

FANATIC  
OR  
CHRISTIAN?

*by*

HELEN R.  
MARTIN





*Jemie Dart*

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**FANATIC OR CHRISTIAN?**

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TILLIE, A MENNONITE MAID

WARREN HYDE

WHEN HALF-GODS GO

# FANATIC OR CHRISTIAN?

A STORY OF THE PENNSYLVANIA DUTCH

BY

HELEN R. MARTIN

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“Are we preserving freedom in this land of ours, the hope of all the earth? . . . We stand in danger of utter failure, except we . . . speedily . . . deal with the new and subtle tyrannies according to their deserts. Don't deceive yourselves for a moment as to the power of the great interests which now dominate our development. They are so great that it is almost an open question whether the government of the United States can dominate them or not. Go one step farther, make their organized power permanent, and it may be too late to turn back.”

WOODROW WILSON in *The New Freedom*

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**FANATIC OR CHRISTIAN?**





# FANATIC OR CHRISTIAN?

## CHAPTER I

**S**TELLA SWARTZ looked at her younger sister, Gertrude, with sharp, calculating scrutiny. Was it going to be a difficult task to manage her in the impending crisis? That it would be an impossible one never occurred to her; for when Stella Swartz greatly desired a thing, obstacles in the way of attainment only stimulated her indomitable energies. It seemed almost funny to imagine any difficulty in managing Gertrude in *any* contingency; in turning that amiable, yielding creature peremptorily Right-about-Face to march where her superior officer commanded; for Stella was, and always had been, a born Major General; while Gertrude, too good-natured as well as too indolent to protest, had all her life let herself be shoved here and there by Stella like a pawn on a chess board. Nevertheless—

Stella's keen examination of the young girl, four years her junior, seated on the grass a few feet away from her, grew sharper. There was that one instance of insubordination of three years ago—

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it seemed unbelievable, even yet, that she, Stella, had been worsted in that conflict of their wills; that her easy-going, lackadaisical sister had actually, against the formidable opposition of her mother and herself, taken a stand, held to it and won! That instance, however, stood alone; the only time in all their lives that Gertrude had not been entirely acquiescent to Stella's dominance in the family.

"Until that question of her going to college came up, I never thought she had any backbone. But it seems that it is only when she is indifferent that she is yielding. In cases where she couldn't possibly be indifferent—in such big affairs as marriage—and money—will she oppose me again, I wonder?"

The look of a warrior girding herself for battle came into Stella's eyes.

"She hasn't father to back her up now," she told herself.

The girls were both in mourning.

"What good has it done you, anyway—your going to college three years?" she interrupted Gertrude's reading to demand.

Gertrude, startled, dropped her book to her lap.

"What did you say?"

"I asked you, Gertie, what good your three years at college have done you anyway?"

"A large order, sister, to expect me to tell all that in a sentence at a moment's notice," Gertrude answered in the hesitating, half apologetic tone habitual to her in speaking to Stella, so ingrained

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was her life-long sense of feeling herself a troublesome superfluity in Stella's scheme of life.

Yet Stella realised as she looked at her that although her countenance, like her voice, was mellow and womanly, it was by no means weak or characterless. What lent it character, however, and even distinction seemed to be, oddly enough, the expression of amiable drollery about the mouth, an expression at once arresting and winning; and agreeably at variance with the almost puritanic austerity of the earnest eyes and brow.

"You know, Gertie, you never hurt yourself studying when you did go to college, though of course I know you consider yourself intellectual."

"I studied only what interested me. 'No profit goes where is no pleasure ta'en. In brief, sir, study what you most affect,'" said Gertrude as she yawned, stretched, and raised herself from the ground to a chair. Stella, in another garden chair, was busily embroidering a piece of linen while she speculated and talked. It was five o'clock on a May afternoon and they were sitting on the wide shady lawn of their home; a tea table between them; a hammock suspended from two great trees a few yards away; several rustic chairs standing about on the well-kept expanse of green.

Their home on the edge of the town was one of the most pretentious estates in the small Pennsylvania Dutch city, New Munich. The large red brick house was built in the so-called "Queen Anne"

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style of forty years ago and was set in the midst of several acres of beautifully laid out land. In the rear of the grounds was a garage containing a variety of cars; there was a tennis court, a croquet lawn, summer houses covered with vines, an orchard of fruit trees. Withal the place looked inviting, home-like, comfortable. It suggested a family life of ease, pleasure and even of luxury.

"Those three years at college were the best of my life, Stella, so far. Of course I hope to have even better ones. They've helped to prepare me for better ones."

