit. Already I loved the garden which was to be.

"Violets are to be here and tulips there," I said, under my breath, and wondered if Lillie were herself again, if I could not go back. "A row of snowdrops and bleeding-hearts would look lovely there—" Something green and growing in a sheltered corner near the house caught my eye, and stooping, I pulled the little blossom, and went up the steps to Lillie's cot and gave it to her.

Eagerly she held out her hands and the silence of days was broken. The bitterness that had filled her eyes, the scorn that had drawn her thin lips into forbidding curves, the mask of control which had exhausted her strength, yielded at the sight of a little brown-and-yellow flower, and with a cry she kissed it, pressed it to her face.

"It used to grow, a long bed of it, close to the kitchen wall where it was warm, and where it bloomed before anything else." The words came stumblingly. "Mother loved it best of all her flowers; she had all sorts in her garden."

With a quick turn of her head she looked at me, in her face horror, in her eyes tumultuous pain, then threw the flower from her with a wild movement, as if her touch had blighted it. “Why don’t you let me die!” she cried. “Oh, why don’t you let me die!”

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I drew a chair close to the cot and sat down by it. For a while I said nothing. Things long locked within her, long held back, were struggling for utterance. In the days she had been with us her silence had been unbroken, but gradually something bitter and rebellious had died out of her face, and into it had come a haunted, hunted look, and yet she would not talk. Until she was ready to speak we knew it was best to say nothing to her of days that were past, or of those that were to come.

Mrs. Mundy had known her before she came to Scarborough Square. In a ward of one of the city's hospitals, where her baby was born, she had found her alone, deserted, and waiting her time. Two days after its birth the baby died.

When she left the hospital there was nowhere for her to go. She had lived in a city but a short time and knew little of its life, and yet she must work. Mrs. Mundy got a room for her, then a place in a store, and she did well, kept to herself, but somebody who knew her story saw her, told the proprietor, and he turned her off. He couldn't keep girls like that, he said. It would injure his business. Later, she got in an office. She had learned at night to do typewriting, and there one of the men was kind to her, began to give her a little pleasure every now and then. She was young. It was dreary where she lived, and she craved a bit of brightness. One night he took her to what she found was—oh, worse than where she has since lived, for it pretended to be respectable.

"She was terribly afraid of men. It wasn't put on; it was real. I know pretense when I see it." Mrs. Mundy, who was telling me of the girl, changed her position and fixed the screen so that the flames from the fire should not burn her face. "Ever since the father of the child had deserted her, she had believed all men were wicked, but this man had been so friendly, so kindly, she thought he was different from the others. When she found where she was, she was crazy with fear and anger, and made a scene before she left. The next morning when she went to work she was told her services were no longer needed, and told in a way that made her understand she was not fit to work in the room with other girls. The man who had charge of the room was the man she had thought a friend. He's got his job still."

The ticking of the clock on the mantel alone broke the stillness of the room as Mrs. Mundy stopped. I tried to say something, but words would not come.

"For years I've heard the stories of these poor creatures." Mrs. Mundy's even tones steadied somewhat the protesting tumult in my heart. "For years I've known the awful side of the lives they lead. I didn't have money or learning or influence, or the chance to make good people understand, even if they'd been willing to hear, what I could tell, but I could help one of them every now and then. There 're few of them who start out deliberate to live wrong. When they take it up regular it's 'most always because they're like dogs at bay. There's nothing else to do."

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"What became of Lillie when she lost her place?" I got up from the sofa and came closer to the fire. My teeth were chattering.

"She lost her soul. She went in a factory, but the air made her sick, and after three faints they turned her off. It interrupted the work and made the girls lose time running to her, and so she had to go. After a while—I was away at the time—the woman she lived with turned her out. She owed room rent, a good deal of it, and she needed food and clothes, and there was no money with which to buy them. It got her crazy, the thought that because she had done wrong she was but a rag to be kicked from place to place with only the gutter to land in at last, and—well, she landed. But she isn't all bad. I used to feel about girls like her just as most good people still feel, but I've come to see there's many of them who are more sinned against than sinning. The men who make and keep them what they are go free and are let alone."

"Couldn't she have gone home? You said she was from the country. Wouldn't they let her come back home?"

Mrs. Mundy shook her head. "Her own mother was dead and her stepmother wouldn't let her come. She had young children of her own. Last month she tried to end it all. She won't be here much longer. The doctor says she'll hardly live six months. If we can get her in the City Home—"

"The City Home!" The memory of what I had seen there came over me protestingly. The girl had lived in hell. She need not die in it. "Perhaps she can be sent somewhere in the country," I said, after a while. "Mr. Guard might know of some one who will take her. Certainly she can stay here until—until he knows what is best to do."

Mrs. Mundy got up. For a moment she looked at me, started to say something, then went out of the room. She was crying. I wonder if I said anything I shouldn't.

"Tell me of your mother's garden." I picked up the tiny flower and put it on Lillie's cot, where its fragrance waked faint stirrings of other days. "I've always wanted a garden like my grandmother Heath used to have. I remember it very well, though I was only nine when she died. There were cherry-trees and fig-trees in it, and a big arbor covered with scuppernong grape-vines, and wonderful strawberries in one corner. All of her flowers were the old-fashioned kind. There was a beautiful yellow rose that grew all over the fence which separated the flowers from the vegetables, and close to the wood-house was a big moss-rose bush. There were Micrafella roses, too. I loved them best, and Jacqueminots, and tea-roses, and—"

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“Did she have princess-feather in hers, and candytuft, and sweet-williams?” Lillie turned over on her side, her hand under her cheek, and in her eyes a quick, eager glow. “In mother’s garden were all sorts of old-fashioned flowers also. We lived two miles from town and father sold vegetables and chickens to the market-men, who sold them to their customers. But he never had as good luck with his vegetables as mother had with her flowers. She loved them so. There was a big mock-orange bush right by the well. Did you ever shut your eyes and see things again just as they were a long time ago? If I were blind-folded and my hands tied behind me I could find just where every flower used to grow in mother’s garden, if I could go in it again.”

Like a flood overleaping the barrier that held it back, the words came eagerly. To keep her from talking would do more harm than to let her talk. The fever in her soul was greater, more consuming, than that in her body. I did not try to stop her.

“I don’t remember where each thing was in grandmother’s garden.” I moved my chair a little closer to her cot. “But I remember the gooseberry-bushes were just behind a long bed of lilies-of-the-valley. It seemed so queer they should be together.”

“Lilies of the valley grow anywhere. Mother’s bed got bigger every year. There was a large circle of them around a mound in the middle of our garden, and they were fringed with violets. One February our minister’s wife died. They didn’t have any flowers, and it seemed so dreadful not to have any that I went into the garden to see if I couldn’t find something. The ground was covered with snow, but the week before had been warm, and, going to one of the beds, I brushed the snow away and found a lot of white violets. They were blooming under the snow. I pulled them and took them to the minister, and he put them in her hands. They used to put flowers in people’s hands when they were dead. I don’t know whether they do it now or not.”

“Sometimes it is done.” I took up the sewing on my lap and made a few stitches. “Tell me some more of your mother’s garden. Did she have winter pinks and bachelor’s buttons and snap-dragons and hollyhocks in it? I used to hate grandmother’s hollyhocks. They were so haughty.”

“We did not have any, but we had bridal-wreath and spirea and a big pomegranate-bush. There were two large oleanders in tubs at the foot of the front steps. One was mine, the other was my sister’s. My sister is married now and lives out West. She has two children.”

A bird on the bough of the apple-tree began to twitter. For a moment Lillie listened, then again she looked at me, in her eyes that which I had noticed several times before, a look of torturing fear and pain and shame.

“Do”—her voice was low—“do you know about me?”

“Yes, I know about you.”

“You know—and—and still you talk to me? I don’t understand. Why did you come down here? You don’t belong in Scarborough Square.”



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"Why not? I have no one who needs me." I held my bit of sewing off, looked at it carefully. "Other women have their homes, their husbands and children, or their families, or duties or obligations of some sort, which they cannot leave, even if they wanted to know, to understand better how they might—" I leaned forward. "I think you can help me, Lillie, help me very much."

"Help you—" Half lifting herself up, Lillie stared at me as if not understanding, then the flush in her face deepened. "I help anybody! Oh, my God! if I only could! If I only could!"

"I'm sure you can." I picked up the flower, which again had fallen. "The doctor says you can go in the country soon, but before you go—"

"I hope I won't live long enough to go anywhere, but before I go away for good if I could tell you what you could tell to others, and make them understand how different it is from what they think, make them know the awfulness—awfulness—"

She turned her head away, buried it in her arms, her body shaking in convulsive sobs. The bird on the apple-tree had stopped its singing, and the sun was no longer shining. In the hall I heard Mrs. Mundy go to the door, heard it open; then heavier footsteps came toward us, I looked around. Selwyn was standing in the doorway.

CHAPTER XVI

Selwyn closed the door, put his hat and overcoat on a chair beside it, and came over to the fire. Standing in front of it, hands in his pockets, he looked at me. I, also, was standing.

"Why don't you sit down? Are you in a hurry? Am I interrupting you?"

I shook my head. "I am not in a hurry, and you are not interrupting. I thought perhaps —"

"Thought what?"

"That you were in a hurry." I sat down on a footstool near the mantel, and leaned against the latter, my hands on my knees. "I so seldom have a visit from a man in the morning that I don't know how to behave." My head nodded toward the chair he usually preferred.

"I would not take your time now—but I must." He took a seat opposite me, and looking at me, his face changed. "What is the matter? Are you sick? Your eyes look like holes in a blanket. Something has been keeping you awake. What is it?"

"I am not at all sick, and I slept very well last night." I drew a little further from the flame of the fire. "I'm sorry if my eyes—"

"Belie your bluff? They always do. Resist as you will, they give you away. You've been working yourself to death doing absurd things for unthankful people. Who is that sick person downstairs? Where'd you pick her up?"

"I didn't pick her up. She had a hemorrhage and fainted in front of the house. I happened to see her and—and—"

"Had her brought in. I understand. In a neighborhood of this sort you don't know who you're bringing in, but I suppose that doesn't matter."

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"No, it doesn't—when the bringing in is a matter of life and death, perhaps! As long as I am here and Mrs. Mundy is here, any one can come in who for the moment has nowhere else to go. Scarborough Square has no walls around its houses. Whoever needs us is a neighbor. The girl was ill."

My voice was indignant. There are times when Selwyn makes me absolutely furious. He apparently takes pleasure in pretending to have no heart. Then, too, he was talking and acting in such contrast to the way I had expected him to talk and act at our first meeting alone after the past weeks, that in amazement I stared at him. Of self-consciousness or embarrassment there was no sign. It had obviously not occurred to him that his acquaintanceship with a girl he had given no evidence of knowing when I was present, and three days later had been seen walking with on the street, absorbed in deep and earnest conversation, was a matter I would like to have explained. The density of men for a moment kept me dumb.

Selwyn has been reared in a school honest in its belief that a woman is too fine and fair a thing to face life frankly; that personal knowledge and understanding on her part of certain verities, certain actualities, did the world no good and woman harm. But the woman of whom he thought was the sheltered, cultured, cared-for woman of his world. Protection of her was a man's privilege and obligation. Of the woman who has to do her own protecting, fight her way through, meet the demands of those dependent on her, he personally knew little. It was what he needed much to know.

But because his handsome, haughty mother had lived in high-bred, self-congratulatory ignorance of what she believed did not concern her, and because he has for a sister, who's a step-sister, a silly, snobby person, he is not justified in withholding from me what he naturally withheld from them. One can be a human being as well as a lady. It's this that is difficult to make him understand.

For a half-moment longer I looked at him, then away. Apparently he had not heard what I said.

"I should not trouble you. I have no right, but I don't know what to do. I've so long come to you—" He turned to me uncertainly.

"What is it?" I got up from the footstool and took my seat in the corner of the sofa. "Why shouldn't you come to me?"

"You have enough on you now." He bit his lip. "It's about Harrie—the boy must be crazy. For the past few weeks he has kept me close to hell. I never imagined the time would come when I would thank God my father was dead. It's come now."

"What is it, Selwyn? There is nothing you cannot tell me." I leaned forward, my hands twisting in my lap. I knew more of Harrie than Selwyn knew I knew, but because he was

the one person I did know with whom I had no measure of patience, I rarely mentioned his name. Harrie is Selwyn's weakness, and to his faults and failings the latter is, outwardly, at least, most inexplicably blind. He is as handsome as he is unprincipled and irresponsible, and his power to fascinate is seemingly limited only by his desire to exercise it. "What is it?" I repeated. "What has he been doing?"

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"Everything he shouldn't." Selwyn leaned forward and looked in the fire. "I was wrong, I suppose, but something had to be done. For some time he's been drinking and gambling, and I told him it had to stop. I stood it as long as I could, but when I found he would frequently come home too drunk to get in bed, and would have to be put there by Wingfield, who would be listening for him, I had a talk with him which it isn't pleasant to remember. I'd had a good many before. God knows I've tried—"

Selwyn got up, went over to the window and stood for a moment at it with his back to me. Presently he left it and began to walk up and down the room, hands in his pockets.

"I've doubtless made a mess of looking after him, but I did the best I knew how. Because of the eleven years' difference in our ages I've shut my eyes to much I should have seen, and refused to hear what I should have listened to, perhaps, but I was afraid of being too severe, too lacking in sympathy with his youth, with the differences in our natures, and, chiefly, because I knew he was largely the product of his rearing. He was only fourteen when father died, and to the day of her death mother allowed no one to correct him. She indulged him beyond sense or reason; let him grow up with the idea that whatever he wanted he could have. Restraint and discipline were never taught him. As for direction, guidance, training—" Selwyn's shoulders shrugged. "If I said anything to mother, cautioned her of the mistake she was making, she thought me hard and cruel, and ended by weeping. After her death it was too late."

"Doesn't he work? Does he do nothing at all?"

"Work!" Selwyn stopped. "He's never done a day's work in his life that earned what he got for it. When he refused to go back to college mother bought him a place in Hoge and Howell's office. They kept him until he'd used up the capital put in the business, then got rid of him. I offered to put more in, but they wouldn't agree. Later, I got John Moore to take him in, but John now refuses to renew their contract. He's absolutely no good. That's a pretty hard thing to say about one's brother, but it's true. He's the only thing on earth belonging to me that I've got to love, and now—"

Selwyn's voice was husky, and again he went to the window, looked long upon the Square, and for a moment I said nothing. I could think of nothing to say. From various friends of other days who came occasionally to see me in my new home, I had heard of Harrie's wild behavior of late, of Selwyn's patient shielding of him, of the latter's love and loyalty and care of the boy to whom he had been far more than a brother, and I wanted much to help him, to say something that would hearten him, and there was nothing I could say. Harrie was selfish to the core; he was unprincipled and unscrupulous, and for long I had feared that some day he would give Selwyn sore and serious trouble. That day had seemingly come.

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"He is so young. At twenty-three life isn't taken very seriously by boys of Harrie's nature. He'll come to himself after a while." I was fumbling for words. "When his money is entirely gone he'll tire of his—his way of living and behave himself."

"The lack of money doesn't disturb him. I bought his interest in the house for fear he'd sell it to some one else. He's pretty nearly gotten through with that, as with other things he inherited. How in the name of Heaven my father's son—" Selwyn came over to the sofa and sat down. "I didn't mean to speak of this, however; of his past behavior. It's concerning his latest adventure that I want your help, want you to tell me what to do."

"Why don't you smoke? Haven't you a cigar?" I reached for a box of matches behind me. "Begin at the beginning and tell me everything."

Selwyn lighted his cigar and for a while smoked in silence. In his face were deep lines that aged it strangely and for the first time I noticed graying hair about his temples. Suddenly something clutched my heart queerly, something that cleared unnamable darkness, and understanding was upon me. Unsteadily my hand went out toward him.

"There is nothing you cannot ask me to do, Selwyn. There is nothing I would not do to help you."

He lifted my hand to his lips. "There is no one but you I would talk to of this. You will not misunderstand. If I could not come to you—"

I drew my hand away. "That's what a woman is for, to—to stand by when a man needs her." My words came stammeringly. "I heard Harrie was away. Where is he and why did he go?"

"He's in Texas. He went, I think, because of a mix-up with a girl here he had no business knowing. There was a row, I believe." Selwyn frowned, flicked the ashes from his cigar with impatient movement. "There's no use going into that. I'm not excusing him; there's no excuse, but so far as that's concerned there's nothing to be done, so far as I can see. He got involved with this girl, a little cashier at some restaurant downtown who thought he was going to marry her. I knew nothing about this until a few weeks ago. When I heard it, I went to see the girl."

The tension of past weeks, not yet entirely unrelaxed, snapped with such swiftness that I seemed suffocating, and, lest he hear the sob in my throat, I got up and went over to the window and opened it a little. "Was she—" I made effort to speak steadily. "Was she the girl who was brought in here? The girl you were with some three weeks ago?"

Selwyn, who had gotten up as I came back to the sofa, again sat down. "Yes. She was the girl." His voice was indifferently even. He had obviously no suspicion of my unworthy wondering, had forgotten, indeed, his indignation at the question I had asked

him after seeing him with her. Other things more compelling had evidently crowded it from memory.

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"I had never seen her until the night I saw her here. She, I learned later, knew me, however, as Harrie's brother. I had been told that Harrie was infatuated with her, and, knowing there could only be disaster unless the thing was stopped, I went to see the girl. The evening you saw me was the second time I had seen her. I was trying to make her promise to go away. This isn't her home. She came here to get work."

Selwyn leaned back against the sofa, and his eyes looked into mine with helpless questioning. "I've been brought in contact professionally with many types of human beings, but that girl is the most baffling thing I've come across yet. I can't make her out. The night after I saw her here I went to see her at what, I supposed, was her home, just opposite the Hadley box-factory. Later she told me she didn't live there, and would not say where she lived. All the time I talked to her her eyes were on her hands in her lap and, though occasionally her lips would twist, she would say nothing. It isn't a pleasant thing for a man to tell a girl his brother isn't a safe person for her to go with, isn't one to be trusted, but I did tell her. She's an odd little thing, all fire and flame, and to talk frankly was to be brutal, but some day she should thank me. She won't do it. She will hate me always for warning her. She knew as well as I that marriage was out of the question, and yet she would not promise to give Harrie up. When you saw me I was on my way for a second talk with her. Meeting her on the street, I did not go to the house, which she said she had just left, and as she would not tell me where she was going, I had to do my talking as we walked."

"Did she promise to go away?" I looked into the fire, and the odd, elfish, frightened face of the girl with the baby in her arms looked at me out of the bed of coals. "Did she promise to go?" I repeated.

Selwyn shook his head. "She would promise nothing. I could get nothing out of her, could not make her talk. Harrie has been a durned fool—perhaps worse, I don't know. I tried to help her, and I failed."

My fingers interlocked in nervous movements. Why hadn't the girl told Selwyn? Why was she shielding Harrie? Would she tell me or Mrs. Mundy what she would not tell Selwyn? I could send Mrs. Mundy to her now—could break the silence which was mystifying to her.

Selwyn's hands moved as though to rid them of all further responsibility. "You can't do anything with people like that. She'd rather stay on here and take the chance of seeing Harrie than go away from temptation. I'm sorry for her, but I'm through."

"No, you're not through. Perhaps we've just begun. Maybe there—there were reasons of which she couldn't tell you that kept her here." I looked at him, then away. "The night we heard her fall, heard her cry out; the night we brought her in here, you met some one across the street when you went away. Was it—Harrie?"

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In Selwyn's face came flush that crimsoned it. "Yes, it was Harrie. I don't know what happened. He had been drinking, but I can't believe he struck her. If he did—my God!"

With shuddering movement Selwyn's elbows were on his knees, his face in his hands, and only the dropping of a coal upon the hearth broke the stillness of the room. Presently he got up and again went over to the window. When he next spoke his voice was quiet, but in it a bitterness and weariness he made no effort to conceal. "It was Harrie, but he would tell me nothing about the girl. From some one else I learned where I could find her. A few days after I saw her, Harrie went away."

"Did you make him go?"

"No. I had a talk with him during which he told me to mind my own damned business and he would mind his." Selwyn turned from the window and came back to the sofa, on his lips a faint smile. "When he went off he didn't tell me he was going, left no address, and for some time I didn't know where he was. Less than three weeks ago I had a telegram from him saying he was ill and to send money. I wired the money and left for El Paso on the first train I could make. I tried to see you before I went, but you were out."

"Why didn't you write?"

"I couldn't. Once or twice I tried, but gave it up. I found that Harrie had undoubtedly been ill, but when I reached him he was up and about. Two hours before I took the train to return home he informed me of his engagement to—"

"His what?" For a moment I sat rigidly upright, in my eyes indignant unbelief. Then I sat back limp and relaxed, my hands, palms upward, in my lap.