"Sounds like a Christain Endeavour address! Please be definite! What practical good have they been to you?"

"Practical good?"

"Of course that's the last thing you'd think of—the practical good to be got out of spending over two thousand dollars in going to school after you were already entirely educated!"

"Well, suppose father's sudden death had left us poor—I'd be equipped to earn my living."

"But it hasn't. So that's out. What else?"

"I'm afraid I'm a little vague as to what you mean by practical good. Apart from earning one's living, what is it?"

"Practical good in the case of a woman can mean only one thing—social advantage and a good marriage. As I so strongly protested when the question of your going to college was first brought up, so I

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still say—one year at a first-class finishing school like the one I attended would have given you more social advantage than three years at college.”

“But as social advantage was not what I was seeking—not what you mean by social advantage anyway—”

Gertrude paused a moment, then continued, “Stella, college has helped me to lay hold on the best that life has to offer—the best that the great of the earth have wrought and thought. You don’t get that at a finishing school. At college you at least learn how and where to seek for it.”

“If you ask me, I say it has damaged your chances for making a good marriage. The young men in New Munich are afraid of you. And you are educated so far beyond them that you don’t care for them.”

“Yet most of the young men that come here to see us (or rather you) are college men.”

“I know. But you can’t see it on them as you can on a woman who has been to college! They seem to escape (what did you call it?) the ‘laying hold on the best that the great of the earth have wrought and thought.’ Gee! Fancy Harry’s going to college for anything like that! I certainly can’t see that it ever made any great difference in him—his four years at Yale.”

“Harry certainly came through unscathed,” Gertrude admitted. “He always was very agile in eluding learning. But you wanted him to go to college.”

“My brother—of course. What showing does a

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young man have if he doesn't belong to a college fraternity? But in your case—well, I try to conceal it from people that you are a high-brow! Or get round it by saying that you write for the magazines. And of course they think that's simply grand!"

"That I write for all the leading magazines," proclaimed Gertrude. "And of course you don't have to add that the leading magazines do not publish what I write for them."

"Of course I don't. On the whole your going to college has been a real detriment."

"Oh, I don't know. I think I'm equipped for a little higher usefulness than if I had not gone. And my old age may be less barren."

"Stuff! Is it going to help you to *marry* more successfully—that's the only question of importance."

"More happily, I hope."

"There's no use talking, men don't like intellectual women."

"I've noticed myself that they don't go mad over *me*—but, Stella, dear, it's not my colossal intellect, it's my figure. If I had your figure, they'd overlook my Miltonian brains."

"All your figure needs is a little plumping up; and if you can't accomplish that with milk and eggs, cotton wadding is cheap. You are a nice height; your face is pretty, your colouring lovely. It has always puzzled me that you attract men so much

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less than I do. I'm not nearly so good-looking. And you have the faculty, as I haven't, of making men laugh—they find you droll, even witty—though I never could see it!”

“I know you couldn't. But I am. The trouble with you is my humour is too subtle for you. You like Charlie Chaplin, I prefer Henry James. Why, there are people who don't know that Henry James is a humourist; just as they don't know that Bernard Shaw is almost the greatest living teacher because almost the only intellectually fearless teacher. But as I said, Stella, you have not only a figure, you have a fascination.”

Stella, twenty-seven years old, had never since her thirteenth year been without a train of suitors. Gertrude, on the contrary, was almost a social wall-flower, though three times in her girlhood she had been startled out of her indifference to the men of her (or rather, of her sister's) set, by finding herself most ardently adored.

“The only three men who ever fell in love with you, Gertrude, were perfectly impossible. Impecunious and ordinary. You have now been home from college eight months and you are twenty-three years old. It's time you thought about getting married.”

“After you, sister.”

“You know perfectly well I couldn't be spared from home. What on earth would mother do without me, now that she hasn't father?”

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It was not quite clear to Gertrude why Stella was so indispensable at home. To be sure she did manage things very capably; their comfortable household moved as on oiled wheels. And even the factory manager whom she had employed after their father's death consulted with her and deferred to her judgment. Nevertheless—

“We *could* live our lives without her regulating them, if she'd only believe it!” thought Gertrude. In her heart she knew that it was not so much the needs of the family as an opportunity for a more dazzling marriage than any which had as yet presented itself that had thus far kept Stella unmarried. The needs of the family would never stand in the way of anything she really wanted. Gertrude had always been secretly amused at her sister's pose of a lofty self-sacrifice, for only in so far as the advancement of the family's social and other fortunes were indissolubly bound up with her own did Stella further them.

Gertrude had always taken it for granted that Stella expected some day to marry brilliantly—more brilliantly than would be possible in the little factory town of New Munich where their wealth was produced while they themselves toiled not. Indeed, one day when Stella had been expatiating on the qualifications she would require in the applicant for her hand, Gertrude had ventured the audacious comment, “But such a paragon might just possibly think himself too good for *you*, Stella.”



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Gertrude's gentle irony, however, usually rolled very easily off from Stella's rather obtuse sensibilities.

"The reason you are not very popular with men, Gertrude," Stella now affirmed, "is that you're too indifferent to them, whereas, the thing to do is to flatter their egotism. Put your mind on it and make them aware of you. You're pretty enough and young enough to do anything you please with a man."

Gertrude did not reply.

"You certainly hope to marry, Gertie, don't you?"

"To tell you the honest truth, Stella," said Gertrude, lowering her voice and taking her sister into her confidence, "if there were any other way of having children, I'd be delighted to dispense with the care of a husband. But I do want a few children."

"Then stir yourself and get married."

"Why do you want me to?"

"You can't stay on here at home indefinitely."

Gertrude looked at Stella in surprise. "Why not?—when it isn't a question of money."

"But in a way it *is* a question of money."

"Isn't there plenty?"

"I don't see why a daughter, any more than a son, should live on a mother."

"But my night classes for the factory hands? My day nursery for their babies? Why, Stella, I work."

"And it is all a waste of your time that I am

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beginning to think does our factory people a lot of harm. They're utterly unappreciative and ungrateful."

"I couldn't stand gratitude from them, the poor wretches! Gratitude to us!—when every dollar we have is created by their slavish labour for us!—for which their compensation is the barest living—while we live in comfort and ease!"

"Absurd! Has Capital no claims? Our own father earned the capital that runs the factory."

"That is, of course, quite apart from the question of our parasitism. But how do you know father earned his capital?"

"What do you mean, Gertrude?"

"Father never told us (I asked him several times after I began to study sociology) how he got his start. He didn't want to talk about it. The fact is, Stella—"

Gertrude hesitated, looked troubled, almost distressed. "Father was always rather mysterious about his life in the West with his first wife. Mother says that she never could get him to tell her one word about his first wife, or about his life before he married *her*. Of late years I have realised (haven't you?) that there was surely a shadow over father's life!"

"How perfectly absurd! You certainly do go wool-gathering. Anyway, we are certainly not responsible for our father. What you want to do is to get married and have your babies that you

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say you want—and then you'll have something else to think about than the ruining of our business with your theories of reform!"

"Stella," Gertrude asked with an impersonal curiosity, "is it that I am in your way here at home?"

She suddenly realised, with startled insight, how Stella had manoeuvred, just after their father's death six months ago, to get their brother, Harry, away from home; how she had insisted that his slight attack of pneumonia had left his lungs so weak as to make the factory management a menace to him and life on a ranch his only hope. The family doctor had not agreed with her, but a New York specialist had been found to uphold her opinion, and Harry himself, who hated the factory and loved adventure and out-door life, had lent himself readily to the farce of his ill health. Gertrude had, at the time, been puzzled to understand what Stella's motive had been in all this.

"Put yourself in my hands, Gertrude," said Stella earnestly, "and I'll have you married in six months."

"But this is so sudden! Who is to be the happy bridegroom?"

"A man of brains and of a good moral character."

"Of 'good moral character'? It sounds too much like a Sunday School superintendent. Is he one of your own followers, Stella, that you wouldn't have?"

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“Just tell me this—will you co-operate with me and do your best?” Stella demanded.

“But,” pleaded Gertrude, “I would really prefer, Stella, if it’s all the same to you, to be in love—at least temporarily—with the man I marry.”

“You’re bright enough to know, Gertrude, that since the woman doesn’t do the courting and selecting, she doesn’t marry the man of her choice, but the best she can get—or remains unmarried. And very often she even contrives to *love* this best-she-can-get—when she would never have dreamed of loving him if a free choice had been hers.”

“I suppose,” Gertrude admitted, “that if every woman refused to marry unless she could marry a man she loved ideally, the race would soon become extinct. But we had a very cynical professor at college who maintained that it was the woman, not the man, who was the mating animal and that if women did not lay themselves out to entice and entrap defenceless, unsuspecting males, the race would cease.”

“What a very coarse-minded man he must have been!” exclaimed Stella, shocked. “Calling a woman ‘a mating animal!’ Gertrude, I would not repeat such vulgar things! It’s easily seen why many mothers object to the influence of college upon their daughters! They say it makes them averse to marriage.”