Selwyn's shoulders shrugged. "Your amazement is feeble to what mine was. On the train going down he had renewed his acquaintance with a girl and her mother he had met somewhere; here, I believe, and a week after reaching her home the girl was engaged to him. Her name is Swink."

"Is she crazy?"

"No. Her mother is crazy. I don't blame the girl. She's young, pretty, silly, and doubtless in love. Harrie has fatal facility in making love. This mamma person has a good deal of money; no sense, and large social ambitions. She's determined to get there. If only fools died as soon as they were born there would be hope for humanity. A fat fool is beyond the reach of endeavor." With eyes narrowed and his forehead ridged in tiny folds, Selwyn stared at me. "Have women no sense, Danny? Have they no understanding, no—"

“Some have. But sense and understanding interfere with comfortable ignorances that aren’t pleasant to be interfered with. Does this female parent know anything about Harrie? Did she let her daughter become engaged before making inquiries about him?”

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"She knows very well who he is. She's visited here several times. If told of Harrie's past dissipations, she'd soothe herself with the usual dope of boys being boys, and men being men, and bygones being bygones." Selwyn's hands made gesture of disgust. "It's a plain case of damned fool. She deserves what she'll get if she lets her daughter marry Harrie. But the daughter doesn't. Somebody ought to tell the child she mustn't marry him. If there was a father or brother the responsibility would be on them. There's neither."

"But didn't you tell Harrie—that—that—"

"I did. And the language I used was not learned in a kindergarten. Among other things I told him was that if he— Oh, it's no use going into that. It's easy to say what you'll do, but it isn't easy to show your brother up as—as everything one's brother shouldn't be."

For a moment or two Selwyn continued his restless walking up and down the room, in his face no masking of the pain and weariness of spirit that were possessing him. To no one else would he speak so frankly of a family affair, and I wanted much to help him, but how? What was it he wanted me to do? I could not see where I came in to do anything.

"Is Harrie very much in love?" Such questioning was consciously silly, but something had to be said. "Do you think he really loves the girl?"

"No, I don't. He says he does, of course, but he doesn't love anything but himself. Making love is a habit with him. Our girls know how to take the sort of stuff he talks; rather expect it, but this little creature is obviously a literalist. I imagine Harrie hardly remembers how it happened. He probably was surprised to find himself engaged. However, he's determined to go through with it. A million-dollar mother-in-law has a good deal in her favor. But something is the matter with the boy. He's not himself."

"Didn't he go away about a year ago, and stay some time? If he could begin all over—"

"There's nowhere under heaven I wouldn't send him if he'd go with the purpose of beginning all over, but he won't stay away. About six months ago he went to South America and stayed four months. Since he got home he's been worse than ever—reckless, defiant, and drinking heavily. His health has gone and most of his money; practically all of it. I don't know what to do. I want to do what is right. Tell me what it is, Danny."

My breath was drawn in shiveringly and the frightened face of the girl with the baby in her arms again seemed close to me. Why was I so halting, so afraid to speak? Usually I reached decisions quickly, but I couldn't get rid of the girl's eyes. They seemed appealing for protection. Until I knew more about her I must say nothing. Mrs. Mundy must go to see her and then—

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"I know I shouldn't bother you with all this." Selwyn's voice recalled me and the face in the fire vanished. "But there is no one else I can talk to. I should as soon go to a patient in a nerve sanitarium as to Mildred. As a sister Mildred is not a success. She'd first have hysterics and tell me I was brutal to poor Harrie, and then declare that to marry a million dollars was the chance of a lifetime for him. One of the ten thousand things I can't understand about women is their defense of men, their acceptance of his—shortcomings, and their disregard of the woman who must pay the price of the latter. Mildred would probably not give Miss Swink a thought."

"Harrie's sister and his mamma-in-law-to-be will doubtless find each other congenial. They believe in sweet ignorance and blind acceptance for their sex. But what do you want me to do, Selwyn? What is it I can do?"

"I don't know." Hand on the back of the sofa, he looked down at me. "When things go wrong I always come to you. When they go right you are not nice to me. To-day I had a letter from Harrie. He's coming back next week. His fiancée and her mother are coming with him. The engagement is not to be announced just yet, however, and he asks me to keep it on the quiet."

"And you've told me."

"Told you!" Selwyn's voice was querulous. "Don't I tell you everything? Mrs. Swink has friends here, strivers like herself—the only kind of people you won't have anything to do with. But I'm going to ask you to call. Perhaps you'll be able—"

"She won't want to know me. I'll be no use to her. I can't help her in any way, and people like that are too keen to waste time on people like me. I don't give parties."

"But Kitty does. I don't know how you'll go about it, but you'll find a way to—to make the girl understand she mustn't marry Harrie, or certainly not for some time. I feel sorry for the child, but—"

"And the other girl—the little cashier-girl? What about her?"

For a moment Selwyn did not seem to understand. "Oh, that girl! I don't think there'll be any trouble from her. She doesn't seem that sort. Forget her. You can't do anything. I've tried and failed."

"I may fail, but I haven't tried. You dispose of her as if she didn't count."

"What can I do? I shouldn't have mentioned her." Selwyn's forehead ridged frowningly, and, taking out his watch, he looked at it, took up his hat and coat, and held out his hand.

“Thank you for letting me talk to you. And don’t worry about the other girl. You can’t do anything.”

“Perhaps I can’t, but you said just now one of the many things you couldn’t understand in women was their disregard of other women. That Mildred would probably give the girl no thought. The rich girl, you meant.”

“Well—” Selwyn waited. “I did say it, but I don’t see what you’re getting at.”

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"That sometimes women do remember the woman who has to pay—the price; do give a thought to the girl who is left to pay it alone. Come to-morrow—no, not to-morrow. Come next week. It will take Mrs. Mundy until then to—"

"Mrs. Mundy has nothing to do with Miss Swink. The other girl, I told you, can take care of herself. You mustn't look into that side of it. I'll attend to that, do what is necessary. It's only about her you seem to be thinking."

"I'm thinking about both girls, the poor one and the rich one. But the rich girl has a million-dollar mother to look after her. Good-by, and come Tuesday. I forgot—What is the girl's name, the little cashier-girl's?"

"Etta—Etta something." Selwyn made effort to think, then took a note-book out of his pocket and looked at it. "Etta Blake is her name. I wish you'd forget her. There are some things one can't talk about, but certainly you know I will do what is right if Harrie —" His face darkened.

"I know you will, but sometimes a girl needs a woman to do—what is right. She's such a little thing, and so young. Come Tuesday evening at eight o'clock."

CHAPTER XVII

Late that evening I had a talk with Mrs. Mundy. I told her where Etta Blake lived, that is, where she could find the house from which I had seen her come with the baby in her arms, the house whose address had been given me by Selwyn, and the next morning she was to go and see her; but the next morning Mrs. Mundy was ill. Acute indigestion was what the doctor called it, but to Bettina and me it seemed a much more dreadful thing, and for the time all thought of other matters was put aside and held in abeyance.

With Bettina's help I tried to do Mrs. Mundy's work, but my first breakfast was not an artistic product. I shall never know how to cook. I don't want to know how. I don't like to cook. There were many other things I could do, however, and though Mrs. Mundy wept, being weak from nausea, at my refusal to leave undone the usual cleaning, I did it with pride and delight in the realization that, notwithstanding little practice, I could do it very well. I am a perfect dish-washer, and I can make up beds as well as a trained nurse.

Mrs. Mundy is much better to-day and to-morrow she will be up. Three days in bed is for her an unusual and depressing experience, and her sunny spirit drooped under the combined effects of over-indulgence in certain delectable dishes, and inability to do her usual work.

"It don't make any difference how much character a person's got, it's gone when sick-stomach is a-wrenching of 'em." Mrs. Mundy groaned feebly. "I 'ain't had a spell like



this since Bettina was a baby. Pig feet did it. When they're fried in batter I'm worse than the thing I'm eating. I et three, and I never can eat more than two. And to think you had to do everything for Lillie Pierce, to get her off in time! The doctor says she can't live many months. Outside the doctor, and Nurse White and Mr. Guard, don't anybody know she's been here. I reckon it ain't necessary to mention it. People are so —"

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"People-ish! They love to stick pins in other people! It's tyranny—the fear of what people will think about us, say about us, do about us! I'm going to give myself a present when I get like Mr. Guard and can tell some people to go—go anywhere they please, if it's where I won't meet them. Are you all right now and ready for your nap?"

Mrs. Mundy nodded, looked at me with something of anxiety in her eyes as I straightened the counterpane of her spotless bed; but she said nothing more, and, lowering the shades at the windows lest the sunlight bother her, I went out of the room and left her to go asleep.

I am glad of the much work of these past few days. It has kept me from thinking too greatly of what Selwyn told me of Harrie, of the girl to whom he is engaged, and of the little cashier-girl whose terror-filled face is ever with me. It has kept me, also, from dwelling too constantly on the message Lillie Pierce sent by me to the women of clean and happy worlds. For herself there was no plea for pity or for pardon, no effort at palliation or excuse. But with strength born of bitter knowledge she begged, demanded, that I do something to make good women understand that worlds like hers will never pass away if men alone are left to rid earth of them. Ceaselessly I keep busy lest I realize too clearly what such a message means. I shrink from it, appalled at what it may imply. I am a coward. As great a coward as the women whose unconcern I have of late been so condemning.

Yesterday Lillie went away. Mr. Guard took her to the mountains where a woman he used to know in the days of his mission work will take care of her. He is coming back to-morrow. The sense of comfort that his coming means is beyond analysis or definition. Only once or twice in a lifetime does one meet a man of David Guard's sort, and whatever my mistakes, whatever my impulses and lack of judgment may lead me to do, he will never be impatient with me. We have had several long and frank and friendly talks since the day he brought Lillie in to Mrs. Mundy, and if Scarborough Square did no more for me than to give me his friendship I should be forever in its debt.

Early this morning I had a dream I have been trying all day to forget. Through the first part of the night sleep had been impossible. The haunting memory of Lillie's eyes could not be shut out, and the sound of her voice made the stillness of the room unendurable. I tried to read, to write, to do anything but think. I fought, resisted; refused to face what I did not want to see, to listen to what I did not want to hear; and not until the dawn of a new day did I fall asleep.

In my dream Lillie was in front of me, the bit of wall-flower in her hands, and gaspingly she cried out that something should be done.

"It can never be made clean, the world we women live in. But there should never be such worlds. Good women pretend they do not know. They do not want to know!"

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"But, Lillie"—I tried to hold her twisting, writhing hands. "There is much that has been done. Some women do know, and homes and institutions and societies—"

"Homes and institutions and societies!" She drew her hands away in scornful gesture. "They are poultice and plaster things. They are for surface sores, and the trouble is in the blood. To cure, to cleanse, undo the evil of our world is not in human power. It's the root of the tree that must be killed. You can cut off its top for a thousand years and it will come back again. Women have got to go deeper than that and make men know that they'll be damned the same as we if they sin the same as we do."

She was slipping from me and I tried to hold her back. "Tell me what women must do! Tell me where they fail!" In terror I caught her hands. "Do not go until you tell me—"

In misty grayness she was vanishing. "When women make their sons know there is no less of sin and shame in sinful, shameful lives for them than for their sisters our worlds will pass away. You've got to stop the evil at the source. Men don't do what women won't stand for. Tell women that—"

She was gone and, waking, I found I was sitting up in bed, my hands outstretched.

I had a note from Selwyn to-day telling me the Swinks had come and are at the Melbourne. Harrie is not well.

Kitty telephoned me late yesterday afternoon that Billie had an engagement for a club dinner of some sort, and she had appendicitis, or something that felt like it, and wouldn't I please come up and have supper with her in her sitting-room. There was something she wanted to talk to me about.

Kitty has a remarkable voice. It is capable of every variation of appeal. I went. Mrs. Crimm came in to stay with Mrs. Mundy.

The appendicitis possibility was not disturbing, and in a very lovely pink velvet negligee, with cap and slippers and stockings to match, Kitty was waiting for me. She is peculiarly skilful in the settings she arranges for her pretty self, and as I looked at her they seemed far-away things, the world of Scarborough Square, with its daily struggle for daily bread, and the world of Lillie Pierce, with its evil and polluting life, and the world of the little cashier-girl with its temptations and denials. I tried to put them from me. The evening was to be Kitty's. She took her luxuries as the birds of the air take light and sunshine. Unearned, they seemed a right.

She did not like the dress I had on. It's a perfectly good dress.

"I'll certainly be glad when you stop wearing black. It's too severe for you; that is, black crepe de chine is. You're too tall and slender for it, though it gives you a certain distinction. Did Selwyn send you those violets?"

“He did. Where’s your pain? What did the doctor say was the matter?”

“I telephoned him not to come. I haven’t got any pain. It’s gone. I just wanted you by myself.” Kitty settled herself more comfortably in her cushion-filled chair and stretched her feet on the stool in front of her. “Why didn’t you come to Grace Peterson’s luncheon yesterday?”

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"I had something else more important to do. Grace knew I wasn't coming when she asked me. Society and Scarborough Square can't be served at the same time." I smiled. "During the days of apprenticeship only a half-hour is allowed for lunch. Did you have a good time?"

"Of course I didn't. Who does with an anxious hostess? One of the guests was an out-of-town person who used to know you well. She wanted to hear all about you and everybody told her something different. All that's necessary is to mention your name and—"

"The play's begun. To be an inexhaustible subject of chatter is to serve a purpose in life. I'd prefer a nobler one, still— Who was my inquiring friend?"

"I've forgotten her name. She was the most miserable-looking woman I ever saw. On any one else her clothes would have been stunning. Don't think she and her husband hit it off very well. There's another lady he finds more entertaining than she is, and she hasn't the nerve to tell him to quit it or go to Ballyhack. Women make me tired!"

"They tire men, also. A woman who accepts insult is hardly apt to be interesting. Tell me about the luncheon. Who was at it?"

"Same old bunch. Grace left out nothing that could be brought in. Most of the entertaining nowadays is a game of show-down, regular exhibitions of lace and silver and food and flowers and china and glass, and gorgeous gowns and stupid people. I'm getting sick of them."

"Why don't you start a new kind? You might have your butler hand a note to each of your guests on arriving, stating that all the things other people had for their tables you had for yours, but only what was necessary would be used. Then you might have a good time. It's difficult to talk down to an excess of anything."

"Wish I had the nerve to do it!" Kitty again changed her position; fixed more comfortably the pink-lined, embroidered pillows at her back, and looked at me uncertainly. I waited. Presently she leaned toward me.

"People are talking about you, Danny. You won't mind if I tell you?" Her blue eyes, greatly troubled, looked into mine, then away, and her hand slipped into my hand and held it tightly. "Sometimes I hate people! They are so mean, so nasty!"

"What are they saying?" I straightened the slender fingers curled about mine and stroked them. "Only dead people aren't talked about. What is being said about me?"

"Horrid things—not to me, of course. They'd better not be! But—Mrs. Herbert came to see me yesterday afternoon. She wasn't at the luncheon and Grace got the first rap, but most of her hatefulness she took out on you. She's worse than a germ disease. I

always feel I ought to be disinfected after I see her. If she were a leper she wouldn't be allowed at large, and she's much more deadly. People like that ought to be locked up."

"What did she tell you about me?" I smiled in Kitty's flushed face, smiled also at the remembrance of Alice Herbert's would-be cut some time ago, but I did not mention it. "You oughtn't to be so hard on her. She's crazy."

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"But crazy people are dangerous. A mosquito can kill a king, and a king has to be careful about mosquitoes. I'm more afraid of people than I am of insects. If you could only label them—"

"People label themselves. What did Alice Herbert say about me?"

"First, of course, how strange it was that you should care to live in Scarborough Square, especially as you were a person who held yourself so aloof from—"

"People like her. I do. What else did she say?"

"That you met all sorts of people, had all sorts to come and see you. A trained nurse who is with a sick friend of her aunt's told her she'd heard you let a—let a bad woman come in your house." Kitty's voice trailed huskily. "She said it would ruin you if things like that got out. I told her it was a lie—it wasn't so."

"It was so." I held Kitty's eyes, horror-filled and unbelieving. "She stayed with Mrs. Mundy a week. Yesterday she went away to the mountains—to die."

For a moment longer Kitty stared at me, and in her face crept deep and crimson color. "You mean—that you let a—a woman like that come in your house and stay a week? Mean—"

For a long time we sat by the fire in Kitty's sitting-room with its rose-colored hangings, its mellow furnishings, its soft burning logs on their brass andirons, its elusive fragrance of fresh flowers, and unsparingly I told her what all women should know. In the twilight that of which I talked made pictures come and go that gave her understanding never glimpsed before, and, slipping on her knees, she buried her face, shudderingly, in my lap.

"Is it I, Danny? Is it women like me who could do something and don't?" she said, after a long, long while. "Oh, Danny, is it I?"

[Illustration: "Is it I, Danny? Is it women like me who could do something and don't?"]

"It is all of us." My fingers smoothed the beautiful brown hair. "Every woman of to-day who thinks there's a halo on her head ought to take it off and look at it. She wouldn't see much. We like halos. We imagine we deserve them. And we like the pretty speeches which have spoiled us. What we need is plain truth, Kitty. We need to see without confusion. Sometimes I wonder if we are not the colossal failure of life—we women who have hardly begun to use the power God put in our hands when He made us the mothers of sons and daughters—"

“But we’ve only been educated such a little while—most of us aren’t educated yet. I’m not.” Her arms on my knees, Kitty looked up in my face, in hers the dawning light of vision long delayed. “Men haven’t wanted us to think. They want to think for us.”

“But ours is the first chance at starting men to thinking right. Through babyhood and boyhood they are ours. If all women could understand—”

“All women haven’t got anything to understand with even if they wanted to understand. Some who have sense don’t want responsibility.” Kitty bit her lip. “I haven’t wanted it. It’s so much easier not—not to have it. And now—now you’ve put it on me.”

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"When women know, they will not shirk. So many of us are children yet. We've got to grow up." Stooping, I kissed her. "In Scarborough Square I've learned to see it's a pretty wasteful world I've lived in. And life is short, Kitty. There's not a moment of it to be wasted."

CHAPTER XVIII

Mrs. Mundy cannot find Etta Blake. She went this morning to the house just opposite the box-factory, but no one is living there. A "For Rent" sign is on it. After trying, without success, to find from the families who live in the neighborhood where the people who once occupied the house have gone, she went to the agent, but from him also she could learn nothing.

"They were named Banch. A man and his wife and three children lived in the house, but where they've moved nobody could tell me, or give me a thing to go on. They went away between sun-up and sun-down and no one knows where." Mrs. Mundy, who had come to my sitting-room to make report, before taking off her coat and hat, sat down in a chair near the desk at which I had been writing, and smoothed the fingers of her gloves with careful precision. She was disappointed and distressed that she had so little to tell me.

"I couldn't find a soul who'd ever heard of a girl named Etta Blake. Poor people are generally sociable and know everybody in the neighborhood, but didn't anybody know her. Mr. Parke, the agent, said the man paid his rent regular and he was sorry to lose him as a tenant, but he didn't know where he'd gone. If his wife took boarders he didn't know anything about it. The girl might have rented a room—" Mrs. Mundy hesitated, looked at me uncertainly. "Shall I ask Mr. Crimm to—to help me find her? If she's in town he'd soon know where."

Something in her voice sent the blood to my face. "You mean—oh no, you cannot, do not mean—"

"I don't know. It's usually the end. The only one they have to come to when a man like Mr. Thorne's brother makes a girl lose her head about him. After he tires of her, or when he's afraid there may be trouble, there's apt to be a row and he quits. When he's gone the girl generally ends—down there." Mrs. Mundy's hand made movement over her shoulder. "Respectable people don't want to have anything to do with girls like that, and it's hard for them to get work. After a while they give up and go to what's the only place some of them have to go to. Would you mind if I ask Mr. Crimm?"

I shook my head. "No, I would not mind."

Going over to a window, I opened it, and as the sunshine fell upon my face it seemed impossible that such things as Mrs. Mundy feared were true. But I knew now they were true, and shiveringly I twisted my hands within my arms as if to warm my heart, which was cold with a nameless something it was difficult to define. On one side of me the little, elfish creature with her frightened eyes and short, curly hair seemed standing; on the other, the girl to whom Harrie was engaged. I could not help them. Could not help Selwyn. Could help no one! If David Guard—at thought of him the clutch at my throat lessened. David Guard could help them. He had promised to come whenever I sent for him, and to him I could talk as to no one else on earth.