“College does teach girls,” granted Gertrude, “that they need no longer be dependent upon mar-

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riage as they were in times past. This is woman's day at last!" she proclaimed oratorically, "when she can forge out her own destiny independently of the Usurper of Privilege!"

"She always could—if clever enough."

Gertrude smiled. "Yes, I'm sure, Stella dear, that in any age of history and in any land, you would have been able to manage your own destiny. Of course," she added rather seriously, "there is a sense in which women will always be dependent upon men. Most women (poor donkeys that we are!) find the world a dreary waste without love."

"I'm glad you admit it. I've heard it said that a woman is happier even in a bad marriage than in single life."

"And you, Stella, don't you want to marry? I mean, if the family could spare you, would you want to marry?"

Stella flashed a glance of suspicion upon her questioner, but Gertrude's face was solemn.

"Perhaps," she answered. "Some day. It's your case I'm concerned with now."

"Stella dear, I don't mind your choosing my clothes, regulating my pocket money, selecting my associates,—because these matters are not vital to me. But if you don't mind, I'd rather leave the question of my husband to Providence."

"If left to you and Providence, you'd be an old maid and I'd have you on my hands forever!"

"On your hands?"

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“You just leave it to me, Gertie,” said Stella ingratiatingly (Stella did “have a way with her”), “and you’ll never regret it. You—”

“Here comes mother,” interrupted Gertrude. She rose at once to move another chair near the table.

A stout, elderly Pennsylvania Dutch woman, on whom the expensive mourning she wore seemed incongruous, was coming towards them across the lawn, carrying a basket of sewing. Her figure was heavy and she moved awkwardly; her hands were workworn, her face irredeemably plebeian. To a European unacquainted with the wide gulf that so often exists between American parents and their children, as to education and breeding, it would have seemed impossible that there could be a close relationship between this peasant woman and the young girl, Gertrude, whose aspect suggested unmistakably a fine type of the cultivated product of a modern, first-class college—a girl of intelligence, fastidiousness and high ideals.

But the elder daughter, Stella, though a sophisticated young woman of the world, bore a very marked physical resemblance to her mother.

## CHAPTER II

“**I**F that there dopper of a hired girl ain’t went and put the clo’es to soak when it reads in the paper that we’re to have fallin’ weather!” Mrs. Swartz remarked in a mildly complaining tone, as she sat down with her daughters and began at once to sew industriously. “She hadn’t ought to have wettened them clo’es when it’s a-goin’ to give rain! A rainy wash day—it jist wastes the wash lady’s time.”

“Please, mother, don’t call a washwoman a lady!” exclaimed Stella irritably. “I’ve told you so often!”

Mrs. Swartz subsided, abashed, and Gertrude, who loved her mother, winced at seeing her rebuffed.

It was not that Gertrude was less sensitive than was Stella to their mother’s crudities. Both her pride and her affection were constantly lacerated by them. But she would have died before she would, by word or look of hers, have given her mother one pang because of them; and the keenest suffering her life had known up to the time of her father’s death, had been the pain of constantly hearing her mother criticised by Stella. She never dreamed, however, of protesting against it to Stella, or of

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reasoning with her as to the uselessness of trying to make their mother over. Trying to make Stella over would, she knew, have been equally useless; and Gertrude was not one to exert herself to no purpose.

At Stella's sharp rebuke Gertrude had slipped her hand into her mother's lap. But Mrs. Swartz, though comforted by this sympathetic caress, gave no sign of being conscious of it. She had the Pennsylvania Dutch aversion to any least expression of affection. She had never in all her life voluntarily kissed one of her children and was always embarrassed when they caressed her. Her motherly love manifested itself in her anxiety over their health and her untiring unselfishness in serving them.

To this purely instinctive love for the children of her body her younger daughter eagerly responded, idealising it, trying always to find with her mother some real point of contact.

Mrs. Swartz was a woman of so little natural intelligence that twenty years of affluence had not altered either her provincial outlook upon life or her Pennsylvania Dutch habits of extreme frugality and industry. Not even the force of a personality like Stella's had been sufficient to wedge her out of her groove, for though of an extremely mild and gentle disposition and entirely submissive to Stella in most things, she had the sort of obstinacy that so often goes with the peasant placidity of temperament and dulness of mind. For instance, the work



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she was just now doing—sewing buttons on the dozens of overalls which she daily brought to and from her late husband's factory, earning five cents on every pair—neither the pleadings nor the commands of her husband and her children, nor the free use of more than all the money she could possibly want, had ever made her give up the daily joy of "earning a little," the one real dissipation of her otherwise sober life. To be sure she had also a few minor intemperances, such as an occasional surreptitious gathering of "kindling" in the near-by patch of woods, for the kitchen fire, to make the "bought kindling" in the cellar last longer; or the stealing a march on the servants, whenever she found a chance, to catch them in some of the petty wastefulness that so wracked her Pennsylvania Dutch soul.