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"I will see Mr. Crimm to-night. It won't be new to him—the finding of a girl who's disappeared. He's found too many. I'll be careful what I tell him, and Mr. Thorne needn't worry." Mrs. Mundy got up. "Didn't you say he was coming this afternoon?"

"He is coming to-night. I am going out this afternoon."

Mrs. Mundy walked slowly to the door. She would have enjoyed talking longer, but I could not talk. A sense of involvement with things that frightened and repelled, with things of which I had hitherto been irresponsibly ignorant, was bewildering me and I wanted to be alone. I knew I was a coward, but there was no special need of her knowing it.

I had been honest in thinking I wanted to know all sorts of people, to see myself, and women like me, from the viewpoint of those denied my opportunities, but it had not occurred to me as a possibility of Scarborough Square that I should come in contact with any of the women of Lillie Pierce's world. People like that had hardly seemed the human beings other people were. And now—

"Tell Mr. Crimm whatever you think best." My back was to Mrs. Mundy. "The girl is in trouble. You must see her. Bring her here if you cannot go to her, and try and learn her side of the story. It's an old one, perhaps, but it isn't fair that—"

"She should be shoved into hell and the lid shut down to keep her in, and the man let alone to go where he pleases. It isn't fair, but it's the world's way, and always will be. Lessen women learn some things they ought to know. They wouldn't stand for some of the things that go on if they understood them, but they don't understand. They've been tongue-tied and hand-tied so long, they haven't taken in yet they've got to do their own untying."

"It's a pretty lonely job—and a pretty hard one." I turned from the window. Kitty's automobile had stopped in front of the house. I was to go in it to call on Mrs. and Miss Swink. Kitty had insisted that I use it.

I dressed quickly, putting on my best garments, but as I got into the car something of the old protest at having to do what I did not want to do, to go where I did not want to go, came over me, and I was conscious of childish irritability. I did not care to know the Swinks. Eternity wouldn't be long enough, and certainly time wasn't to waste on people like that, and yet because Selwyn had asked me to call I was doing it. All men are alike. When they don't know how to do a thing that's got to be done, they tell a woman to do it. It was not my business to tell this Swink person and her daughter that they should be careful concerning matrimonial alliances. I would agree with them that such intimation on my part was presumptuous and I had no intention of making it. What I was going to do I did not know, but it was necessary to see them, talk with them before

any suggestions could be made to Selwyn as to a tactful handling of an embarrassing situation; and in obedience to this primary requisite I was calling.

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In their private parlor at the Melbourne, pompously furnished, and bare of all things that make a room reflective of personality, Mrs. Swink and her daughter were awaiting me on my arrival, and the moment I met the former all the perversity of which I am possessed rose up within me, and for the latter I was conscious of sympathy, based on nothing save intuitive antipathy to her mother. Inwardly I warned myself to behave, but I wasn't sure I was going to do it.

"Oh, how do you do!" Mrs. Swink, a fat, florid, frizzy person, waddled toward me with out-stretched and bejeweled hands, and took mine in hers. "Mr. Thorne told us you would certainly call, and we've been waiting for you ever since he told us. Charmed to meet you! This is my daughter Madeleine. Where's Madeleine?" She turned her short, red neck, bound with velvet, and looked behind her. "Oh, here she is! Madeleine, this is Miss Wreath. You know all about Miss Wreath, who's gone to such a queer place to live. Harrie told us." Two sharp little eyes sunk in nests of embracing flesh winked confidentially at first me and then her daughter. "Yes, indeed, we know all about you. Sit down. Madeleine, push a chair up for Miss Wreath."

"Heath, mother!" The girl called Madeleine turned her pretty, dissatisfied face toward her mother and then looked at me. "She never gets names right. She just hits at them and says the first thing that comes to her mind." Pulling a large chair close to a table, on which was a vase of American Beauty roses, she waited for me to take it, then went over to the window and sat beside it.

"Well, everybody's got a mental weakness." Upright in a blue-brocaded chair, elbows on its gilt arms, mother Swink surveyed me with scrutinizing calculation, and as she appraised I appraised also. Full-bosomed of body and short of leg, she looked close kin to a frog in her tight-fitting purple gown with its iridescent trimmings, and low-cut neck; and from her silver-buckled slippers to the crimped and russet-colored transformation on her head, which had slipped somewhat to one side, my eyes went up and then went down, and I knew if Harrie ever married her daughter his punishment would begin on earth.

"Yes, indeed, everybody's got a mental weakness, and I'm thankful mine's no worse than forgetting names. I ought to remember yours, though. It makes you think of funerals and weddings and things like that. I love names which—"

"Her name is Heath, mother! *Not* Wreath."

"Oh yes—of course! This certainly is a beautiful day. If El Paso hadn't been so far away we'd have brought one of our cars with us, but I don't see any sense spending all that money when you can hire cars so cheap by the hour. Madeleine don't like to ride in hired cars. I like any kind of car."



So far I had had no opportunity of doing more than bend my head, a chance to speak not having been permitted me, but, at her mother's pause for breath, the girl at the window looked down upon the street and then turned her face toward me. "That's a pretty car you came in. Can you drive it yourself?"

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"I have no car. That's Kitty's—I mean Mrs. McBryde's. That reminds me. I have a message from her. She could not call this afternoon, but she asks me to say she hopes you can both come in Thursday afternoon and have tea with her. She is always at home on Thursdays and—"

"Yes, indeed; we'll be glad to come." Mrs. Swink took up Kitty's card, which had been sent up with mine, and looked at it through her lorgnette, suspended around her neck by a chain studded with amethysts, large and small. "We'll come with pleasure. Won't we, Madeleine? Shall we write and tell her?"

"Of course not, mother. Didn't you just hear Miss Heath say it was her regular 'at home' day? You don't write notes for things like that." Miss Swink's eyes again turned in my direction. "I'm much obliged, but I don't think I can come. I've an engagement for Thursday."

"If it's with Harrie, he won't mind waiting awhile." With unconcealed eagerness Mrs. Swink twisted herself in her tight and too-embracing chair, for the moment forgetting, seemingly, that I was a hearing person. "You can't afford to miss a chance like that. You'll meet the best people. Harrie can stay to dinner. I'll get tickets for the theatre."

"He won't come to dinner. I asked him. Says he's sick." The girl's lips curled slightly. "He's always sick when—"

"Madeleine!" The sudden change in Mrs. Swink's voice was beyond belief, and with a shrug of her shoulders the girl again looked out of the window. I was making discoveries with unexpected rapidity, discoveries that were filling me with speculation and promising conclusions that were at variance with Selwyn's, and for a moment the uncomfortable silence, following the sharp ejaculation, was unbroken by me in the realization of my unwilling participation in a bit of family revelation, and also by inability to think of anything to say.

"I hope you can come." My tone was but feebly urging. "Everybody has such a good time at Kitty's. I hope, too, you are going to like our city." I looked from mother to daughter as I uttered the usual formulas for strangers. "This is not your first visit?"

"Oh no—we've been here several times before. We like it very much. It's so distinguish and all that." Mrs. Swink's hands went to her head and she patted her transformation, but failed to straighten it. "I was born in Alabama, and Mr. Swink in Missouri, and Madeleine in Texas, so we feel kin to all Southerners and at home anywhere in the South; but I like this city best of any in it. Some day, I reckon, we'll live here." Her voice was significant and again she looked at her daughter, but her daughter did not look at her.

“We think it a very nice city, but I suppose I’d love any place in which I had to live. That is, I’d try to. You have old friends here, I believe, and of course you’ll make new ones.” My voice was even less affirmative than interrogatory. I hardly knew what I was saying. I was thinking of something else.

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"Yes, indeed. That's what we expect to do. We don't know a great many people here. Mrs. Hadden Cressy and I are old friends, but we don't see much of each other. I suppose you know the Cressys?"

"I know of them very well. They are among our most valuable people. I have often wanted to know Mr. and Mrs. Cressy. Their son, Tom, I used to see often as a boy, but of late I rarely come across him. What's become of him? He was one of the nicest boys I ever knew."

Mrs. Swink's hands made expressive gesture, but the girl at the window gave no sign of hearing me. In her face, however, I saw color creep, saw also that she bit her lips.

"Nobody knows what he does with himself." Mrs. Swink sighed. "After all the money his father spent on his education, and after everybody took him up, he dropped out of society and stuck at his business as if he didn't have a cent in the world. He hasn't any ambition. He could go with the most fashionable people in town, if his parents can't, but he won't do it. He must be a great disappointment to his parents."

With a slow movement of her shoulders, Miss Swink turned and looked at her mother, in her eyes that which made me sit up. What the look implied I was unable altogether to understand, but I could venture a guess at it, and on the venture I spoke:

"He's the pride of their life, I've been told. Any parents would be proud of such a son—that is, if they were the kind of parents a son could be proud of. I'd like to see Tom. I used to be very fond of him when he was a boy. He lived just back of us and he and Kitty were great friends as children. I'm afraid he's forgotten me, however."

"No, he hasn't—" Miss Swink stopped as abruptly as she began, but the color that had crept into her face at mention of Tom Cressy's name now crimsoned it, and again she turned her head away. In her eyes, however, I had caught the gratitude flashed to me, and quickly I decided I must see her alone, talk to her alone; and so absorbed was I in wondering how I could do it that only vaguely did I hear Mrs. Swink, who was telling me of various engagements already made, of the difficulty of getting in what had to be gotten in between being manicured and marcelled and massaged and chiropodized and tailored and dress-makered, and had she not been so interested in the telling she would have discovered I was not at all interested in the hearing. She did not discover.

When for the third time I saw Miss Swink glance at the watch upon her wrist, and then out of the window, I knew she was waiting for some one to pass. It wasn't Harrie. There was no necessity for furtive watching for Harrie to pass, The latter's plaint of sickness was evidently not convincing to the girl. I looked at the clock on the mantel. I had been in the room twenty-seven minutes, but I didn't agree with Selwyn that Miss Swink was in love with his brother. Her engagement to him was due, I imagined, not so much to her literalness as to her mother's management. An unholy desire to

demonstrate that the latter was not of a scientific kind possessed me, and quickly my mind worked.

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CHAPTER XIX

With eyes apparently on Mrs. Swink, I missed no movement of her daughter, and when presently I saw her put her elbow on the window-sill and wipe her lips with her handkerchief, and then make movement as if to brush something away, I got up, made effort to say good-by unhurriedly to her mother, and went over to the girl. As I held out my hand I glanced out of the window. Exactly opposite, and looking up at it, was Tom Cressy, his handkerchief to his lips.

I took the hand she held toward me in both of mine and something in her eyes, something both mutinous and pleading, filled me with sympathy I should not have felt, perhaps. She was only nineteen, and her mother was obviously trying to make her marry Harrie when she probably loved Tom. It was all so weak and so wicked, so sordid and stupid, that I felt like Kitty when with Alice Herbert. I needed disinfecting. I would have to get away before I said things I shouldn't.

"Your mother says the masseuse comes this afternoon. Can't you take a drive with me while she is here?" I turned to Mrs. Swink. "You will not mind if she leaves you for a little while? It is too lovely to stay indoors."

"No, indeed, I won't mind. I'll be glad to have her go if she'll do it. Lately she won't do anything but sit at that window." Mrs. Swink, who had gotten out of her chair with difficulty, turned to her daughter, blinking her little, near-sighted eyes at her as if she were beyond all human understanding; and the fretfulness of her tone she made no effort to control. "She's that restless and hard to please and hard to interest in anything that she nearly wears me out. Girls didn't do like that when I was young. If I'd had a hundredth part of what she's got—"

"What's the use of having things you don't want?" Miss Swink's shoulders made resentful movement; then she turned to me, for a moment hesitated.

"Thank you very much for asking me, but I can't go this afternoon. I need exercise. If I don't walk a great deal I—"

"I'd much rather walk. I love to walk." I must know why she was meeting Tom without her mother's knowledge. "I'll send the car home and we'll walk together. It isn't often I have an afternoon without something that must be done in it. I'll wait here while you get your hat and coat."

Into the girl's face came flush that spread slowly to the temples, and uncertainly she looked at me. Steadily my eyes held hers and after half a moment she turned and went out of the room. Coming back, she followed me into the hall and to the elevator, but, eyes on the gloves she was fastening, she said nothing until we reached the street. On the corner opposite us Tom Cressy was standing in the doorway of a cigar-shop, and as



he saw the car dismissed, saw us cross the street and come toward him, into his honest, if not handsome, face came puzzled incredulity. Not until in front of him did I give evidence of seeing him; then I stopped.

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"Why, Tom Cressy!" I held out my hand and, as he took it, I noticed the one holding his hat was not entirely steady. "It's ages since I've seen you, Tom. You know Miss Swink, I believe." I pretended not to see their formal and somewhat frightened bow. "We're going to walk. Can't you go with us? Come on. We're going to the park."

Slipping my arm through Madeleine's, I caught step, and on the other side of her Tom did likewise, hands in his pockets, and into both faces came glow that illuminated them and enlightened me. At the end of our walk I would know pretty well what I wanted to know.

For an hour and a half we walked briskly and talked along lines usually self-revealing; and by the time the hotel was again reached I was quite satisfied concerning a complicated situation that needed skilful steering to avoid a dangerous and disastrous smash-up.

"Can't I go home with you, Miss Dandridge?" Tom twisted his hat nervously. "It's too late for you to go so far by yourself. Please let me go with you."

"Of course you're going with me. After dark I'm only a baby person and I like a nice, big man with me! Good-by, dear." I turned to Madeleine. "Some afternoon, if your mother does not mind, come down and have tea with me in Scarborough Square. Tom can come, too, and bring you home. I'll telephone you one day next week."

With a nod I walked away, but not before I saw a flash of joy pass between two faces which were raised to each other, and, guiltily, I wondered if I had again done something I shouldn't. I was always doing it. Hurrying on with Tom, I talked of many things, but at my door I turned to him and held out my hand.

"I haven't any right to ask you, but I'm going to ask you. You care for each other and something is the matter. What is it, Tom?"

"Matter!" Indignation, wrathful and righteous, flared in face and voice, and Tom's clutch of my hand was more fervid than considerate. "Her mother's the matter. She's batty on the subject of society and position, and first families, and fashion, and rot of that sort—all right in its way, but not her way. I'm not aristocratic enough for her. She doesn't want her daughter to marry me because we haven't any family brush and coats of arms, and don't belong to the inside set, and marrying me wouldn't give Madeleine what she wants her to have. Madeleine don't want it. She wants—"

"You. I understand. Does Mrs. Swink want her to marry some one else?" I hated my pretended ignorance, but I must know just what he knew. Know if Madeleine had told him of her engagement. "Who is it she wants her to marry?"

“Harrie Thorne. If she knew what others knew of Harrie—” Tom bit his lip. “I don’t want to go into that, however. Not my business. But if she was told she wouldn’t believe. She don’t want to believe. She wants her daughter to marry what Harrie can give her. An honored name which he has dishonored.”

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Tom took out his handkerchief and wiped his forehead, in his eyes boyish incomprehension of incomprehensible things. "Men are wicked, Miss Dandridge, but they wouldn't do what some women do. They've got it in their hands to do a lot they don't do—women have—and if it wasn't for some of them, for those we believe in, the world would go smash in certain ways as far as men are concerned. What's the use of keeping straight and living clean when plenty of women don't seem to care, or certainly don't ask too much about a man if he's got money, or anything else they want for their daughters? Mrs. Swink is determined that Madeleine shall marry Harrie."

"But has Madeleine no will of her own? If she permits her mother to dispose of her—"

"She's been disposed of since she was a baby, and resistance wears thin after a while, I suppose." The tips of Tom's right shoe made a small circle on the brick pavement, but presently he looked up at me. "It's pretty queer for me to be telling things like this, but you always did understand a fellow. I've often wished I could come and see you. Madeleine and I were engaged once."

"Why aren't you engaged now? Tell me anything you want. What happened?"

"Mother Swink happened!" Tom's words came jerkily. "She wouldn't even let me talk to her; made a devil of a row, dragged Madeleine all around Europe, wouldn't let her have a letter from me—sent them back herself—and told Madeleine if she married me she would never speak to me."

"That ought to have given you courage. Why didn't you marry Madeleine?"

"I couldn't get hold of her. And, besides, she got so worked up that she went all to pieces, and I—I wasn't patient enough, I guess. When they came back I managed to see her once, but we both got mad and said things we shouldn't, and she gave me up. I heard Harrie had been giving her a rush in El Paso, and if Mrs. Swink can manage it she'll have Madeleine engaged to him before he knows how it happened."

"Are you able to marry, Tom? Is there any reason why you shouldn't?"

"No, there isn't." His head went up. "I can't give her what her mother can, but I can take care of her all right. On the first of next May father makes me general manager of the business. He hasn't spared me because I was his son, and he wouldn't give me the place until I'd earned it, but I'll get it pretty soon now. I wish you knew my father, Miss Dandridge. There isn't any sort of search-light he can't stand, and it isn't his and mother's fault if I can't stand them, also."

"I don't think they'd be uneasy if any were to be turned on. I wouldn't. Good night, Tom. Be careful how you meet Madeleine. How many times have you seen her since she got here?"

“Just once before this afternoon.” His face flushed. “Something is the matter. She’s not like herself. Her mother’s up to something.”

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"When you want to see her, come down here and see me. Don't meet on corners or in the park, and—and the next time you're engaged don't let a girl think you're going to wait indefinitely. If she isn't willing to marry you and go to Pungo if necessary, she isn't the girl for you to marry. Good night."

At the door I turned. Tom was still standing at the foot of the steps, staring at me, in his face slow-dawning understanding.

CHAPTER XX

As Selwyn and David Guard shook hands, eagerness of desire must have been in my face, for Selwyn, turning, seemed puzzled by what he saw. Going into the room adjoining my sitting-room, I left them alone for a few moments, and when I came back I was careful to keep out of my eyes that which as yet it was not wise that they should tell. I have long since learned a man must not be hurried. Certainly not a man of Selwyn's type.

Sitting down in a corner of the sofa, I nodded to the men to sit down also, but that which they had been discussing while I was out of the room still held, and, returning to it, they stood awhile longer, one on either side of the mantelpiece, and, hands in my lap, I watched them with hope in my heart of which they did not dream.

They are strangely contrasting—Selwyn and David Guard. That is, so far as outward and physical appearance is concerned. But of certain inward sympathies, certain personal standards of life, certain intellectual acceptances and rejections, they have far more in common than they imagine, and to find this basis upon which friendship might take root is a desire that sprang into life upon seeing them together. Should they ever be friends, they would be forever friends. Of that I am very sure.

By Selwyn's side David Guard seemed smaller, frailer, less robust than ever, yet about him was no hint of feebleness, and his radiation of quiet force was not lessened by Selwyn's strength. His clothes were shabbier than ever, his cravat even less secure than usual, and the long lock of hair that fell at times across his forehead was grayer than formerly, I thought, but no externals could dim the consciousness that he was a man to be reckoned with.

Opposite him Selwyn seemed the embodiment of all he lacked. The well-being of his body, the quiet excellence of his clothes, the unconscious confidence, born of ability and abundance, the security of established position, marked him a man to whom the gods have been good. But the gods mock all men. In Selwyn's eyes was search for something not yet found. In David Guard's the peace that comes of finding. I had hardly thought of their knowing each other. To-night, quite by accident, they had met. Selwyn had come according to agreement. David Guard, to tell me of a case in which

he was interested. He had come before Selwyn, and at the latter's entrance had started to go. I would not let him go. If they could be made friends—God!—what a power they could be!

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They were discussing the war. The afternoon's reports had been somewhat more ghastly than usual.

"The twentieth century obviously doesn't propose to be outdone by any other period of history, recorded or unrecorded." One hand in his pocket, an elbow on the mantel-shelf, Selwyn looked at David Guard. "In the quarter of a million years in which man, or what we term man, has presumably lived on this particular planet, nothing so far has been discovered, I believe, which tells of such abominations as are taking place to-day. It's an interesting epoch from the standpoint of man's advance in scientific barbarism."

"It deepens, certainly, our respect for our primeval ancestors." David Guard smiled grimly. "I understand there are still tree-dwellers in certain parts of Australia who knock one another in the head when it so pleases them to do. For the settlement of difficulties their methods require much less effort and trouble than ours. On the whole, I prefer their manner of fighting. Each side can see what the other's about."

"So do I." Curled up in the corner of the sofa, I had not intended to speak. A woman's opinions on war don't interest men. "The fundamental instinct in man to fight may require a few thousand more years to yield to the advisability of settling differences around a table in a council-chamber, but one can't tell. Much less time may be necessary. The tree-dwellers and the cave-dwellers and the tent-dwellers spent most of their time scrapping. We do have intervals of peace in which to get ready to fight again."