Gertrude had always been thankful that her mother's personal idiosyncrasies had never been nearly so glaring to Stella as to her; for Stella's realisation of them was blurred, as Gertrude's was not, by the deference with which New Munich treated the whole family, including their mother, in spite of the latter's ungrammatical English and provincial manners and habits which, in view of the fact that she had been the wife of a great employer of labour, a man of wealth and power in the community, had always passed without more criticism than a little good-natured joking.

"Has the mail come yet, girls?" Mrs. Swartz

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inquired when she had rallied a bit from Stella's snub.

"Yes, mother. No letter from Harry," answered Gertrude gently. "It's too bad of him not to write to you."

"I have afraid he ain't gettin' along out there and needs money," said Mrs Swartz anxiously. "He's full young to be so fur off all by hisself. And I could so easy send him my overall earnin's."

Mrs. Swartz's income being upwards of fifty thousand dollars a year and her earnings from the overalls about three dollars a week, it will be seen that her idea of proportion in money values was that of a very young child.

"Harry is twenty-five years old, mother," argued Stella, "and ought to be able to support himself. A lot of money was spent on his education. Now he must learn to depend on himself and not expect to live any longer on his mother."

"But with his weak lungs, Stella?"

"His lungs are all right by this time. No," added Stella firmly, though with a shadow in her eyes that reflected a conflict of feelings, for she was not without affection for her brother, "Harry must not form the bad habit of depending upon money from home."

"But, Stella," Gertrude rather timidly suggested, "couldn't you let him have just the allowance that father always gave him? It doesn't seem fair, does it, that all of us except him should be living in

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affluence on father's money? And he is such an awfully good, steady boy—he would not be hurt by having things made a bit less hard for him.”

Stella looked at Gertrude in sharp surprise. It was not like her to question her elder sister's regulations. Such interference must be nipped in the bud.

“I have decided what is best for Harry,” she answered conclusively. “Leave it to me.”

Gertrude did not reply to this. And Mrs. Swartz's head bent a little lower in submission.

It was only since their father's death that Stella's supervision of the family affairs had extended over such an area as it now covered.

“You see,” she presently explained, “that is just why father's will left everything unconditionally to mother—so that Harry would learn to be a man and make his own way. If mother gave him money, she would simply be defeating father's purpose.”

“If I could only know fur sure that he's well and is gettin' on good!” sighed Mrs. Swartz tremulously.

“I can't think why he has not answered my last two letters,” said Gertrude. “Are you sure, Stella, you gave me his new address exactly right?”

“Of course.”

“Harry knows how you worry about him, mother, and it isn't like him to be inconsiderate, so I'm sure we'll hear from him soon,” Gertrude tried to offer a bit of comfort.

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"You mind all the time he was at college he never oncet missed writin' to me every Sabbath. That's why I have afraid he's sick now—his not writin' fur so long."

"We shall surely hear soon, mother. Did you see in the paper that Roosevelt is in Rome?" she asked, trying to divert her mother from her anxiety with the sort of newspaper personalities she loved.

"Yes, I seen that. I think it reads in the paper that whilst he's over there, he's to appoint a new Pope fur 'em. It would be a good thing if he'd give 'em a Protestant Pope fur oncet; ain't?"

"Gracious, mother! The things you think you read in the newspapers!" exclaimed Stella, horrified, for she had no sense of humour. "For heaven's sake, when any people are here, do keep quiet about what you think the newspapers say!—for you don't understand the half that you read."

Mrs. Swartz looked crestfallen and Gertrude wretched.

"To be sure, I ain't no educated person; that I ain't," Mrs. Swartz admitted humbly. "I certainly never did git no sich a high education like what papa give yous girls and Harry. It's a pity of me, I guess. But still I don't miss it any. I guess it would worry me a good bit, havin' so much learnin' to think about. I guess it would git me all up-mixed. Yes, I'm uneducated—that I am—but I guess I'm better off so."

"Mother," interrupted Stella, "if any one drops

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in, don't forget to put the lid on that basket of overalls!"

"All right, Stella, I will."

"Gertrude, mother ought to be a sufficient answer to your notion that the factory employees are martyrs. I believe she envies them."

"Ach, no," protested Mrs. Swartz. "I think it gives sich dumb\* wives when girls work in factories till they're married a'ready. A factory girl is an awful poor soul when it comes to housekeepin'. A man that marries one he's certainly got a dopple!† And it ain't no wonder he gener'ly takes to drinkin'—yes, even when he didn't have no name fur drinkin' whilst he was single yet. Here this mornin' come our milk man that got married, a week or so back, to one of the factory girls; and sure enough, in the quart bottle of milk he gimme, it was a fly! You jist guess I wouldn't take that bottle off of him! 'Here!' I says to him, 'you jist take this here fly along back home with you!' Mebby that'll learn his dopplig wife, when she sees that there fly come along home again, to be a little careful."

Gertrude smiled; but Stella looked bored and grim.

"Are you lookin' fur strangers, Stella?" her mother asked.

"Mr. Ranck might stop if he happens to be passing."

"He comes real often; ain't? Do you think he

\* Stupid.

† Awkward person.

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means it fur really?" she asked anxiously. "Much as I'd like to see anyhow *one* of yous girls git married and settled (and to be sure," she added in a tone of horror, "I wouldn't want fur my girls to be old maids!) yet that there Mr. Ranck—"

"You hear, Gertie?" interrupted Stella, "mother doesn't approve of old maids."

"And do you hear, sister?" Gertrude answered.

"I've been telling Gertrude, mother, that it is really her duty to get married. It isn't right that you should have two grown women on your hands forever."

"Yes, but, Stella, as I was sayin', this here Mr. Ranck—much as I want to see yous git settled, I wouldn't like to see neither one of yous tied to sich an ugly dispositioned man as what he is! You kin both do better'n him, I guess! I hope," she added wistfully, "when yous do git married, you'll settle near home. It's so lonesome fur me without Harry and—and pop," she faltered a little. "I'd hate to see another one go fur away!"

"Mr. Ranck, mother, is a very clever lawyer," Stella protested. "And very good-looking. And I'm sure he is a strictly moral man too."

Mrs. Swartz looked up quickly from her sewing. "Are you and him makin' up to each other, then?"

"*I!* Of course not! I mean," she hastily added, modifying her unequivocal rejection of the suggestion, "well, if I wanted to marry, I think I could look far in this town before I should find another

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man of Mr. Ranck's education—and good looks—and worldly experience. And he is a man that reads everything."

"Well, to be sure, he comes from educated folks—that he does—his father bein' the district attorney here and his mother playin' the 'Piscopal Church organ. But since he was a little boy a'ready, Stella, he was noted fur bein' ugly-dispositioned that way. And he ain't *got* nothin'."

"He has his practice."

"He ain't even got much of that. He's too onpop'lar to build up a big practice. As well off as yous girls will be and as high educated as what yous are, you kin do better'n him."

Gertrude, watching Stella's face wonderingly, saw that she looked distinctly annoyed at her mother's disparaging comments. Was her ambitious sister, after waiting so long for a brilliant marriage, succumbing to a man like Mr. Ranck? To be sure he was, as Stella had pointed out, more than ordinarily well-educated. He had a social ease and experience unusual in New Munich and his extreme fastidiousness, as well as a tendency to snobbishness, would appeal to Stella. But then, on the other hand, Stella was far too astute not to know that her mother was certainly right in predicting that his intensely disagreeable disposition would prevent his ever having a very large practice, in spite of his reputed learning and ability.

"What can be his attraction for Stella?" Ger-

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trude wondered. "I never noticed that she seemed to like or encourage him. Rather the contrary."

"Don't you think, Stella," she ventured, "that for a man of his brains, Mr. Ranck is remarkably uninteresting? He has no opinions, only violent prejudices. And he's so strange! I never could understand him."

"But he's such an absolutely upright man, Gertie. Do you know that he refused a three thousand dollar fee which the Marshall family offered him if he would try to prove their son's insanity when the son married that factory girl? Every one knows how honourable Mr. Ranck is. If he isn't extremely popular, he is at least greatly respected."

"That's wery nice—to be so much respected—that it is," granted Mrs. Swartz. "But a wife could a good deal easier put up with her man's bein' a little dishonourable, Stella, than with his bein' so ugly-dispositioned that way."

"Why, mother!" exclaimed Stella, scandalised.

"Oh, yes, she could too. She wouldn't need to know nothing about the dishonour if he kep' it to hisself. But an ugly disposition she's got to take notice to all the time; set at table with it; go to bed at night with it; git up in the morning with it! No, Stella, I wouldn't want to see you married to no sich a person as what Mr. Ranck is!"