"So did they, though their intervals were shorter, perhaps, owing to their simpler methods of attack." Selwyn laughed. "In their day, warfare being largely a personal or tribal affair, little time was necessary for preparation. With us the whole machinery of government is needed to murder and maim and devastate and ruin. Civilization and science and education have complicated pretty hopelessly the adjustments of disputes, the taking of territory, and the acceptance of opposing ideals. The biggest artillery and the best brains for butchery at present are having their day. Humanity in the making has its discouraging side."

"It has!" David Guard's voice was emphatic, though he, too, laughed. "If humanity made claim to being a finished product, there'd be justification for more than discouragement. It makes no such claim. Fists and clubs, and slingshots and battle-axes, are handier weapons than guns and cannon, and armored air-ships and under-sea craft, but in the days of the former using, but one kind of army was sent out to fight. To-day we send out two."

"Two?" Selwyn looked puzzled. "What two?"

"One to undo, as far as possible, the work of the other. The second army, not the first, is the test of humanity's advance; the army that tries to keep life in the man the other



army has tried to kill, to give back what has been taken away, to help what has been hurt, to feed what has been starved, to clothe what is made naked, to build up what has been broken down. Each country that to-day gives fight, equips and trains and sends out two contrasting armies. They work together, but with opposing purposes. The second army—”

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"Has a good many women in it. But it's so stupid, so wicked and wasteful, to fight over things that are rarely finally settled by fighting. It's bad business!" My hands twisted shiveringly in my lap. "Do you suppose the time will ever come when man will see it's the animal's way of getting what he wants, of keeping others from getting what he's got, of settling difficulties and defending points of view? Do you think he'll ever find a better way?"

"In a few thousand years—yes," Selwyn again smiled and, changing his position, stood with his back to the fire. "When we have the same code for nations as for individuals, the same insistence that what's wrong in and punishable for a man is wrong in and punishable for his country, or when we cease to think of ourselves as group people and remember we are but parts of a whole, we may cease to be fighting animals. Not until then, perhaps. Personally, I think war is a good thing every now and then. That is, in the present state of our undevelopment."

"So do I." David Guard's shoulders made energetic movement. "War brings out every evil passion of which man is possessed, but it has its redemptive side. It clears away befogging sophistries, delivers from deadening indulgences and indifferences; enables us to see ourselves, our manner of life, our methods of government, our obligations and our injustices, in perspective that reveals what could, perhaps, be grasped in no other way. It brings about readjustments and reaccountings, and puts into operation new forces of life, new conceptions of duty. It's a frightful way of making man get a firmer grip on certain essential realizations, of taking in more definitely the high purpose of his destiny, but at times there seems no other way. I pray God we may keep out of this, but if it means a stand for human rights—"

"We'll all enlist!" The faces of the men before me were sober, and quick fear made my voice unsteady. "War may have its redemptive side; it may at times be necessary for the preservation of honor and the maintenance of principle, but that's because, I imagine, of our unpreparedness as human beings to—to be the right sort of human beings. When we are there'll be no time to kill one another. We'll need it all to help each other. I hate war as few hate it, perhaps, but should it come to us I'm as ready to join my army as you to join yours." I got up and took the hand David Guard was holding out to me. "I wish you didn't have to go. Must you?"

"Must. Got an engagement at nine-fifteen. I'll see you before the week is out about Clara Rudd. Good night." He turned to Selwyn, shook hands, and was gone.

In the corner of the sofa I again sat down, and Selwyn, turning off the light in the lamp behind me, took a chair and drew it close to me. Anxiety he made no effort to control was in his eyes.

"Well—have you anything to tell me?"

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"Not as much as I hoped. Mrs. Mundy hasn't been able to find Etta Blake yet. Until—"

"Etta Blake?" Selwyn's tone was groping. "Oh, the little cashier-girl. I didn't expect you to tell anything of her. I wish you'd put her out of your mind." His face darkened.

"I can't. She seems to be in no one else's. But we won't talk of her to-night. I saw the Swinks this afternoon."

"I know you did. Mrs. Swink telephoned Harrie to-night. Did my appraisal approach correctness?"

"Of Mrs. Swink, yes. She's impossible. Most fat fools are. They're like feather beds. You could stamp on them, but you couldn't get rid of the fool-ness. It would just be in another place. She told me she was manicured on Mondays, massaged on Tuesdays, marcelled Wednesdays, and chiropodized on Thursdays, and one couldn't expect much of a daughter with that sort of a mother; still, the girl interested me. I feel sorry for her. She mustn't marry Harrie."

"But who's going to tell her?" Selwyn's voice was querulously eager. "I thought perhaps you might find—find—"

"I did." I nodded in his flushed face. "I don't think it will be necessary to tell her anything. She's very much in love, but not with Harrie."

Selwyn sat upright. A certain rigidity of which he is capable stiffened him. He looked much, but said nothing.

"I've had an interesting time this afternoon. I never wanted to be a detective person, but I can understand the fascination of the profession. Luck was with me, and in less than thirty minutes after meeting her I was pretty sure Madeleine Swink was not in love with Harrie and was in love with some one else. A few minutes later I found out who she was in love with, found he was equally in love with her; that they were once engaged and still want to get married. Our job's to help them do it."

Selwyn's seriousness is a heritage. Frowningly he looked at me. "This is hardly a thing to jest about. I may be very dense, but I fail to understand—"

For an hour we talked of Madeleine Swink and Mrs. Swink, of Harrie and Tom Cressy, and in terms which even a man could understand I told how my discoveries had been made, of how I had managed to see Tom and Madeleine together, and of my frank questioning of the former. But what I did not tell him was that my thought was not of them alone. By my side the little girl with the baby in her arms had seemed clinging to my skirt.

“What sort of a girl is she?” In Selwyn’s voice was relief and anxiety. “Has she courage enough to take things in her own hands? I’ve no conscience so far as her mother is concerned. She deserves no consideration, but, being an interested party, I—”

“You needn’t have anything to do with it. I’m not sure what sort she is, or how much courage she’s got, but worms have been known to turn. If a hundred years before they were born somebody had begun to train her parents to be proper parents she might have been a better product, still there seems to be something to her. For Tom’s sake I hope so.”

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"He's a nice chap." Selwyn's voice was unqualifiedly emphatic. "And his father is as honest a man as ever lived. His mother, I believe, comes of pretty plain people."

"I don't know where she comes from, but she's made a success of her son, which is what a good many well-born women fail to do. People aren't responsible for their ancestors, but they are for their descendants to a great extent, and Mrs. Cressy seems to understand this more clearly than certain ancestrally dependent persons I have met. I'd like to know her."

"You're looking at me as if I didn't agree with you. Some day I hope there may be deeper understanding of, and better training for, the supreme profession of life; but to get out of generalizations into a concrete case, what can I do in the way of service to Miss Swink and Mr. Thomas Cressy? Being, as I said before, an interested party, I hardly—"

A knock on the door behind him made Selwyn start as if struck; gave evidence of strain and nervousness of which he was unconscious, and, jumping up, he went toward the door and opened it. In the hall Bettina and Jimmy Gibbons were standing. The latter was twisting his cap round and round in his hand, his big, brown eyes looking first at Bettina and then at me and then at Selwyn, but to my "Come in," he paid no attention.

Getting up, I went toward him, put my hand on his shoulder. "What is it, Jimmy? Why don't you come in?"

"My shoes ain't fitten. I wiped them, but the mud wouldn't come off." His eyes looked down on his feet. "I could tell you out here if you wouldn't mind listening."

"I told him I'd take the message or call you down-stairs, but he wouldn't let me do either one." Bettina, hands behind her, nodded in my face. "His mother says her boarder is dying and she wants to tell you something before she dies, and she told Jimmy he must see you himself. Grannie's gone to prayer-meeting with Mrs. Crimm, and afterward to see about a sick person. I'm awful sorry to interrupt you, and if the lady hadn't been dying—"

"You're not interrupting." I drew the boy inside. Bettina came also. From the fire to which I led him, Jimmy drew back, however, and blew upon his stiff little fingers until it was safe to put them closer to the blazing coals. Looking down at his feet, I saw a large and ragged hole on the side of his right shoe from which a tiny bit of blood was slowly oozing upon the rug.

"What's the matter with your foot, Jimmy? Have you cut it, stuck something in it? You must take your shoe off and see what's the matter." I pointed to the floor.

“I didn’t know I’d done it.” Craning his neck to its fullest extending. Jimmy peered down at the bleeding foot, then looked up at me. “I’m awful sorry it got on the rug. I’ll wipe it up in a minute.” Imperishable merriment struggled with abashed regret, and, holding out the offending foot, he laughed wistfully. “It ain’t got no feeling in it, though it’s coming. I guess it’s kinder froze. They’re regular flip-flops, them shoes are.”

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Under his breath I heard a smothered exclamation from Selwyn. He was standing in front of the boy, hands in his pockets, and staring at him. He knew, of course, there were countless ill-fed, ill-clothed, unprotected children in every city of every land, but personally he had come in contact with but few of them, and the bit of flesh and blood before him stabbed with sharp realization. Helplessly he turned to me. "The boy's half frozen. Where did he come from? What does he want you to do?"

Jimmy looked up at me. "Mother told me to hurry. The doctor's done gone and Mrs. Cotter says she's bound to see you before she dies. She's got something to tell you. She says please, 'm, come quick."

Hesitating, I looked at the boy, who had come closer to the fire. "Did the doctor say she was dying? I saw her yesterday and she seemed better. Miss White was to see her today."

"Miss White is there now." Jimmy lifted his right foot and held it from the ground. The warmth of the room was bringing pain to the benumbed member into which something had been stuck. "She told me to tell you please, 'm, to come if you could. Mrs. Cotter says she can't die until she sees you, and she's so tired trying to hold out. She won't have breath left to talk, mother says, if you don't hurry."

Perplexed, uncertain, I waited a half-minute longer. Mrs. Cotter, the renter of Mrs. Gibbons's middle room, and sometime boarder, I had seen frequently of late. Nothing human could have stood what she had been forcing herself to do for some weeks past, and that resistance should have yielded to relentless exaction was not to be wondered at. Ten hours a day she sewed in the carpet department of one of the city's big stores, and for some time past she had been one of the office-cleaning force of the Metropolitan Building, which at night made ready for the day's occupants the rooms which were swept and dusted and scrubbed while others slept or played, or rested or made plans for coming times. The extra work had been undertaken in order to get nourishment and medicine needed for her little girl, who had developed tuberculosis. There was nowhere for the child to go. The insufficient sanatorium provided by the city for its diseased and germ-disseminating poor was over-crowded. To save her child she had fought valiantly, but her life was the forfeit of her fight. I wondered what she wanted to tell me.

I looked at Selwyn, in my eyes questioning. Mrs. Mundy was out. I could not leave Bettina alone in the house. What must I do?

"Do you think she is really dying? People like that are often hysterical, often nervously imaginative." Selwyn's voice was worried. "You ought not to be sent for like this. It isn't right."

“She wouldn’t have sent as late as this, but the doctor says she won’t last till daybreak.” Jimmy twisted his cap into a round, rough ball. “I’ll get Mrs. Mundy for Bettina if you’ll tell me where she is.”

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"You can't get her. She's out the prayer-meeting by now and gone to see somebody who sent for her. I don't know who it is, and I ain't by myself. Miss Sallie Jenks is sitting with me while grannie's out." Bettina's tones were energetic. She turned to me. "You needn't stay back on my account, Miss Danny. Aren't you going?"

"Yes—I'm going." I walked toward my bedroom. At its door I stopped. "I'm sorry, Selwyn, but I'll have to go. The woman is dying."

Selwyn's teeth came together sharply and in his eyes were disapproval and protest. For a half-minute he did not speak, then he faced me.

"If you insist, there's nothing to be said except that I am going with you. Where's your telephone? I'll get a cab."

"Oh no! You must not go." Back to the door, I leaned against it. "You've never seen things of this kind. They're—they're—"

"No pleasanter for you than for me." His voice was decisive; but his eyes were no longer on mine. They were on Jimmy Gibbons's shoes with the big and ragged hole in one of them through which the bare skin of his foot showed red and raw. He drew in his breath; turned to me. "Put on warm things. It's pretty cold to-night."

CHAPTER XXI

Jimmy followed me into the taxi, and as Selwyn snapped the door he huddled in an opposite corner as if effacement were an obligation required by the situation in which he found himself. But he had never been in an automobile before, and his sense of awe soon yielded to eager anxiety to miss no thrill of the unexpected experience. His face was pressed against the glass pane of the door before we had gone two blocks, in the hope that he might see some one who would see him in the glory of an adventure long hoped for and long delayed and Selwyn and I were forgotten in the joy of a dream come true.

There was time to tell Selwyn but little of the woman I was going to see. Mrs. Gibbons's home was only a short distance from Scarborough Square, and before I could do more than give the briefest explanation of Mrs. Cotter's condition, of her long hours of work and lack of home life, the cab had stopped, and Jimmy, springing out, hopped, on his unhurt foot, to the sagging gate of his little yard and opened it for us to pass through. Going up the broken steps, I pushed open the partly closed door and went in.

A faint light from a kerosene-lamp, set on a bracket in the wall at the far end of the hall, caused weird shadows to flicker on the floor and up the narrow staircase, and for a half-minute Selwyn and I waited until we could see where we should go. From the middle room we could hear hoarse and labored breathing and the stir of footsteps on the bare

floor. Putting my hand on the door-knob, I was about to turn it when Mrs. Gibbons came out, holding Mrs. Cotter's little girl by the hand.

"I'm glad you've come. She keeps calling for you." Her voice was the monotone of old, and, as unmoved as ever, she nodded to me and then looked at Selwyn. "Is he a doctor? Did he come to see her?"

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I explained Selwyn's presence and suggested that he wait for me while I went to Mrs. Cotter. Beckoning him to follow, she went toward her kitchen bedroom, but stopped to give warning of the two steps that led down to it, and as she stopped I heard the low whimper of the frightened child by her side and saw her footsteps drag.

"I want my mother! I want to go back to my mother! I don't want to go 'way from my mother!"

Was it well to let her go back? Only a few minutes were left for them to be together. Was it kind or cruel to keep them apart? Uncertain, I looked at the group before me and saw Selwyn stoop and take the child, a little girl of five, up in his arms.

"Your mother is going to sleep." His voice was low. "And we are going to be quiet and not wake her. Jimmy will play with you, and I—"

"Will you tell me a story?" Sleepily the child leaned against his shoulder, one arm thrown over it. "Will you tell me a pretty story about—"

As they disappeared through the door opening into Mrs. Gibbons's quarters I went into Mrs. Cotter's room, but for a moment drew back. I had learned not to shrink at much that once I would have run from, but the gaunt body and ghastly face of the woman propped against pillows on the bed frightened me, and my feet refused to move. All the hardships and denials, the injustices and inequalities, of working womanhood, unfit to fight and unprepared for struggle, were staring at me, and on the open lips was something of the mocking smile that had been on Lillie Pierce's face when she was first brought in to Mrs. Mundy.

Heavily, and with great labor, breath came gaspingly, and the blank stare in the eyes made me think at first I was too late. Slowly I went toward the bed, and at its side I took a twitching hand in mine, and as I did so the staring eyes turned to me. Too nearly gone for aught save faint returning, light struggled back in a supreme and final effort, and with life's last spark of energy she clutched my fingers with her work-worn, weary hands. Miss White, the district nurse, who was standing at the foot of the bed, nodded to me, and from a far corner the sobbing of a man and woman in shabby clothes, and crouched close together, reached across the room. All other worlds were, for the moment, far away, and only the world before me seemed real and true and unescapable.

Drawing a low chair close to the bed, I sat down and leaned toward the woman. There was little time to lose. "What is it, Mrs. Cotter? Look at me. This is Dandridge Heath. You have something you want to say to me. Tell me what it is."

Her head made backward, twisting movement as if for breath, then her eyes held mine, and in them was the cry eternal of all motherhood. "My little girl! My little girl! If only—I

could take—her with me! Who’s going to—tell her how—not to go—wrong? She won’t be safe—on earth. Promise me—promise me!”

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"Promise you what?" I leaned still farther over the bed. The fire of a tortured soul was burning in the eyes before me, and out of them had gone dull glaze and ghastly stare; into them had come appeal, both piteous and passionate, and fear that defied death. "What must I promise?" My eyes held hers lest words should wander.

"Tell me what I must do?"

"Don't let them put her in—an orphan home. The ones who—manage it—don't know themselves—how life—treats girls. They mean kind—but they don't teach them—what might happen. Little Etta—little Etta Blake lived in an orphan home. And now—now—"

The hands in mine were dropped, amazement for the moment making me forget all else. I leaned yet closer. "Where is she? Where is Etta Blake? Where can I find her?"

As if groping, the eyes looking into mine made effort to understand, then turned away. "You can't find her—now. It's—too late. She was let go—to work—and she—didn't know. She come—from a little town—to a big one. And nobody—told her—what might happen. My little Nora—who's going to tell her?"

With violent effort, the figure on the bed attempted to sit up, and the twitching hands were flung one on either side, then again they clutched mine. "Why don't God—let me—take her—with me? Promise me—you won't forget—my little Nora! Won't let them—put her—in an orphan home. Promise me—you'll watch—"

Gaspingly she lay back on the pillows, but her eyes held mine. "Promise—"

"I promise I will not—forget." Before God and a dying woman I was pledging protection for a homeless child. My voice broke and then steadied. "I promise—and I will watch."

As if that which held had snapped, the tossing head lay quiet, and out of the face fear faded, and into it, as softly as widens dawn at break of day, came peace. The sobbing in the corner of the room had ceased, and through the thin walls I could hear Selwyn's low tones as he told stumblingly to the child a story that was keeping her quiet, and I knew he, too, was on new thresholds; he, too, was entering unknown worlds.

"Tell her—" Flame-spent, the eyes again opened and this time looked at Miss White. "Tell her—why I—don't want— They mean—to be good—but—people like that—don't know how—people like us—"

Martha White thrust her handkerchief up her sleeve, cleared her throat, and straightened her wide and rustling apron. "She's been trying to tell me all day that she didn't want Nora to be put in an orphan asylum, and yet there's nobody to take her. All her people are too poor to add another child to their families." She came closer and lowered her voice that it might reach no one but me, and with her shoulders made movement toward the bed, with her hands to the man and woman still close together in

tearless silence in the corner. “You know how people like that are. They judge everything by the few cases that come within their knowledge, and—”

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"Most of us do. What does she know about asylums that prejudices her so?"

"Little, except she's come across some girls who came out of them who have gone wrong, and she thinks it's because they were kept too shut off from outside life, and told too little of temptations and real truths and—and things like that. What she means is that she thinks those who manage asylums and homes try to keep the girls innocent through ignorance, and when they're turned out to go to work they don't understand the dangers that are ahead. Some grown-ups forget that young people crave young ways and pretty things and good times, and that they've got to be taught about what they don't understand."

"Little Etta—Etta Blake was an orphan. She was like a bird—in a cage. When she—got out— If only—they had—told her—" The voice from the bed was strangely stronger, and the fingers, still twisted into mine, made feeble pressure.

I leaned closer. "Where is she? Where is Etta Blake? Where can I find her?"

"You can't find her. It's—too late. We worked—at the same place—once. And I tried—to make— But she said—it was—too late."

The gasping voice trailed wearily and the face, turning from me, lay still upon the pillow. Presently I saw Miss White start and come closer. The short, quick breath had stopped.

At Mrs. Mundy's front door Selwyn, holding the sleeping child in his arms, looked at me. "What are you going to do with her?" His voice was uncertain, but in it there was not the disapproval I had expected from the telling of my promise to Mrs. Cotter. "You can't keep her, can you?"

I shook my head. "She mustn't stay in town. The doctor says her case is too advanced to be arrested, and the only thing that can be done is to make her as comfortable and happy as possible until she—can go—to her mother. I don't know what is best to be done. I must be near enough to see her every now and then. Mr. Guard will tell me what to do. Whenever I don't know I ask him. He always helps me."

"Are you never to ask me to—help you?" Selwyn's voice was low, but from his eyes was no escape, and as the light from the door which I had opened with my latch-key fell upon his face I saw it flush—saw in it what I had never seen before.

"You!" I was very tired, and something long held back struggled for utterance. "You!" The word was half a sob. "If only you—"

Mrs. Mundy was coming down the hall, and at the door her hands went out to take the child from Selwyn. "Bettina told me, and I thought perhaps you'd bring the little creature here. I've got a place all fixed. You are tired out." She turned to me, and then to Selwyn. "Thank you, sir, for taking care of her—for going with her and bringing her

back. I'm sorry I wasn't here to do it myself. She's needing of some one to look after her." Turning, she went down the hall with the child in her arms, and Selwyn, also turning, walked down the steps and got into the cab.

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CHAPTER XXII

The one day in the year I heartily hate is the first day of January. Yesterday was January first. Its usual effect is to make me feel as the grate in my sitting-room looks when the fire is dead. Knowing the day would get ahead of me if I did not get ahead of it, I decided to give a party. Last night I gave it.

All through the busy rush of Christmas with its compelling demands I have been trying not to think; trying to put from me memories that come and go of Mrs. Cotter, of my disappointment in not hearing from her where Etta Blake could be found, and my anxiety about little Nora, now in the care of a woman I know well who lives just out of town. The child will not be here next Christmas. Kitty is paying for all her needs. She asked that I would let her the day before I received Selwyn's note concerning Nora. I promised her first.

Mr. Crimm cannot find Etta Blake. She must have gone away.

In the past few weeks I have seen little of Selwyn. I have been a bit more than busy with Christmas preparations, and his mortification over Harrie's behavior since the latter's return from El Paso has kept him away even from me. Madeleine Swink I have seen several times, also Tom Cressy, but Mrs. Swink I have been spared, owing to absence from home when she returned my call.

I have told Madeleine that she must not meet Tom here again until she breaks her engagement with Harrie and tells her mother she will not marry him. I cannot help her marry Tom unless she is open and square with her mother. She thinks I am hard, but I will agree to nothing else.

It isn't easy to be patient with halting, hesitating, helpless people, and Madeleine, having long been dominated, is a rather spiritless person. Still, she is the sort one always feels sorry for. I wish I wasn't mixed up in her affairs, however. They aren't my business and fingers put in other people's pies are likely to get pinched. Then, too, my fingers have many other things to do.

Last night's party was a great success. During most of the day I was telephoning messages, sending notes of invitations, and helping Mrs. Mundy with the preparation of certain substantial refreshments which must be abundant; and when at last I stood ready to receive my guests a thrill I had long thought dead became alive again. At other parties I knew what to expect. At this one I didn't.

Lucy Hobbs, resplendent in a green silk, lace-trimmed dress, was dashingy handsome with her carefully curled hair and naturally colored cheeks; and her big, black eyes missed no detail of my holly-bedecked and brightly lighted rooms. It was difficult to associate her with the girl in shabby clothes who hurried through the streets in the dark

of early mornings, and whose days were spent in a factory, year in and year out; and yet the factory had left its imprint in a shyness that was new to one whose usual role was that of boss, and at first she was ill at ease.

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"You must help me, Lucy." I spoke hurriedly and in an undertone. "Some of these people think they're at a funeral. Mix them up and introduce them again if they don't talk to each other. Take Mr. Banister over to Gracie Hurd. He's afraid to cross the room to get to her and she hasn't budged since she came in. And get Mr. Schrioser from Mrs. Gibbons. She's telling him about the baby's whooping-cough and enjoying the telling; but he isn't. Go to him first."

As I spoke to Lucy, David Guard came in the room. He wore his usual clothes, but his cravat was fixed with apparent firmness and no longer crawled half-way up his collar, and his hair had been carefully brushed. As we shook hands I laughed.

"I'm frightened. Did you ever do a thing in a hurry and then wonder what you did it for? Most of these people have such a stupid time at home, so seldom go out at night, that I thought I'd have a party for them, but they seem to think they're at a show waiting for the curtain to go up. What am I going to do?"

"Give them time. They can't unlimber all at once. Mrs. Crimm over there thinks it would be improper for her to smile, as she's just lost her brother, but Mr. Crimm is a performance in himself. What's he in uniform for?"

"He goes on duty at twelve, and he doesn't want to lose time going home to change. Look at Archer Barbee. I believe he's in love with Louie Hill."

"He is. I hope they are going to be married soon. Why don't you let these people dance?"

I had not thought of dancing. My guests were oddly assorted, of varying ages and conditions, and I had gathered them in for an evening away from their usual routine rather than with the view of getting a congenial group together, and the realization of social blundering was upon me. Dancing might do what I could not.

To dance in my sitting-room would be difficult. The few things in the room adjoining it could be easily pushed against the wall, however, and quickly Fannie Harris and Mr. Guard began to make it ready. And while they made ready, Mr. Crimm was invited to sing.

Mr. Crimm is my good friend. I had never known a policeman before I came to Scarborough Square, but I shall always be glad I know him. He is a remarkable man. He has been Mrs. Crimm's husband for thirty years and has his first drink to take.

As I played the opening notes of "Molly, My Darling, There's No One Like You," Mr. Crimm took his place by the piano. Straight and important, shoulders back, and a fat right hand laid over a fat left one, both of which rested just above the belt around his well-developed waist, he surveyed the silent company with blinking, twinkling eyes.



Mrs. Crimm, struggling between righteous pride in the possession of so handsome a piece of property as her blue-uniformed and brass-buttoned husband, and the necessity of subduing all emotions save that of respect, due to the recent death of her brother, sat upright in her chair, hands clasped in her lap, and eyes fastened on the floor. Not until the song was over did she lift them.

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"Molly, My Darling, There's No One Like You" is a piece of music permitting the making of strange sounds, and when Mr. Crimm sings it the sounds are stranger. At the third verse he asked all present to join in the chorus, and the effect was transforming. Bettina, standing in front of him, eyes uplifted as if entranced, and hands clasped tightly behind her back, was ready at the first word to join in, and shrilly her young voice piped an accompaniment to the deep notes of her official friend. With a nod of his head and a time-beating movement of both hands, Mr. Crimm began his work of leadership, and in five minutes every one in the room was around him, save his wife, who kept her seat, her lips tight and her eyes on the floor.

As a garment thrown off, the stiffness disappeared, and feet tapped and heads moved to the rhythmic swing of first one song and then another, but finally Mr. Crimm wiped his perspiring face and called for silence.

"It's Archie's time now. Step up, Archie, and tell the ladies and gentlemen how 'Mary Rode the Goat, She Did.' Shying is out of fashion. Step lively, Archie. This, ladies and gentlemen—" Mr. Crimm waved one hand and with the other grasped firmly the collar of his young friend's coat and drew him forward, "is Mr. Archer Barbee, who will now entertain you. Begin, Archie. Make your bow and begin."

For a moment Archie stood in solemn silence, hands crossed on his breast and thumbs revolving rapidly. His lips made odd movements, although from them came no sound, and vacantly he stared ahead of him, in his eyes no expression, in his manner no hint of what was coming. Short and fat, with face round and red, hair red and curly, and ears of a prodigious size, he made a queer picture; and, ignorant of his power of mimicry and impersonation, I kept my seat on the piano-stool. That is for a while I kept it. When safety lay no longer on it I took refuge on the sofa. First, smiles had followed his beginning words, then shouts of laughter, then shrieks of it; and little gasping screams and bending of bodies and convulsive doubling up; and when finally he stopped we were spent and breathless, and for a while I could not see. When again my eyes were clear, Fannie Harris was standing by me.

"If you think you can stand up, the room is ready for dancing." She pointed ahead of her. "Please look at Mrs. Mundy. She'll split her best black silk if she doesn't stop."

Mrs. Mundy's cackles were getting shorter and shorter and, wiping her eyes, she joined us and nodded at Mr. Guard.

"I haven't laughed as much since the first time I went to the circus, and if there's anything better for the insides than laughing, I've never took it. Seems to me it clears out low-downness and sour spirits better than any tonic you can buy, and for plum wore-outness a good laugh's more resting than sleep. When you're ready to have the hot things brought up, let me know, Miss Dandridge. Martha's down-stairs and everything's ready and just waiting for the word."

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It was hardly time for refreshments, and at Mr. Guard's announcement that all who cared to dance could go into the next room, a movement was made toward the latter, and then all stopped and waited for Archie Barbee, who, with a low bow, was asking Mrs. Crimm for the favor of a fox-trot.

Rigidly Mrs. Crimm stiffened. Indignantly she waved Archie away. "I'm a church member. I never danced in my life, and it's unfeeling of you to be asking of me when my poor brother's only been in his grave eight days." She took out a, black-bordered handkerchief from a bag hanging at her side, and opened it carefully. "It's unfeeling of you, with him only dead one day over a week."

Hands in his coat pockets, Archie bowed low. "I ask your pardon, ma'am. I hadn't heard about, your brother—leaving you, and I didn't guess it, seeing you sitting here as handsome as a hollyhock, though now you speak of it, I see your dress is elegant black and extra becoming. I beg you'll be excusing of me. Mrs. Mundy, ma'am, I hope you'll honor me."

The room had grown quiet, each waiting for the other to move, and, hearing a step in the hall, I looked toward the door, which was partly open, then went forward, thinking a belated guest might be coming in. The door opened wider and Selwyn stood on its threshold.

For a half-minute I stared at him and he at me. In his face was amazement. As I held out my hand he recovered himself and came inside.

"I beg your pardon. I'm afraid I'm intruding. I did not know you were having a—"

"Party. I am." I was angry with myself for the flush in my face. "You are in time to share in some of it. Mr. Guard"—I turned to the latter, who happened to be near the door—"will you introduce Mr. Thorne to some of my friends while I see Martha? I will be back in a moment." I had changed my mind and decided to have supper before we danced.

Selwyn bit his lip and his eyes narrowed, then over his face swept change, and, shaking hands with David Guard, he went forward and spoke to Mrs. Mundy and Bettina; shook hands with Mr. Crimm, and met in turn each of my guests. Why had he come to-night of all nights? I asked myself. He evidently intended to stay and perhaps my party might be ruined.

But it was not ruined. With an ability I did not know he possessed Selwyn gave himself to the furtherance of the evening's pleasure, talking to first one and then the other, and later, with the ease of long usage, he waited on Mrs. Gibbons and Mrs. Crimm, serving them punctiliously with all that was included in the evening's refreshments. When there was nothing more that he could do I saw him sitting between Gracie Hurd the little shirtwaist girl, and Marion Spade, a waitress at one of the up-town restaurants, eating

his supper as they ate theirs, and they were finding him apparently somewhat more than entertaining.

From my corner where I poured tea I watched the pictures made by the different groupings and tried not to think of Selwyn. He was behaving well, but he didn't approve of what I was doing. He rarely approves of what I do.

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"Do let Mrs. Mundy bring you some hot oysters." I leaned over and spoke to Bettie Flynn, upon whom Mrs. Mundy and I were keeping watch lest she show signs of her old trouble. "And can't I give you a cup of coffee?" I held out my hand for her empty cup.

Bettie shook her head regarding the coffee, but handed her plate to Mrs. Mundy. "You certainly can give me some more oysters. I've been an Inmate for nine years and Inmates don't often have a chance at oysters. At the City Home your chief nourishment is thankfulness. You're expected to get fat on thankfulness. I ain't thankful, which is what keeps me thin, maybe." She turned to me. "My dress looks real nice, don't it? Seeing we're such different shapes, it's strange how good your clothes fit me. I hope the rats won't eat this dress. I'm going to keep it to be buried in. Good gracious! I didn't know you was going to have ice-cream and cake. I wouldn't have et all them oysters if I'd known."

When supper was over Dick Banister, who is Gracie Hurd's beau, asked me, with awkward bowing, for the first dance, and, beginning with him, I danced with every man in the room who made pretense of knowing how, except Selwyn. He did not ask me. Bravely, however, he did his part. He overlooked no one, and David Guard, watching, blinked his eyes a bit and smiled. Selwyn would make a magnificent martyr. A situation forced upon him is always met head up.

Mr. Crimm, who, like his wife, did not dance, though for different reasons, at a quarter to twelve took out his watch and, looking at it, got up with a start. "Come on, old lady, we've got to go." Taking his wife by the arm, he held out his hand to me. "It's been great, Miss Heath. I never had such a good time in my life. Good night, friends." He bowed beamingly, then made a special bow in Selwyn's direction.

"I'm glad to know you, sir. I used to know your father. I've heard many a case tried in his court. A juster man never lived. Good night, sir. Good night, Miss Heath."

When all good-bys were over and all were gone Selwyn, standing with his back to the fire, looked at me, but for a moment said nothing. As completely as if he had stepped from one body into another he seemed a different person from the man who had been most charming to my guests a few minutes before when he had told them good night as if he were, indeed, their host. Looking at him, I saw his face was haggard and worn and that he was nervously anxious and uneasy.

"It is late. I know I shouldn't stay." His voice was as troubled as his eyes. "I'm sorry to keep Mrs. Mundy up, but I must talk to you tonight. Again I must ask you what to do."

CHAPTER XXIII

“It’s pretty beastly in me to put this on you.” Selwyn, who had taken his seat in a chair opposite mine, first leaned back, then forward, and, hands clasped between his knees, looked down upon the floor. “I’ve kept away from you lest I trouble you with what I have no right—”

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"If you did not talk to me frankly I would be much more troubled." I drew the scarf about my shoulders a little closer. I knew what was coming. The thought of it chilled. "Is it about Harrie you are again worried?"

Selwyn nodded. "You knew he had left home? Knew he had taken a bachelor apartment downtown?"

"I heard it day before yesterday. Kitty told me. Billie is pretty upset about him. Being five years older and married, Billie is seeing life rather differently from the way Harrie takes it, and the latter's recklessness—"

Selwyn looked at me, then away. "The boy is beyond comprehension. I haven't seen him but once in nearly two weeks. Five days before Christmas he had his trunk and certain things sent down-town, and wrote me a note telling of the apartment he'd taken. I've been to see him several times, but he's never in and, I'm told, hasn't been in now for over a week. I've written him, made every inquiry likely to lead to information without exciting undue suspicion, and now, unless I go to the police—" Biting the ends of his close-cut mustache, Selwyn stopped abruptly.

"Does Mrs. Swink know he has left home?"

"If she doesn't, she'll know it to-morrow when she gets my answer to this." Taking a letter from his pocket, Selwyn threw it on the table behind me. "Later you can read that, if you've time to waste. I got it to-day. Harrie hasn't been to see Madeleine for over a week. Mrs. Swink wants to know why. Wants to know where he is. So do I."

"Didn't he dine with Mildred on Christmas day? I thought both of you were always there at Christmas."

"We are. When Mildred's Christmas dinner is over I thank God there will be three hundred and sixty-five days before she can have another one. Harrie was all right when he came in, but he took too much egg-nog, too much of other things Mildred had no business having, I tried to make him go home with me, but he wouldn't do it. Then I tried to go with him and he wouldn't let me do that either. Said he had an engagement with Miss Swink. He was not in a condition to fill it, but, thinking if she saw him Mrs. Swink might take in what she so far has failed to understand, I was rather glad he was going to keep his engagement. He didn't keep it."

"What did he do? Where did he go?"

Selwyn's face darkened. "I don't know. Nobody knows. He hasn't been in his apartment since Christmas day. His trunk and clothes are in his rooms, also his suit-cases and bags, and there is no evidence of his having gone off on a trip. I haven't told Mildred. She'd go into hysterics and tell the town Harrie had disappeared. Mrs. Swink,

however, had to be told something. Madeleine, I imagine, has given notice and her mother is sitting up.” Selwyn’s hands made gesture of disgust. “Her letter is inquisitorial and hysterical. My answer will give a bump, I imagine.”

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"You've clouded visions and waked her from sweet dreaming. She's been seeing herself in the Thorne house as the mother of its mistress. I don't mean to laugh, indeed I don't, but—" I did laugh. Mrs. Swink and Selwyn dwelling under the same roof was a picture beyond the resistance of laughter. Incompatibility and incongruity would be feeble terms with which to designate such a situation, and at its suggestion seriousness was impossible. That is, to me. In Selwyn's face was no smiling.

"If there have been any little dreams I'm glad she wrote me. In reply I had a chance to say what there has been no chance to say before. Were there imaginings that Harrie was to bring his wife to his old home they will cease when she gets my note. No house is big enough for a bride and groom and members of either family, and certainly mine isn't. I limited comment on Harrie to his financial condition; expressed regret at my inability to explain his failure to keep his engagement, and gave her no hint of my uneasiness. Only to you have I given it. Something is wrong. I'm afraid the boy is ill somewhere. The thing has gotten on my nerves. I've got to do something. I can't go on this way."

With eyes in which nervous uneasiness was unrestrained, Selwyn looked at me, asking unconsciously for help I could not give, and for a moment I said nothing. Possibilities of which I could not speak were clutching at my heart and making me cold with fear and horror, for suddenly something I had overheard a girl telling Mrs. Mundy a few days before, as I passed through the hall, came to me with cruel and compelling clearness. "He's a gentleman, all right. Drunk or sober, you can tell that. She ain't left him day or night since he was taken sick, and except the doctor she won't let any one come in the room."

The words of the girl talking to Mrs. Mundy repeated themselves with such distinctness that it seemed Selwyn would hear the thick beating of my heart and understand its wonder as to who the man was who was ill, who the girl who was nursing him. Did Mrs. Mundy know? Lest he notice that I, too, was nervous I got up and went over to a table in an opposite corner of the room and drank a glass of water. Coming back, I took my seat, but Selwyn remained standing, and, taking out his watch again, looked at it.

"I must go. Had I known you were to have a party"—he smiled faintly—"I should not have come. You are too tired to stay up longer. Forget what I've told you and go to sleep. If tomorrow you can suggest anything— I'm pretty ragged and don't seem able to think clearly. You are keener than I in grasping situations, and quicker in making decisions. Whatever you think might be done—" Again his teeth came down upon his lips, and, looking up, I saw his face was white.

"Give me a day or two in which to see what can be done. And you won't mind if I ask Mr. Crimm's advice?" I seemed pushing the girl I'd heard talking to Mrs. Mundy behind me. "He hasn't been able to find Etta Blake yet. Do you suppose her disappearance could have any connection with Harrie's? It may be he really loves her."

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Selwyn turned away. "Love is hardly a term to be used in connection with an acquaintanceship such as theirs. A girl with a past, possibly—"

"How about his past?"

"I think you understand pretty well my opinion of his past. But as long as theories yield to accepted custom a man's past will be forgotten, a woman's remembered. Harrie, if married, would be received anywhere, provided he married a woman of his world. This little girl would have to pay her price and his, were she his wife, for no one would receive her. That's hardly the question before us, however. To find where Harrie is, find if anything is wrong, if he's ill—"

The sharp, sudden ringing of the telephone on the table behind me made me start, and, jumping up like a frightened child, I stood close to Selwyn. "Who on earth— It's half past twelve. Who can want me at this time of night?" I started to take the receiver from its hook, but, laughing at me, Selwyn got it first.

"One would think a spook was going to spring at you. Central's given the wrong number, I guess. Hello! Who is that?"

Watching with as strained eagerness as if I were hearing, I saw Selwyn lean forward, after admitting that the number wanted was the right one, and heard him ask again: "Who is it? Who did you say?"

For the next five minutes there was snatchy, excited, and incoherent conversation over the telephone, during which Selwyn and I alternated in the talking in an effort to learn what Tom Cressy was saying at the other end of the line, and what it was he wanted me to do. Tom's voice was not distinct and caution was making it difficult to understand what we finally got from him, which was that he wanted to bring Madeleine down to spend the night with me; that they had started to go away to be married and missed the train by one minute, owing to an accident to the automobile they were in. The next train did not leave until 4 A.M. Could Madeleine stay with me until train time?

"No, she can't!" Hand over the telephone transmission, Selwyn turned to me. "They've got no business mixing you up in this. You'll be blamed for the whole thing. I'm going to tell him to take her back to the Melbourne. They can make another try some other time. Tom must be crazy!"

"Most people in love are. You've never been desperate." I laughed and took the receiver from him. "Madeleine's courage will be gone after tonight and Tom's afraid to risk waiting. Get up and let me talk."

Over the telephone I could hear Madeleine crying and I told Tom to bring her down. Her two-penny worth of nerve and dash had given out and she was frightened. Incoherently

I was told by Tom that Madeleine was being persecuted, and he wouldn't stand for it any longer, and the only thing for them to do was to get married. Hadn't it been for a durned tire—"

"Come on down." I heard a little cry. "And hurry. It's pretty late."

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Mrs. Mundy, who had been told of their coming, opened the door for them in dressing-gown and slippers, and piloted them up-stairs and into my sitting-room, where Madeleine, at sight of Selwyn, burst into tears and buried her face on my shoulder. But the ten minutes were not entirely lost which passed before we understood why the venture had been decided upon at this particular time, and how hard luck had prevented its fulfilment. Tears are effective. Selwyn weakened as rapidly as I could have wished.