"Dear me, Mother, he's not a monster, as you seem to think!" cried Stella. "I've even half suspected sometimes that he's rather—well, effeminate."



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"He is," Gertrude unexpectedly agreed. "Now that you speak of it, Stella, that's just what he is. I never realised it before, for of course he is a strong character. There's no denying that. But he is so pernickety-nice; so petty. He sees little details that a manly man doesn't see. And such an overweening regard for social position as he has is certainly not a masculine trait. He's both a toady and a snob. He nags. He's vindictive. He's vixenish like a shrewish woman! I couldn't possibly recommend him as a husband for you, sister!"

"Do you realise what insults you are offering your own sex in what you are saying?" Stella asked.

"I do owe my sex an apology for saying Mr. Ranck is like unto it! And his voice, Stella—there's an unmistakably effeminate note in that voice!"

"And yet," insisted Stella, "people do respect him and are afraid of him."

"I know it. He frightens me horribly. Talk of the— Here he comes!"

The sound of a small motor turning in at the drive was the signal for Mrs. Swartz to hastily hide the overalls.

Stella, rising as the car stopped in the drive near where they sat, dropped the little sewing bag which held her scissors, thimble, and embroidery silk, and as Gertrude picked it up and handed it to her, she saw, with a shock that made her tremble, an unopened letter sticking out at the top of the bag, addressed to Stella in her brother Harry's hand.

### CHAPTER III

“GOOD afternoon, Mr. Ranck. Don’t go, Gertie!” Stella interposed as her sister rose. “Sit still!”

She almost pushed Gertrude back into her chair as she turned from shaking hands with her visitor.

Mr. Ranck, offering his hand to Mrs. Swartz with what looked like a fastidious reluctance, spoke to her distantly; and his greeting of Gertrude was scarcely warmer. Gertrude always had, in his presence, a rather disturbing sense of his disapproval of her. She, therefore, avoided his society as much as possible.

He was a slimly built man of medium height; but he carried himself with a stiffness, almost haughtiness, that gave him the effect of height. His hair was coal black, his eyes pale and cold, the expression of his thin lips bitter and harsh. He was immaculately groomed and faultlessly dressed to the minutest detail.

He was a man without friends; for he not only did not attract—he repelled. The few temporary friends he did occasionally contrive to make never proved equal to the strain of continued association

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with him. While he seemed to long for companionship and to resent bitterly the defection of these temporary friends, he never even tried to modify the unpleasant idiosyncrasies which he knew drove people away from him.

“Why will you persist in nicknaming your sister ‘Gertie’?” he demanded of Stella as he sat down with them. An inclination to educate and reform his acquaintances to his own ideas and standards of propriety and correctness was one of the many disagreeable characteristics which made for his unpopularity. “I dislike nicknames excessively.”

“Yes, well, but Gertie’s her right name,” spoke in Mrs. Swartz. “So Stella ain’t nicking her. I named her Gertie so she couldn’t get nicked like my other two children always got nicked.”

“‘Nicked’? Oh, but why were they handled so carelessly, Mrs. Swartz?” Mr. Ranck returned facetiously, with an appreciation of his own humour that he never gave to any one else’s. “And were they nicked beyond repair?”

“Well, Stella she got *Ellie* there fur a while; and Henry he got *Harry*; and the two little girls that died—Sarah she went by *Sally* and Louisa she got nicked *Weesy*. So when Gertie come, I says to papa, ‘Now,’ I says, ‘I’d like one child to go by her right name fur oncet,’ I says. So I had her baptised *Gertie*. So she couldn’t git nicked. I was jist bound—”

“Any news in the evening paper, Mr. Ranck?”

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Stella desperately interposed, touching the newspaper that stuck from his pocket.

“Nothing of any interest; a lot of discussion about prison reform, child labour laws, labourers’ compensation laws—everything to make life easy and comfortable for every one. We are becoming a degenerate race because we are eliminating pain and effort.”

“But pain is Nature’s signal to halt; and health, not sickness, is life’s plan,” Gertrude remarked a little timidly, for she did not want to invite controversy with Mr. Ranck. “Visit the Swartz overall factory if you imagine we have eliminated pain and effort.”

“A race which at the bottom of the social scale is stunted from overwork and privation; and at the top, degenerate from luxury and self-indulgence,” pronounced Mr. Ranck.

“There I agree with you,” said Gertrude gravely.