"I haven't seen Harrie for two weeks. Ever since I've been here he's been writing me he was sick." Madeleine's words came stumblingly, and the corners of her handkerchief were pulled with nervous movements in between the wiping of her pretty brown eyes. "The day after Christmas I wrote him, breaking our engagement. I've never heard from him since. I don't even know that he got my letter." Questioningly she looked at Selwyn, and her face, already colored, crimsoned yet more deeply.

"Neither do I." Selwyn's voice was gentle. Indignation at his and my involvement in what was not an affair of ours seemed to have vanished. "I redirected a number of letters to his new address, but—"

"His new address?" Madeleine looked puzzled. "I didn't know he had a new address."

"He is not living at home just now." The flush in Selwyn's face deepened also. "I have not seen him since Christmas day. But go on. I did not mean to interrupt you."

"Three days ago Madeleine told her mother she'd broken with Harrie and was going to marry me." Tom was no longer to be repressed. "She's had the devil of a time ever since, and yesterday I told her she shouldn't stand it any longer, and neither would I. Harrie has hypnotized her mother. She thinks—"

"I'm unkind and unsympathetic and hard and cruel to give him up because he is not well. It isn't that. You know it isn't that—" Madeleine's fingers twisted in appeal and again her eyes were on Selwyn. "You think it's dreadful in me not to marry your brother —"

"No, I don't. I think it would be much more dreadful in you if you did marry him." Selwyn's hands made gesture. "However, we'll leave that out. You say you told your mother you intended to marry Tom?"

Handkerchief to her lips, she nodded. "I told her, and Tom wrote her, asking her consent. She wouldn't give it, and said I was ungrateful and had no ambition, and that if she had a stroke I'd be the cause. She's never had a stroke and is very healthy, but—"

Bursting into fresh tears, Madeleine this time hid her face in her hands, and Tom, wanting much to comfort, miserably ignorant of how to do it, and consciously awkward

and restrained in the presence of witnesses, stood by her side, his hand on her shoulder, and at sight of him I reached swift decision.

“I’m glad you told her. You’ve been open and square and asked her consent. One can’t wait indefinitely for consent to do things.” I got up and took Madeleine by the hand.

“Come in my room and take off your hat and coat. When we come back we’ll talk about what is best to do.”

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Five minutes later we were back and, eyes bathed and face powdered, Madeleine gave evidence of fresh injections of courage, and quickly we began to plan. The 4 A.M. train was the best to take, but for half an hour we talked of whether Shelby or Claxon was the better town to go to for the marriage ceremony, which at either place could be performed without the consent of parent or guardian, and irrespective of the age of the applicants for the same. Though preferring Shelby, Tom agreed to Claxon on my insisting on the latter place, which was the Mecca for runaway couples from our section of the state. If I were going with them—

“Going with them?” The inflection in Selwyn’s voice was hardly polite. “You don’t intend —”

“Yes, I do. They’ve made a mess of the first try and they’ll be caught and brought back if somebody isn’t there to keep them from being held up. I’m going with them.”

“How do you expect to hold off—the holding up?” Selwyn was staring at me and anxiety concerning Harrie was for the time in abeyance. He needed something to distract him. “What are you going to do?” he asked.

“I don’t know—don’t have to know until to-morrow—I mean later to-day.” I motioned toward the hall and, following me into it, he partly closed the door behind us. “We’ll let those children have a chance to say good night, and then please go home. And don’t look at me like that! I don’t approve of runaway marriages any more than you do. I’d never be a party to one, because I wouldn’t marry an angel-man before I was twenty-one. Afterward running away wouldn’t be necessary. Tom and Madeleine are not entirely to blame.”

“The blame for this will be put on you. Mrs. Swink will credit you with the instigation and carrying out of the whole affair. You mustn’t go with them, Danny. It isn’t necessary.”

“Maybe it isn’t, but I’m going. I can’t let a girl of Madeleine’s age leave the house alone at half past three in the morning, and certainly I cannot let Tom come here for her. We will get to Claxon at ten o’clock and by that time Mrs. Swink will have finished her swooning and be working the wires. They’ll certainly be held up at Claxon.”

“Then why go there? Why not go on to Shelby?”

I shook my head. “Claxon is the better place. I don’t know how it’s going to be managed, but if one couldn’t outmanoeuvre mother Swink—. It doesn’t matter about my being blamed for helping them. Long usage has accustomed me to large shares of blame.” I held out my hand. “I’ll be back to-morrow night. Come Thursday. I think by then—”

“There are few things you will let me share with you, but the blame that will come from this I am going to share whether you let me or not. I’ve gotten you into it and we’ll see it through together. If you are going with them, I am going also. Good night.” He dropped the hand he was holding and turned away. “Tell Tom I’m waiting, will you?”

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CHAPTER XXIV

Telling Madeleine not to unpack her bags, I gave her one of my kimonos and ordered her to lie down while I slipped down-stairs for a few words with Mrs. Mundy. There was time for only a hurried talk, but during it I told her what I wanted her to do, what she must get Mr. Crimm to do, and also, if inquiry was made for me during the coming day she was to say I was out and she did not know just when I would be in. As Mrs. Swink was unaware that her daughter had made frequent visits to Scarborough Square at the same time Mr. Thomas Cressy happened to be there, she was hardly apt to associate me with their departure from the city; still, with less justice I have been held responsible for things with which I had nothing to do, and, that Mrs. Mundy be prepared for possible questions, I gave her a few instructions concerning them.

She recalled clearly the conversation of which I had heard a few words, but the girl talking to her had not mentioned the name of the girl of whom she talked, or of that of the man who was being nursed by her.

"She spoke of her as a friend who was a fool to care for a man as she cared." Mrs. Mundy put her hand to her mouth to cover a yawn. "She said—"

I got up. It was too late for details. "Find the girl who came to see you, and if the friend of whom she is speaking is Etta Blake, get her address and go to see her, if you can. If not, send Mr. Crimm. Tell the latter he must find Harrie. He may be somewhere under an assumed name. So may Etta Blake. Do you suppose it is possible they—can be together somewhere?"

"Anything is possible." Mrs. Mundy blinked her eyes bravely to prevent my seeing the overpowering sleep in them, and quickly I went to the door.

"It's a shame you have to go to the train with us. You can come right back, however, and sleep as late as you want. The cab will be here at three-thirty. Take a nap until then, and don't look so worried. I'm not committing a crime. I'm helping to keep some one else from committing one. Good night." I kissed the dear soul and, leaving her, hurried up-stairs.

Madeleine was lying down when I came back in the room, and, wanting much to talk, she began to do so, but unfeelingly I made her stop. Getting out the oldest and shabbiest dress I possessed, with a hat to correspond, I took off my party dress and slipped into a warm and worn wrapper. After putting a few things in a bag, without further undressing, I stretched out on the couch near the foot of the bed and in the dark called to Madeleine.

"You won't be a beautiful bride if you don't get some sleep. Shut your eyes." Mine were shut. I wasn't going to be married. I was only a very tired maiden-lady about to do

something she had no business doing, and shamelessly I went to sleep and left Madeleine awake.

Seemingly I had slept but a few minutes when, opening my eyes, I saw Madeleine standing, fully dressed, by the side of my couch, and looking down at me. “It’s ten minutes past three,” she said. “I hate to wake you, but—”

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Springing up, I threw off my wrapper and reached down for my shoes. "If you'd waked me before you put on your dress you wouldn't have to take it off. You're going to wear that dress." I pointed to the one on the chair behind her. "I'm sorry your wedding garments can't be more festive, and that I'll have to wear your good clothes, but we mustn't run risks merely for pride. Take your dress off quickly and give it to me. Don't look at me, but hurry."

Madeleine's mind does not work as quickly as some people's, and a little time was lost in explaining that any description to which she would answer would have to apply to me, not her. In consequence the cab was at the door before she was fully garmented in my plainest clothes and I arrayed in her beautiful ones, and regretfully she looked at me. I am taller and slenderer than Madeleine, but fashion was in my favor, and the absence of fit and shortness of skirt gave emphasis of adherence to its requirements. I looked the part. She didn't.

At the station Tom and Selwyn were waiting and their puzzled incomprehension was even greater than Madeleine's had been. Explanations included a few suggestions as to the wisdom of our separating and, the men agreeing, Selwyn and I went in the Pullman, and poor little rich Madeleine and Tom to a day-coach, where crying babies and peanut-hulls and close air and torn papers would have made them wretchedly unhappy had they not been happily unconscious of them. I was sorry for them, but marriage involves much. As the train pulled out I waved from the window to Mrs. Mundy, who, on the platform, waved back with one hand and with the other wiped her eyes. Mrs. Mundy loves me, but she, too, does not always approve of me.

Travel evidently was light. The sleeper in which we found ourselves had barely two-thirds of the berths made up, and, the rest of the seats being empty, we took ours in a corner where in an undertone we could talk and not disturb others. Taking off Madeleine's handsome fur coat and newest hat I put the latter in its paper bag and gave the former to Selwyn to hang on a hook. Gloves and other things being disposed of, I again sat down and suggested that he, also, make himself comfortable, and at the same time change his expression.

"Later you can smoke, but at present you will have to be in here where I'm compelled to look at you. The photographic injunction to look pleasant oughtn't to apply only to the taking of pictures. For the love of Heaven, sit down, Selwyn, and behave yourself!"

Selwyn hung up his hat and coat and took the seat opposite mine. From him came radiation of endurance, and, objecting to being endured, I spoke impatiently. I did not care to be traveling at four o'clock in the morning any more than he did, but much in life has to be done that isn't preferable. He had invited himself to take the trip. His desire to share any criticism coming to me for my part in it was sincere, but rather than shielding it might subject me to an increased amount. For the first time such a possibility came to me, and, looking up, I saw his eyes were gravely watching me.

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"I thought I was behaving. I'm willing to play the part properly if I know the part, but I don't know it. Your intimations have been indefinite."

"There's been no time for any other sort. When Mrs. Swink learns that Madeleine and Tom have run away she will begin to ask where, and somebody will certainly suggest Claxon."

"Then why go to Claxon?"

"They're not going to Claxon. We are going there. Just this side is a little station at which they can take a local for Shelby. They will change at this station and go to Shelby while we keep on to Claxon and get off there."

"But last night you insisted on their going to Claxon." Selwyn's voice implied that a woman's methods of management were beyond a man's understanding.

"Inquiries will be made as to who bought tickets for Claxon. Mrs. Swink will have the whole police department running around for clues and things. I told you not to buy tickets. Did you?"

"I did not. I'm taking orders and doing what I'm told, but, being new at it, I don't work as smoothly as I might. Is there any special reason why I shouldn't have bought tickets?"

"There is." I opened my pocket-book, and, taking out a note, handed it to him. "I'll take breakfast with you but I'll have to pay my railroad fare. I didn't want you to get tickets, because if two couples bought them it would cause confusion and telegrams might be sent to Shelby also. I didn't have time to think it all out last night. I only knew Tom and Madeleine must seemingly go to Claxon and yet not go. I wasn't sure what could be done, but after you decided to come I thought we could play the part and give them time to be married at Shelby."

"You mean you and I are to pretend we are somebody else, mean—"

Selwyn's voice was protestingly puzzled. Impersonation did not appeal.

"There'll be no necessity to pretend. If a sheriff, with orders to do so, takes charge of us he will hardly believe our assertion that we are not the parties wanted. He's used to that. All we will have to do is to wait until Tom and Madeleine come back. When they show as proper a marriage certificate as a dairy-maid and farmer-laddie ever framed he will let us go. You don't look as if playing groom to my bride pleases you. I'm sorry, but —"

Into Selwyn's eyes came that which made me turn mine away and look out of the window. Unthinkingly I had invited what he was going to say. "Playing groom does not interest me. Why play? And stop looking out of the window." He changed his seat and

took the one beside me. “Look at me, Danny. Why can’t we be married at Claxon? We’ll wait for those children to come back and then—”

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"Is that exactly fair?" I drew away the hands he was hurting in his tense grip. "I hardly thought you'd take—" I shut my eyes to keep back quick tears for which there was no accounting. Something curious was suddenly possessing me, something that for weeks I had seemed fighting and resisting. An overmastering desire to give in; to surrender, to yield to his love for me, to mine for him, was disarming me, and swift, inexplicable impulse to marry him and give up the thing I was trying to do urged and swept over me. And then I remembered his house with its high walls. And I remembered Scarborough Square. Until there was between them sympathy and understanding there could be no abiding basis on which love could build and find enrichment and fulfilment. Straightening, I sat up, but I was conscious of being very tired.

"Please don't, Selwyn." The hand I had drawn away I held out to him. "We must not think or talk of ourselves to-day. This is not our day."

"But I want my day." His strong fingers twisted into mine with bruising force. "I have waited long for it. For all others you have consideration, but my happiness alone you ignore. You seem to think my endurance is beyond limit. How long are you going to keep this thing up? Some day you are going to marry me. Why not to-day?"

I shook my head. "I cannot marry you today. Take care—" The conductor was coming down the aisle toward us.

CHAPTER XXV

By the time we learn a few of the lessons life teaches we stop living. I should have known it is the unexpected that happens, but I forgot it. What I expected at Claxon did not come to pass.

At a little station a few miles east of the tiny town to which we were going, Tom and Madeleine left our train and waited for a crawling accommodation to Shelby, where, later, they would be married. From the car window I waved to them and tried to transmit a portion of my courage, for which there was no credit, and of my enjoyment, of which I should have been ashamed and was not ashamed. A taste for adventure will ever be a part of me, and I was getting much more pleasure out of an unexpected experience than Madeleine was. The playing of shadow to her substance was not so serious for me as for her, and then, too, I had the joyful irresponsibility of not going to be married. I do not want to be a married person yet.

As we left the car at Claxon I glanced in the mirror at the end of our coach and was pleased. About me was a bridal atmosphere that was unmistakable. Madeleine's clothes were new and lovely and I looked well. So did Selwyn. As we reached the platform I was undecided whether to cling timidly to Selwyn's arm or to walk bravely apart, and the indecision, together with the certainty that some one would put a hand on

Selwyn's shoulder and say words I had never before heard, made my heart beat with a rapidity that was as genuine as if I were soon to become a bride in very truth. The sensation was exhilarating. I liked it.

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On the platform of the little station a few negroes in overalls, two boys, and five men, having apparently nothing to do, were hanging around, hands in their pockets; and, looking about me, I waited. Nothing happened. Ahead of us and across a muddy road half a dozen stores, hunched together in a row of detached and shabby frame houses, with upper stories seemingly used for residential purposes, comprised the business portion of the little town, and on our right the post-office, telegraph and express offices, and telephone exchange were in the one large building of the place. Out of each window facing us some one was looking, and in the open door a man was standing, hat off and sweater-coated, who, at regular intervals, and with unfailing accuracy of aim, ejected tobacco juice into a puddle of water some distance away. No one but ourselves got off the train, and, its stay at the station being short, the attention of the loungers near by and those resting themselves on boxes and barrels in front of the stores across the road was turned determinately to us. I looked at Selwyn. In his face was relief. In mine was anxiety and, I'm afraid, disappointment. The situation was flat.

I had read various accounts of runaway marriages which had taken place at Claxon, several of which had only succeeded after eluding the sheriff, waiting under orders from irate parents to arrest them; and feeling confident Mrs. Swink would wire the proper person to prevent the marriage of her daughter, I looked around for the one most likely to do the work. No one appeared. What if my plan had failed and Madeleine, in my unwedding garments, was to be taken into custody in Shelby? I turned to Selwyn.

"Do you suppose—" My voice was low. A man close to me, with hands in his pockets, hat on the back of his head, and his left cheek lumpy, was looking at us appraisingly. "Do you suppose anything will happen at Shelby? Nothing is happening here."

Selwyn's sigh of relief was long. "If nothing happens here I'll thank God. To keep it out of the papers would have been impossible. Stay here while I see if there is a decent hotel." He looked around speculatively. In the distance a man could be seen on horseback coming down the road which wound from the top of a mountain to the valley below, while at our left a covered ox-cart, a farm wagon, and a Ford car were waiting for their owners. Nothing in which we could ride, however, was seemingly in sight. A sudden desire to go somewhere, do something, possessed me. The day was mild, and the air clean and clear and calling, and the sunshine brilliant. It was a beautiful day. We must go somewhere.

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For weeks I had been face to face with cruel conditions of life, had seen hardships and denials and injustices, and dreary monotony of days, and I wanted for a while to get away from it all, to breathe deep of that which would renew and reinforce and revitalize; wanted to be a child again, and, with Selwyn as my playmate, wander along the winding road with faces to the sun, and hearts of hope, and faith that God would not forget, and the world would yet be well. If nobody was going to do anything to us, if we were not needed to play a part, the hours ahead could be ours. The train on which we were to return did not leave until three-thirty. I looked at my watch. It was ten-thirty.

“Get something from somebody.” My hand made movement toward the men about us and then in the direction of the shacks and sheds and cabins of the negroes, scattered at wide intervals apart from the village, which consisted of a long, rambling street with a white frame church at one end, a gray one at the other, a court-house in the middle, and a school-house at its back. “Get a buggy and something you can drive and let’s have a holiday—just by ourselves. What is that house over there?”

I pointed to a square, old-fashioned red-brick building set well back from the road and surrounded by great oak-trees, and smaller ones of birch and maple and spruce and pine, and shrubs of various kinds. It was Claxon’s one redemption. Shading my eyes, I read the tin sign swinging in the wind from a rod nailed at right angles to a sagging post at its gateless yard. “Swan Tavern.” The name thrilled. I was no longer a twentieth-century person, but a lady of other days, and if a coach and four with outriders had appeared I would have stepped in it with delight. It did not appear, nor was Selwyn suddenly in knee-breeches and buckles and satin coat and brocaded vest. Not even my imagination could so clothe him. His practicality recalled me.

“I’ll go over and find out what sort of place it is, and see if we can get anything to ride in. Perhaps this man can tell me. Wait here.” He put out his hand as if to prevent my speaking first to the man. I didn’t intend to speak to him.

The man could tell him nothing. He lived seven miles back and had come to the station to meet a friend who had failed to appear. There were teams in the neighborhood that might be gotten. Swan Tavern didn’t have any. Used to, but most people nowadays, specially drummers, wanted automobiles, and old Colonel Tavis, who owned the place, wouldn’t let an automobile come in his yard. Perhaps Major Bresee might let him have his horse and buggy. The person who gave the information changed his quid of tobacco from his left to his right cheek and, spitting on the ground below the plank-loose platform on which we were standing, pointed to a one-room office-building down the street, then again surveyed us. Two or three men across the road came over, and two or three others hanging around the station drew nearer and nodded to us, while both of the boys, hands in their pants pockets, stared up at Selwyn as if something new had indeed come to town.

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From each of the group, now uncomfortably close to us, the impression radiated that the right of explanation was theirs as to why we should appear in Claxon with no apparent purpose for so appearing. Seemingly we were not the sort who usually applied for aid to the minister of the little town, known far and near for his matrimonial activities, and just what we wanted was a matter concerning which they were entitled to enlightenment. They said nothing, but looked much. Frowningly, Selwyn bit his lip. Presently he spoke.

"Can you tell me where I can get a horse and buggy for a few hours?" He looked first at one man and then another. "We have to wait here for friends who will return with us on the three-thirty train, and we'd like to see something of the country round about here while we're waiting. Can we get lunch over there? And what time do they have it?" His hand pointed to Swan Tavern.

"Don't have lunch. Dinner's at twelve o'clock." The man farthest away took his hands from the pockets of his pants and put them in those of his coat. "I reckon you can get Major Bresee's horse and buggy if he ain't using 'em. The horse ain't much, but it moves along. Want me to see if I can get him for you?"

"I would be very much obliged." Selwyn turned to me. "Shall we have the buggy sent over to us while we see about lunch?" he asked, but not waiting for an answer spoke again to the man whose kindly offices he had accepted. "If you can get anything we can ride in comfortably, bring it over, will you? And bring it as soon as you can."

Lifting his hat, he turned from the staring strangers and helped me down the three rickety steps that led to the road across which we had to go before turning in to the tree-lined lane that led to the quaint old tavern; and as we walked we were conscious of being watched with speculation that would become opinion as soon as we were out of hearing.

Picking our way through the mud, we soon reached the house, and at its door an untidy old gentleman, with the grace and courtesy of the days that are no more, greeted us as a gracious host greets warmly welcomed guests, and we were led to a roaring fire and told to make ourselves at home.

As he left the room to call his wife I touched Selwyn's arm and pointed to an open book on an old desk near the window at which travelers were supposed to register. "Ask him if he can't have a lunch fixed for us to take with us. Then you won't have to register or explain. Tell him anything will do, and please to hurry!"

He did not hurry. Nobody hurries in Claxon. It was twelve o'clock before the buggy was at the door, a basket of lunch in it, and good-bys said; and giving a last look around the big, dusty, sunshiny room with cobwebs on its walls and furniture in it that would have made a collector sick with desire, I walked out on the porch, and with me went the three

dogs which had been stretched in front of the big log fire. Together we went down the steps.

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Tucking a robe around me, the old gentleman nodded to Selwyn. "Don't let your wife get cold, suh, and don't stay out too long. The sun's deceiving and it ain't as warm as it looks." Being deaf, he spoke loudly. "The battlefields are to your left about half a mile from the creek with a water-oak hanging over it, and nigh about two miles from here. You can't miss 'em. Over yonder"—he pointed to the top of a modest mountain—"is where we had a signal station during the war. The view from there can't be beat this side of heaven. I ain't sure the battlements of heaven itself—"

But our horse had started and Selwyn, looking at me, laughed. "Battlefields have their interest, but not to-day. It's nice, isn't it, to be—just by ourselves and all the world away? Are you all right? I have orders to keep my wife warm."

"She's very warm. Where are we going?" I turned from Selwyn's eyes.

"I don't know. Don't care. It is enough that we are to be together."

"Wouldn't you feel better if you said 'I told you so'? Any one would want to say it. It was a pretty long trip to take unnecessarily, and as we haven't been of service we needn't have come. I'm sorry—"

"I'm not." Selwyn, paying no attention to the horse, who had turned into the road leading to the top of the mountain, kept his eyes still on me. "I don't deserve what has come of our venture, but I shall enjoy it the more, perhaps, because of undeserving. It is just 'we two' to-day. I get so mortally tired of people—"

"I don't. I like people. Perhaps if I only knew one sort I would get tired of them. I used to think my people were those I was born among, but I'm beginning to glimpse a little that my family is much larger than I thought, and that all people are my people. Still—" I laughed and drew in a deep breath of pine-scented air.

"Still—?" Selwyn waited.

"It *is* nice to get away from everybody now and then, and be with just you. I mean—" Certainly I had not meant to say what I had said, and, provoked at my thoughtless revealing, at the chance it would give Selwyn to say what I did not want him to say, I stopped abruptly, then quickly spoke again. "Why don't you make the horse go faster? We'll never get to Signal Hill at this rate. He's crawling."

"What difference does it make whether we get anywhere or not? I don't want to get anywhere. To be going with you is enough. You are a cruel person, Danny, or you would not make me go so long a way alone."

"I am not making you go alone. It is you who are making me. I am much more alone than you." Again I stopped and stared ahead. What was the matter with me that I

should be saying things I must not say? In the silence of earth and air I wondered if Selwyn could hear the quick, thick beating of my heart.

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On the winding road no one was in sight, and from our elevation a view of the tiny town below could be glimpsed through the bare branches of the trees of the little mountain we were ascending; and about us was no sound save the crunch of the buggy-wheels on the gravel road, and the tread of the slow-moving horse. It was a new world we were in—a kindly, simple, strifeless world of peace and plenty, and calm and content, and the crowded quarters close to Scarborough Square, with their poignant problems of sin and suffering, of scant beauty and weary joy, seemed a life apart and very far away. And the world of the Avenue, the world of handsome homes and deadening luxuries, of social exactions and selfish indulgence, of much waste and unused power, seemed also far away, and just Selwyn and I were together in a little world of our own.

“We might as well have this out, Danny.” An arm on the back of the buggy, Selwyn looked at me, and in his eyes was that which made me understand he was right. We might as well have it out. “For three years you have refused to marry me, and now you say you are more alone than I. We’ve been beating the air, been evading something; refusing to face the thing that is keeping us apart. What is it? You know my love for you. But yours for me— You have never told me that you loved me. Look at me, Danny.” He turned my face toward him. “Tell me. Is it because you do not love me that you will not marry me?”

“No.” A bird on a bough ahead of us piped to another across the road, and as mate to mate was answered. “It is not because I do not love you—Selwyn. I do—love you.” The crushing of my hands hurt, but he said nothing. “I shall never marry unless I marry you—but I am not sure—we should be happy.”

“Why not? Is there anything that man could do I would not do to make you happy? All that I am or may be, all that I have to give—and of love I have much—is for you. What is it, then, you fear? Your freedom? I should never interfere with that.”

I shook my head. “It is not my freedom. What I fear is our lack of sympathy with, our lack of understanding of, certain points of view. We look at life so differently.”

“But certainly a woman doesn’t expect a man to think just as she thinks, to feel as she feels, to see as she sees, nor does he expect her to see and feel and think his way in all things. As individuals they—”

“Of course I wouldn’t expect, wouldn’t want my husband to feel toward all things as I feel. I would not want a stupid husband with no mind of his own! You know very well it is nothing of that sort. If, however, we cared not at all for the same sort of books; if we saw little alike in art and literature, in music or morals, in science or religion; if the same interests did not appeal; if to the same impulse there was no response—we could hardly hope for genuine comradeship. In most of those things we are together, but life is so much bigger than things, and in our ideas of life and what to do with it we are pretty far apart.”

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"Are we? Are you very sure? Are you perfectly sure, Danny, that we are so very far apart?"

Something warm and sweet, so tempestuously sweet that it terrified, for a moment surged, and, half-blinded, I looked up at him. "Do you mean—?" My fingers interlocked with his.

"That I would like to live in Scarborough Square?" He smiled unsteadily and shook his head. "No, I wouldn't know how to live there. I wouldn't fit in. I am just myself. You are a dozen selves in one. But I am beginning to see dimly what you see clearly. Concerning my selfishness there is certainly nothing hazy. The walls around my house have been pretty high, and perhaps they should come down. You have much to teach me. I have a habit of questioning—"

"So have I. All thinking people question. But in spite of my questioning, perhaps because of it, I know now that my life—must count. It isn't mine to use just for myself, or in the easiest way. If there's anything to it, I've got to share it. Down in Scarborough Square I've been seeing myself in the old life, and when I go back to it I cannot—keep silent concerning what I have learned. I think perhaps we've failed—the men and women of our world even more discouragingly than the men and women of the worlds I've learned to know. As your wife you might not care to have me say—"

I stopped, silenced by the view which lay revealed before us, then I gave a little cry. Peak after peak of tree-filled mountains raised their heads to a sky of brilliant blue whose foam-clouds curled and tumbled in fantastic shapes, and in the valley below was the silence and peace of a place unpeopled. I turned to Selwyn, and long resistance yielding to that for which there was no words, I let him see the fulness of surrender. For a long moment we did not speak, then I drew away from his arms. "We must get out. It is a heavenly vision. I want—"

Getting down from the high, old-fashioned buggy, Selwyn held his arms out to me, lifted me in them to the ground. "I, too, want here—my heavenly vision." It was difficult to hear him. Drawing my face to his, he kissed me again. "You have told me that you loved me. *You are mine and I am going to marry you.*"

He turned his head and listened, in his face something of the old impatience. The soft whir of an automobile broke the silence of the sun-filled, breeze-blown air, and I made effort to draw away from Selwyn's arms. "Some one is coming," I said, under my breath. "Shall we go on or stay here?"

"Stay here. Why not?" Frowningly, Selwyn for a moment waited, then, with his hand holding mine, we walked nearer the edge of the mountain's plateau and looked at the ribbon-like road that wound up to its top. The noise of the engine was more distinct

than the car, but gradually the latter could be seen clearly, and presently three figures were distinguished in it.

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"They'll have to pass us. There's no other way." Words not utterable were smothered under Selwyn's breath. "A few more minutes and they'll be going down the mountain, however, and will soon be out of sight. Are you cold? Do you mind staying up here for a little while—with all the world away?"

"No. I want to stay." I leaned forward. In the machine, now near enough to see that two people were in its back seat and the driver alone in front, there was also leaning forward; then hurried movement, then the man behind got up and waved his hat, and the girl beside him got up also.

Slowly Selwyn turned to me, in his eyes rebellious protest. "It is Mr. and Mrs. Cressy, and there's no way of getting rid of them. They've motored over instead of waiting for the train. Have they no sense, no understanding?"

"And they think they've been so considerate in hurrying to us!" The tone of my voice was that of Selwyn's. "Is there nothing we can do?"

"Nothing—unless we tell them to wait here while we go over to Shelby. The reward of virtue was never to my taste! Our one day together—"

He turned away, but quickly I followed him; in his hand slipped mine. "I'm sorry, Selwyn—but there will be another day—be many days."

CHAPTER XXVI

Many undeserved blessings have come to me in life and have made me temporarily meek and humble, but when punishments come which are unwarranted, meekness and humility (of which I have never possessed a sufficient amount, inasmuch as I am a person without money) disappear, and I am not a lowly-minded lady. I was punished for my part in helping Tom and Madeleine get married by action of Mrs. Swink that was as astounding as it was unexpected. Mrs. Swink is a wily woman. She has little education and large understanding of human nature. She knows when she is beaten. In a woman such knowledge is unusual.

The day after our return from Claxon she appeared in my sitting-room in Scarborough Square and, throwing her arms around me, kissed me three times. She attempted a fourth kiss, which I prevented, and followed the kisses with an outburst of tears that was proportionate to her person in volume and abundance. Feeling as one does who is overtaken by a shower when the sun is shining, I made effort to draw away, but my head was again pressed on her broad bosom, and with fresh tears I was thanked for my kindness in chaperoning her daughter on her matrimonial adventure; an adventure which would have subjected her to much criticism had I not been along. Also Mr. Thorne. The unexpectedness of these thanks was disconcerting and, with an

expression that was hardly appreciative of the pose she was assuming, I finally rescued myself from her arms and, drawing off, looked at her for explanation. Mrs. Swink is not a person I care to have kiss me.

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"Oh, my dear, you do not know the anguish of a mother's heart! You couldn't know it unless you were a mother, and when you are one I hope your heart won't be wrung as mine has been wrung! But poor, dear Mr. Swink always said bygones ought to be bygones, and now they're married I suppose it's a bygone and I ought not to let my heart be wrung; but it is, and I've been thinking about poor, dear Mr. Swink all day." She took her seat and, wiping her eyes and nose, began to cry again. "Oh, my dear, you don't know the anguish of a mother's heart!"

"Would you like a fresh handkerchief?" I asked. The one in Mrs. Swink's hand was too wet for further use. I started toward my bedroom door, but she shook her head.

"I've got two or three, I think. I'm so easily affected when my heart is wrung that I have to keep a good many on hand. But I had to come and thank you. It would have been so dreadful for them to have gone off alone. It makes it very different to have had you and Mr. Thorne along. Yes, indeed—a mother's heart—"

What was she up to? Fearing that my face would indicate too clearly that I was not deceived by her change of tactics, I shielded it from the fire by the screen, close to the chair in which I sat, and made effort to wait politely, if not with inward patience, for what I would discover if I only gave her time. Something had happened I did not understand. I had forgotten the letter Selwyn had sent her.

"They went away an hour ago on their wedding-trip." A fresh handkerchief was drawn from the heaving bosom for the fresh tears which again flowed. "My poor head is all in a whirl. So many things had to be done, though Madeleine wouldn't take but one trunk and no maid, though I told her she could have Freda, and there are so many things that have got to be attended to before they get back that I don't know where to begin, and I had to come down here right away and thank you the first thing. And of course she will have to have a trousseau, for her poor, dear father wouldn't like it if she didn't have one, and the best that could be bought. He was very particular, her father was, and I know he would thank you, too, if he could. And there will have to be a reception, and it's about that, and a few other things, I felt I must talk to you this morning, being you are responsible, in a way, for the marriage—"

"I am nothing of the sort. You are responsible for its being the sort of marriage it was. I went with them because—"

"Yes, indeed, I understand! Tom says it was splendid in you and I had to come and thank you. Everybody will take it so differently when they know you and Mr. Thorne were along. I think it was noble in Mr. Thorne when his poor brother wanted so much to marry Madeleine. I feel it was such a narrow escape—her not marrying him. I've been hearing all sorts of sad things about him lately. Real sad. I was deceived in him."

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"Who deceived you?"

I might as well not have asked the question. No attention was paid to it.

"He was such a dear boy, Harrie was. So handsome and his family so well known, and he was so in love with Madeleine that I was deceived in him. Yes indeed, I was deceived. A woman is so helpless where men are concerned."

"She isn't a bit helpless unless she prefers to be. A great many women do. Had you made any inquiries concerning Harrie's character?"

"In my day it wasn't expected of a woman to make inquiries." Mrs. Swink's voice was that of righteous reserve. "It's very hard on a mother to ask questions about character and things like that. I knew of the Thorne family very well, and of the Thorne house, which I thought Harrie would live in until he and Madeleine could build a modern one, and— Oh no, my child, you don't know the anguish of a mother's heart! You don't know!" Tears not of anguish, but of blighted ambition, caused the flow of words to cease temporarily, and light came to me. Selwyn's letter had done the work.

Harrie being eliminated, the fat old hypocrite was trimming her sails with hands hardened from long experience. Her embraces and gratitude were a veer in a new direction. In a measure I was to be held to account for the present situation; in a sense to be social sponsor for Mrs. Thomas Cressy. A homeless Harrie, disapproved of by family and friends, would not have made a desirable son-in-law, and I had been seized upon as the most available opportunity within reach to bring her daughter's marriage desirably before the public. Mrs. Swink had seemingly little understanding of the little use society has for people who do not entertain. I do not entertain.

Nothing was due her, but hoping if I promised help she might go away, I suggested the possibility of Kitty's entertaining Tom and Madeleine on their return from their wedding-trip, and at the suggestion the beady little eyes brightened, and immediately I was deluged with details of the reception she had determined to give the bride and groom, implored for help in making out the list of guests to be invited, and begged to be one of the receiving party. The last I declined.

When at last she was safely gone I locked the door and sprayed myself with a preparation that is purifying. I was dispirited. There are times when the world seems a weary place and certain of its people beyond hope or pardon.

Last night I had a talk with Mrs. Mundy. She had seen the girl I overheard speaking of an ill man who was being nursed by some one she knew, and this girl had admitted that the "some one" was Etta Blake. By another name she had been living in Lillie Pierce's world. For the past two weeks, however, she had been away from it. When Mrs. Mundy told me, something within gave way, and my head went down in my arms, which



fell upon the table, and I held them back no longer—the aching tears which came at last without restraint. “The pity—oh, the pity of it!” was all that I could say, and wisely Mrs. Mundy let me cry it out—the pain and horror which were obsessing me. Hand on my head, she smoothed my hair as does one’s mother when her child is greatly troubled, and for a while neither of us spoke.

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I had feared for some time what I knew now was true, and it was not for Etta alone that pity possessed me. Somehow, for all young girlhood, for the weak and wayward, the bold and brazen, the unprotected and helpless, I seemed somehow responsible, I and other women like me, who were shielded from their temptations and ignorant of the dangers to which they were exposed; and Etta was but one of many who had gone wrong, perhaps, because I had not done right. Something was so wrong with life when such things could happen, as through all ages had happened; things which men said were impossible to prevent. Perhaps they are, but women are different from men in that they attempt the impossible. When they understand, this, too, must be attempted—

After a while Mrs. Mundy began to tell me what she had learned. It was an old story. The girl who told her of Etta was a friend of the latter's and had been a waitress in the same restaurant in which Etta was cashier. It was at this restaurant that Harrie met her.

"She was crazy to think he meant to marry her," the girl had told Mrs. Mundy, "but at first she did think it. For some time he was just nice to her, taking her to ride in his automobile, and out to places where he was not apt to meet any one he knew, and then—then—"

"She doesn't blame Harrie, though. That is, at first she didn't. She was that dead in love with him she would have gone with him anywhere, but after a while, when she found out the sort he was, she—cursed him. It was about the child they had a split."

"Was it born here?" I was cold and moved closer to the fire.

Mrs. Mundy shook her head. "He sent her to a hospital out of town, but when she came back with the child he told her she would have to send it away somewhere, put it in some place, or he'd quit her. He seemed to hate the sight of it. It was on account of the child they had a fuss. Etta wouldn't give it up. She can be a little fury when she's mad, the girl said, and they had an awful row and he went off somewhere and stayed four months. She tried to get work, but each time some one told about her and she was turned off because—of the child. At one place one of the bosses tried to take some liberty with her and she threw an ink-bottle at him and he drove her away. She knew there wasn't any straight way left to her after that unless she starved or went in a rescue place. She tried to get in one and take the baby with her, but it was full, and then, too, she kept hoping she could get work. Then the baby got sick and needed what she couldn't give it, and after a while she gave up. She got a woman to look after the child, promised to pay her well, and went down into Lillie Pierce's world. Since the day she went she has never been out except to see the baby, until two weeks ago, when she moved into a decent place and took two rooms. Harrie had come back to her."

"How old is the child?"

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"Ten months. She never intended it to know anything of its mother. She hoped she would die before it was old enough to understand. It's a little girl. Etta is eighteen."

The room grew still and, getting up, Mrs. Mundy put more coal on the fire, made blaze spring from it, warm and red. I waited for her to go on.

"It seems like Mr. Harrie can't stay away from her, the girl says. He never sees the child, though. The other woman, who's married and has children of her own, still keeps it for her. She's named Banch." Mrs. Mundy looked up. "I've found where the Banches live. It's only two squares from where Etta is now living."

"But Harrie?" I turned off the light behind me.

"He is with Etta. He was taken ill on Christmas night. Except the doctor, no one knows he is with her. He would have been dead by now had it not been for Etta, the doctor says. He had pneumonia. Mr. Guard and Mr. Crimm have gone to see him to-night, to see when he can be moved away."

"And Etta—what will become of her?"

Mrs. Mundy looked into the fire. "What can become of any girl like that but to go back to the old life? She's an outcast forever."

"And he—" I got up. All the repression of past ages was breaking into revolt. "He will go home and feed on the leaven of Pharisees and hypocrites, and later he will marry a girl of his world, and the world that will give him welcome will keep Etta in her hell. I wonder sometimes that God doesn't give us up—we who call ourselves clean and good! We are a lot of cowards, most of us women, of 'fraid-cats and cowards!"

My hands made gesture, and, going to the window, I looked out, ashamed of my outburst. Beating one's head against the walls of custom and convention accomplished nothing. All sane people agreed concerning the injustice of one person paying the price of the sin of two people; all normal ones admitted that what was wicked in a woman was wicked in a man, but agreement and admission were terms of speech. Translation into action would have meant a bigger price than even sane and normal and righteous people were willing to pay. Men could hardly be blamed, but women should be, for the continuance of old points of view. Women are no longer ignorant or dependent, and the time for silence and acceptance is past. Perhaps the women of Lillie Pierce's world are not so much to be despaired of as some of mine and other sheltered worlds; the soulless, spineless, selfish ones who cannot always justly draw their skirts aside, and yet do draw them with eyebrows raised, and curling lips, and gesture that means much. I, too, have been a coward. I, too, have been long asleep. But there were other women who had been making splendid fight while I was wasting time, and at thought of them came courage, and under my breath I prayed God to make it grow.



“You must bring Etta here.” I turned from the window. “I want to talk to her, to see if something can’t be done. Surely something can be done! She might get some rooms not far from here and take the child to live with her. Mr. Thorne will doubtless make his brother go away. Can you see her to-morrow and bring her here?”

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Mrs. Mundy got up. "You are dead tired and ought to go to bed. Night before last you didn't sleep two hours, and I heard you up late last night. You mustn't take things too hard, Miss Dandridge." She put her warm hands on my cold ones. "You're young, but for over thirty years I have been looking life in the face, and I've learned a lot that nothing but time can teach. One of the things is that we all ain't made in the same mold, and our minds and hearts ain't any more alike than our bodies. Every day we live we have to get in a new supply of patience and politeness to keep from hitting out, at times, at folks who don't see our way. Some people ain't ever going to look at things they don't want to see, or to listen to what they don't want to hear, but there ain't as many people like that as you think. There's many a woman in this world to-day that God is proud of; in the Homes and places what they're the head of, and on their boards and things they are learning that all women are their kin, and after a while they'll make other women understand. I'll see Etta to-morrow, and if she will come I will bring her to see you. But until Mr. Harrie is gone she won't come—won't leave him. Sometimes it seems a pity he didn't die. Go to bed, Miss Dandridge! you are all tired out."

CHAPTER XXVII

For two weeks Etta Blake refused to come to Mrs. Mundy's, refused to see the latter when she went to see her, to see me when I went; but yesterday she came to both of us. Ten days ago Harrie was taken to Selwyn's home and is now practically well. Mr. Guard tells me he is going away; going West.

I have seen Selwyn but twice since he learned where Harrie was found, and then not alone. Both times some one was here and he stayed but a short while. He has bitten dust of late and even with me he is incased in a reserve that is impenetrable. There has been no chance to mention Harrie's name had he wished to do so. I do not know that he will ever mention it again. Selwyn is the sort of person who rarely speaks of painful or disgraceful things.

I was in my sitting-room when Mrs. Mundy came up with Etta. As the latter stood in the doorway prayer sprang in my heart that I would not shrink, but the heritage of the ages was upon me, and for a half-minute I could only think of her as one is taught to think—as a depraved, polluted creature, hardly human, and then I saw she was a suffering, sinful child, and I took her hands in mine and led her to the fire.

To see clearly, see without confusion, and with no blinding of sentimental sympathy, but as woman should see woman, I had been trying to face life frankly for some months past; yet when I saw Etta I realized I had gone but a little way on the long and lonely road awaiting if I were to do my part. And then I remembered Harrie. He had gone back to the proudest, haughtiest home in town; and Etta—where could Etta go?

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Hatless, and in a shabby dress, with her short, dark, curly hair parted on the side, she looked even younger than when I had first seen her, but about her twisting mouth were lines that hardened it, and in her opalescent eyes, which now shot flame and fire and now paled with weariness, I saw that which made me know in bitter knowledge she was old and could never again be young. Youth and its rights for her were gone beyond returning.

She would not sit down; grew rigid when I tried to make her. "You want to see me?" She looked from me to Mrs. Mundy and back again to me. "What do you want to see me about? Why did you want me to come here?"

"We want to talk to you, to see what is best for you to do." I spoke haltingly. It was difficult to speak at all with her eyes upon me. They were strange eyes for a girl of eighteen.

"Best for me to do?" She laughed witheringly and turned from the fire, her hands twisting in nervous movements. "There are only two things ahead of me. Death—or worse. Which would you advise me—to do?"

Without waiting for answer the slight shoulders straightened and went back. Scorn, hate, bitterness were in her unconscious pose, and from her eyes came fire. "If you sent for me to preach you can quit before you start. There ain't anything you can do for me. I'm done for. What do people like you care what becomes of girls like us? Maybe we send ourselves to hell, but you see to it that we stay there. You're good at your job all right. I hate you—you good women! Hate you!"

I heard Mrs. Mundy's indrawn breath, saw her quick glance of shock and distress, then I went over to Etta. She was trembling with hot emotion long repressed, and, as one at bay, she drew back, reckless, defiant, and breathing unsteadily.

"I do not wonder that you hate us. I am sorry—so sorry for you, Etta."

For a full minute she stared at me as if she had not heard aright and the dull color in her face deepened into crimson, then with a spring she was at the door, her face buried in her arms. Leaning heavily against it, she made convulsive effort to keep back sound.

"Sorry—oh, my God!" In a heap she crumpled on the floor, her face still hidden in her hands. "I did not know—in all the world—anybody was sorry. You can't be sorry—I'm a ___"

I motioned Mrs. Mundy to go out. "Leave her with me," I said. "Come back presently, but leave her awhile with me."

Going over to the window, I stood beside it until the choking sobs grew fainter and fainter, and then, turning away, I drew two chairs close to the fire and told Etta to come

and sit by me. For a while neither of us spoke, and when at last she tried to speak it was difficult to hear her.

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"I didn't mean to let go like that. I wouldn't have done it if you hadn't said—you were sorry. You've no cause to be sorry for me. I'm not worth it. I was crazy—to care as I cared. I ought to have known gentlemen like him don't marry girls like me, but I didn't have the strength to—to make him leave me, or to go away myself. And then one day he told me it had to be a choice between him and the baby. He seemed to hate the sight of the baby. He said I must send it away." Swaying slightly, she caught herself against the side of the table close to her, and again I waited. "She's a delicate little thing, and I couldn't put her in a place where I didn't know how they'd treat her. He told me it had to be one or the other—and I'd rather he'd killed me than made me say which one. But I couldn't give the baby up. She needed me."

"And then—" My voice, too, was low.

"He got mad and went away. I thought I hated him, but I can't hate him. I've tried and I can't. When he came back and found where I was living—" A long, low shiver came from the twisting lips. "About five weeks ago I moved to where he was taken sick. And now—now he has gone home again and I—" She got up as if the torment of her soul made it impossible for her to sit still, and again she faced me. "It doesn't matter what becomes of me. What do rich people and good people and people who could change things care about us? And neither do they care what we think of them, and specially of good women. Do you suppose we think you really believe in the Christ who did not stone us? We don't. We laugh at most Christians, spit at them. We know you don't believe in Him or you'd remember what He said."

She turned sharply. Mrs. Mundy with Kitty behind her was at the door. The latter hesitated, and, seeing it, Etta nodded to her. "Come in. I won't hurt you. You need not be afraid."

Speaking first to Etta, Kitty kissed me, and I saw she had come up-stairs because she, too, was wondering if there was something she could do. Kitty is no longer the child she once was. She is going, some day, to be a brave and big and splendid woman. At the window she sat down, and as though she were not in the room Etta turned toward me.

"You said just now you wanted to help. Wanting won't do that!" She snapped her fingers. "You've got to stop wanting and will to do something. Men laugh at the laws men make, but we don't blame men like we blame women who let their men be bad and then smile on them, marry them, and pretend they do not know. They do not want to know. If you made men pay the price you make us pay, the world would be a safer place to live in. Men don't do what women won't stand for."

Kitty leaned forward, and Etta, with twisting hands, looked at her and then at Mrs. Mundy and then at me, and in her eyes was piteous appeal. "There's no chance for me, but I've got a little baby girl. What's going to become of her? In God's name, can't you

do something to make good women understand? Make them know the awfulness—awfulness—”

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Again the room grew still and presently, with dragging steps, Etta turned toward the door. Quickly I followed her. She must not go. I had said nothing, gotten nowhere, and there was much that must be said that something might be done. To have her leave without some plan to work toward would be loss of time. She was but one of thousands of bits of human wreckage, in danger herself and of danger to others, and somebody must do something for her. I put my hand on her shoulder to draw her back and as I did so the door, half ajar, opened more widely. Motionless, and as one transfixed, she stared at it wide-eyed, and into her face crept the pallor of death.

Selwyn and Harrie were standing in the doorway.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Stumbling back as if struck, Harrie leaned against the door-frame, and the hat in his hand dropped to the floor. Selwyn, too, for a half-minute drew back, then he came inside and spoke to Etta, and to me, and to Mrs. Mundy, and to Kitty. Pushing a chair close to the fire, he took Harrie by the arm and led him to it.

"Sit down," he said, quietly. "You'll be better in a minute."

Harrie had given Etta no sign of recognition, but the horror in his once-handsome face, now white and drawn, told of his shock at finding her with me, and fear and recoil weakened him to the point of faintness. In his effort to recover himself, to resist what might be coming, he struggled as one for breath, but from him came no word, no sound.

Infinite pity for Selwyn made it impossible for me to speak for a moment, and before words would come Mrs. Mundy and Kitty had gone out of the room and Selwyn had turned to Etta.

With shoulders again drawn back, and eyes dark with fear and defiance, she looked at him. "Why have you come here?" she asked. "What are you going to do? You've taken him home and left me to go back to where he drove me. Isn't that enough? Why have you brought him here?"

"To ask Miss Heath to say what he must do. That is why I have come." Pushing the trembling girl in a chair behind Harrie's, Selwyn looked up at me. "You must decide what is to be done, Dandridge. This is a matter beyond a man's judgment. I do not seem able to think clearly. You must tell me what to do."

"I? Oh no! It is not for me. Surely you cannot mean that I must tell you—" The blood in my body surged thickly, and I drew back, appalled that such decision should be laid upon me, such responsibility be mine. "What is it you want—of me?"

“To tell me—what Harrie must do.” In Selwyn’s face was the whiteness of death, but his voice was quiet. “I did not know, until David Guard told me, that there was a child, and that Harrie was its father, and that because of the child Etta would not go away as I had tried to make her. I did not know she had no father or brother to see that, as far as possible, her wrong is righted. I want you to forget that Harrie is my brother and remember the girl, and tell me—what he must do.”

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From the chair in which Harrie sat came a lurching movement, and I saw his body bend forward, saw his elbows on his knees, his face buried in his hands, and then I heard a sudden sob, a soft, little cry that stabbed, and Etta was on the floor beside him, crouching at his feet, holding his hands to her heart, and uttering broken, foolish words and begging him to speak to her, to tell her that he would marry her—that he would marry her and take her away.

“Harrie—oh, Harrie!” Faintly we could hear the words that came stumblingly. “Could we be married, Harrie, and go away, oh, far away, where nobody knows? I will work for you—live for you—die for you, if need be, Harrie! We could be happy. I would try—oh, I would try so hard to make you happy, and the baby would have a name. You would not hate her if we were married. She was never to know she had a mother, she was to think her real mother was dead and that I was just some one who loved her. But if we were married I would not have to die to her. Tell me—oh, tell me, Harrie, that we can be married—and go away—where nobody knows!”

But he would tell her nothing. With twitching shoulders and head turned from her he tried to draw his hands from those which held his in piteous appeal, and presently she seemed to understand, and into her face came a ghastly, shuddering smile, and slowly she got up and drew a deep breath.

As she stood aside Harrie, with a sudden movement, was on his feet and at the door. His hand was on the knob and he tried to open the door, but instantly Selwyn was by him, and with hold none too gentle he was thrust back into the room.

“You damned coward!” Selwyn’s voice was low. “She is the mother of your child, and you want to quit her; to run, rather than pay your price! By God! I’ll see you dead before you do!”

Again the room grew still. The ticking of the clock and the beat of raindrops on the windowpanes mingled with the soft purring of the fire’s flames, and each waited, we knew not for what; and then Etta spoke.

“But you, too, would have to pay—if he were made to pay—the price.” She looked at Selwyn. “It is not fair that you should pay. I will go away—somewhere. It does not matter about the baby or me. Thank you, but— Good-by. I’m going—away.”

Before I could reach her, hold her back, she was out of the room and running down the steps and the front door had closed. Mrs. Mundy looked up as I leaned over the banister. “It is better to leave her alone to-day,” she said, and I saw that she was crying. “We can see her to-morrow. She had better be by herself for a while.”

Back in the room Selwyn and I looked at each other with white and troubled faces. We had bungled badly and nothing had been done.



“Come to-morrow night. I must see David Guard, must see Etta again, before I— Come to-morrow and I will tell you. I must be sure.” I turned toward Harrie, but he had gone into the hall. Quickly my hands went out to Selwyn, and for a long moment he held them in his, then, without speaking, he turned and left me.

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CHAPTER XXIX

I know I should not think too constantly about it. I try not to, but I cannot shake off the shock, the horror of Etta's death. Selwyn inclosed the note she wrote him in the letter he sent me just before leaving with Harrie for the West, but he did not come to see me before he left.

When I try to sleep the words of Etta's note pass before me like frightened children, crying—crying, and then again these children sing a dreary chant, and still again the chant becomes a chorus which repeats itself until I am unnerved; and they seem to be calling me, these little children, and begging me to help make clean and safe the paths that they must tread. I am just one woman. What can I do?

I knew Etta was dead before Selwyn received her note. Mrs. Banch, the woman who kept the child for her, came running to Mrs. Mundy the day after Etta had been to see me, and incoherently, sobbingly, with hands twisting under her apron, she told us of finding Etta, with the baby in her arms, lying on her bed, as she thought, asleep. But she was not asleep. She was dead.

"She had done it as deliberate as getting ready to go on a long journey," the woman had sobbed. "Everything was fixed and in its place, and after bathing and dressing the baby in a clean gown, she wrote on a piece of paper that all of its clothes were for my little girl, and that she wouldn't do what she was doing if there was any other way."

With a fresh outburst of tears, the woman handed me a half-sheet of note-paper. "Bury us as we are," it read. "I am taking the baby with me.—Etta."

"We will come with you." Mrs. Mundy, who had gotten out her hat and coat to go to see Etta before Mrs. Banch came in, hurriedly put them on, while I went for mine, and together we followed the woman to the small and shabby house in the upper part of which Etta had been living for some weeks past; the lower part being occupied by an old shoemaker and his wife who had been kind to her; and as we entered the room where the little mother and her baby lay I did not try to keep them back—the tears that were too late.

"Last night I was standing in the door when she came by with a letter in her hand." As Mrs. Banch talked, she was still quivering from the shock of her discovery, and her words came brokenly. "On her way back from mailing it I asked her to come in and set with me, but she wouldn't do it; she said she was going to take the baby with her to spend the night, as she didn't want to be by herself; and, going up-stairs, she wrapped her up good and took her away with her. I don't know why, but I felt worried all last night, and this morning I couldn't get down to nothing 'til I ran around to see how she was and how the baby was, and when I went up in her room—" The woman's work-worn

hands were pressed to her breast. “God—this world is a hard place for girls who sin! It don’t seem to matter about men, but women—” Presently she raised her head and looked at us. “I never seen a human being what had her spirit for enduring. She paid her price without whining, but something must have happened what she couldn’t stand. She had a heart if she was—if she was—”

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Two days later, as quietly as her life had ended, Etta's body, with her baby on its breast, was put into the ground, and mingled with David Guard's voice as he read the service for the dead was the far-off murmur of city noises, the soft rise and fall of city sounds. With Mrs. Mundy and Mrs. Banch, the old shoemaker and his wife, I stood at the open grave and watched the earth piled into a mound that marked a resting-place at last for a broken body and a soul no one had tried to reach that it might save, but I did not hear the beating of the clods of clay, nor the twittering of the birds in the trees, nor the wind in their tops. I heard instead Etta's cry to Kitty and to me: "In God's name, can't somebody do something to make good women understand!"

It is these words that beat into my brain at night; these and the words I did not speak in time and which, on the next day, were too late. The note she sent Selwyn also keeps me awake.

"I am going," she wrote, "so the thought of me will not make you afraid. You tried to help me, but there isn't any help for girls like me. I am taking the baby with me. I want to be sure she will be safe. It would be too hard for her, the fight she'd have to make. I can't leave her here alone. *Etta.*"

Last night David Guard came in for a few minutes. Leaning back in a big chair, he half closed his eyes and in silence watched the flames of the fire, and, seeing he was far away in thought, I went on with the writing of the letter I had put aside when he came in. I always know when he is tired and worn, and I have learned to say nothing, to be as silent as he when I see that the day's work has so wearied him he does not wish to talk. At other times we talk much—talk of life and its possibilities, of old cults and new philosophies, of books and places; of the endless struggles of men like himself to be intellectually honest and spiritually free. But oftenest we speak of the people around us, the people on whom the injustices of a selfish social system fall most heavily; and among them, sharing their hardships, understanding their burdens, recognizing their limitations and weaknesses, leading and directing them, he has found life in losing it, and it now has meaning for him that is bigger and finer than the best that earth can give.

Presently he stirred, drew a long breath as one awaking, but when he spoke he did not turn toward me.

"I saw Mr. Thorne the night before he left with Harrie for his friend's ranch in Arizona. He is going to give him another chance, and it's pretty big of him to do it, but I doubt if anything will come of it. Harrie belongs to a type of humanity beyond awakening to a realization of moral degeneracy; a type that believes so confidently in the divine right of class privilege that it believes little else. Harrie's failure to appreciate the hideousness of certain recent experiences has made them all the more keenly felt by his brother. I have rarely seen a man suffer as the latter has suffered in the past few days, but unless I am mistaken—"

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The pen in my hand dropped upon the desk, and for a while I did not speak. Then I got up and went toward David Guard, who had also risen. "You mean—" The words died in my throat.

"That he is beginning to understand why you came to Scarborough Square; to grasp the necessity of human contact for human interpretation. He, too, is seeing himself, his life, his world, from the viewpoint of Scarborough Square, and what he sees gives neither peace nor pride nor satisfaction. He will never see so clearly as you, perhaps, but certain cynicisms, certain intolerances, certain indifferences and endurances will yield to keener perception of the necessity for new purposes in life." He held out his hand. "He needs you very much. I've got to go. Good-by."

For a long time I sat by the fire and watched it die. Was David Guard right, or had it been in vain, the venture that had brought me to Scarborough Square? I had told Selwyn I had come that I might see from its vantage-ground the sort of person I was and what I was doing with life; but it was also in the secret hope that he, too, might see the kindred of all men to men, the need of each for each, that I had come. If together we could stand between those of high and low degree, between the rich and the poor, the strong and the weak, with hands outstretched to both, and so standing bring about, perhaps, a better understanding of each other, then my coming would have been worth while. But would we ever so stand? All that I had hoped for seemed as dead as the ashes on the hearth. I had brought him pain and humiliation, drawn back, without intention, curtains that hid ugly, cruel things, and for him Scarborough Square would mean forever bitter memories of bitter revealing. I had failed. I had tried, and I had failed, and I could hold out no longer.

Getting up, I pressed my hands to my heart to still triumphant throbbing. It had won, I did not hate his house. I hated its walls. But I could no longer live without him. I would marry him when he came back.

CHAPTER XXX

My hands in his, Selwyn looked long at me, then again drew me to him, again raised my face to his. "A thousand times I've asked. A thousand times could give myself no answer. Why did you wire me to come back, Danny?"

"You were staying too long."

He smiled. "No; it was not that. There was something else. What was it?"

"I wanted to see you."

He shook his head. "What was it? Why did you send for me?"

“To—tell you I would marry you whenever you wish me to—”

His face whitened and the grip of his hands hurt. Presently he spoke again. “But there was something else. You had other reasons. Surely between us there is to be complete and perfect understanding. What is it, Danny?”

I drew away and motioned him to sit beside me on the sofa. In the firelit room faint fragrance of the flowers with which he kept it filled crept to us, and around it we both glanced as if its spirit were not intangible; and at unspoken thought his hands again held mine.

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"You sent for me—" He leaned toward me.

"Because I heard—an unbelievable thing. David Guard tells me—you have sold—your house. I can think of nothing else. Tell me it is not true, Selwyn! Surely it is not true!"

"It is true."

With a little cry my fingers interlaced with his and words died on my lips. As quietly as if no fight had been fought, no sleepless nights endured, no surrender made at cost of pride beyond computing, he answered me, but in his face was that which made me turn my face away, and in silence I clung to him. The room grew still, so still we could hear each other's breathing, quick and unsteady, then again I looked up at him.

"But why, Selwyn? Why did you sell your house?"

"You would not be happy in it. You do not care for it. I am ready now to live—wherever you wish."

"But I am ready, too, to live—where you wish. Don't you see it does not matter where one lives? What matters is one must be very sure—one cannot live apart, and that one's spirit must have chance. Why did you not tell me, Selwyn? Why did you do this without letting me know?"

"You would have told me not to do it; would not have consented. There was no other way to be sure that I was willing—to do my part. I know now there is something to be done, know I must no longer live behind high walls."

"But the house will be needed when the walls come down! It is not where one lives, but how, that counts. You must not sell your house."

"But I have sold it—" Something of the old impatience was in his voice, then the frown faded. "There was no other way—to be sure. Were the walls down— I did not think, perhaps, that walls could be anywhere. It is too late now. The house was sold while I was away. The papers will be signed next week."

Again the room grew still and I made effort to think quickly, definitely. I was not willing that Selwyn should make such sacrifice for me. I would let the sunshine into his house and love it when its cold aloofness became friendly warmth, and together we could learn in it what life would teach. The house must not be sold, but how prevent? I bent my head down to the violets on my breast, drew in deep breath. Suddenly a thought came to me. I looked up.

"When a man sells a piece of property doesn't his wife have to sign the papers as well as himself?"

“She does.” Selwyn smiled.

“And the sale couldn’t be consummated unless she signed them?”

“It could not. You know the law.” Again he smiled. “Not having a wife—”

“But you will have—before those papers are ready to be signed. I am not going to sign them. I mean— Don’t you see what I mean?”

“I’m not quite sure I do.” Selwyn’s voice was grave, uncertain. “Is it that—”

“We will have to be married next week and then you can tell the party who wants your house that your wife does not wish it to be sold. Put the blame on me. It would be disappointing to many people if there was not something, even about my marriage, for which they could criticize me. You mustn’t sell the house, Selwyn. That is why I wired you to come. I was afraid it might be too late—if I waited.”

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Still doubting, Selwyn looked at me as if it could not be true, that which I was saying, and again the room grew still. Then—

Presently, and after a long and understanding while, he broke its stillness, though when he spoke it was difficult to hear him. “We will always keep them, these rooms in Scarborough Square. We will need them as well as the house without its walls. And I — You must have patience with me, Danny. Are you sure you have enough?” “I have not quite as much as you will need for me. And yet—when there is love enough there is enough of all things else. We have waited long to be sure. Surely—oh, surely now—”

“We know?” He bent lower. “Yes, I think now—we know.”

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