“Gertrude!” Stella reproved her, “your slams at our factory seem to me to be in very questionable taste when you consider that father organised them and that we live from them. And if there were no poor people, where would the exercise of Charity come in? And you know how St. Paul praises Charity. And how our Lord said, ‘The poor ye have always with you.’”

Gertrude stole a glance at Mr. Ranck to see how these characteristically bromidic remarks of Stella’s impressed him since he was very far from being a

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stupid man. She herself, entirely unsuspected by Stella, got a good deal of quiet amusement from her sister's views of things in general.

"Charity!" repeated Ranck with a shrug. "What would our women of leisure do without the outlet that 'sweet charity' gives them for their surplus energy, their overweening sentimentality, their long, empty days devoid of legitimate duties and labour! And then the socially ambitious who use charity as an Open Sesame to those otherwise charmed and inaccessible circles to join which is their highest earthly (if not, indeed, their only heavenly) hope!"

"Hate as well as love," thought Gertrude, "has its insight into truth! Mr. Ranck does see through some things!"

"Oh, come now!" laughed Stella. "Don't be so hard on our poor sex! Don't make us out so much worse than we are!"

"I wouldn't dream of doing that—you're so very bad as you are!"

"Really, Mr. Ranck, if one didn't know you didn't mean half you say!" cried Stella. "Surely there are many good and lovely women who, from the highest motives, go in for good causes and charity work."

"The high motive of selfishness, with few exceptions, though of course they easily fool themselves into believing in their own genuineness. Women are all natural hypocrites."

"Let us apologise," said Gertrude meekly, "for

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so forgetting ourselves as to belong to such a perfidious sex!"

"Mr. Ranck," Stella reproved him, "you always talk as though you were not only a woman hater, but had not a particle of respect for women! Why will you give out such a false impression of yourself?"

"It's not a false impression of himself," Gertrude mildly interposed. "It's his Pennsylvania Dutch blood that makes him spurn us. Isn't it, Mr. Ranck?" she asked with a touch of malice, for she knew that, unlike most of the Pennsylvania Dutch, he despised his origin.

There was a flash of resentment in his eyes at her thrust. But ignoring her, he replied to Stella: "We don't have to look far to see signs of feminine degeneracy. Look, for instance, at the easy divorces of our day, and the laxity of family discipline that prevails. Children have no more idea of implicit obedience—"

"Och, but mine always had," Mrs. Swartz gently maintained. "Papa always said, 'They must mind on my first word.' And they did too."

"Parents these days," Mr. Ranck continued as though Mrs. Swartz had not spoken, "seem afraid to punish their children!—afraid to make them suffer a pang."

"Isn't it because we've learned that punishment doesn't reform, but only enslaves?" suggested Gertrude.

"That's a mischievous belief," he frowned, "that

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would lead to the disintegration of society. As for marriage and divorce, when a wife in these days finds her relation with her husband the least unpleasant or hampering, what does she do? Divorce him! No adjustment or compromise or endurance of anything that isn't perfectly comfortable and easy! What sort of a race will this sort of self-indulgence produce? We are already seeing the effects of it. And you will notice one thing—it is the women, not the men, who sue for divorce.”

“That must be because fewer men have cause to,” ventured Gertrude. “I wonder, Mr. Ranck, whether you can tell me something I’ve often wondered about—”

“About which you’ve often wondered. Well?”

“Thank you. About which I’ve often wondered. Why, since men are said to be natural polygamists and they, not women, have made the laws, did they ever come to make monogamy the universal law?”

Mr. Ranck looked shocked and prim. “Men natural polygamists!” he repeated disapprovingly. “On the lips of a young lady, such an idea sounds, to say the least, singular!”

“Can an idea sound? Wouldn’t it be preferable to say, ‘Such a statement sounds, etc.?’” Gertrude sweetly asked.

“I’m surprised at you, Gertrude!” said Stella.

Gertrude rose lazily. “Come, mother,” she said, holding out her hand, while she picked up from her

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mother's lap the big covered basket of overalls. "Will you excuse us, Mr. Ranck?"

Mrs. Swartz acquiesced eagerly, for Mr. Ranck always made her feel like apologising for being alive and she was only too glad to get away from him.

Stella offered no protests, now, to Gertrude's leaving, since she was removing their embarrassing mother.

Gertrude reflected, as Mr. Ranck politely stood when she and her mother rose to go away, that although he never failed in conventional forms of courtesy to women, he performed them grudgingly, as though they went against the grain. "Because in his heart he has a contempt for women," she thought. "There are men that are made that way!"

"Say, Gertie," Mrs. Swartz asked when they were out of earshot, "what do you think our Stella sees in him anyhow? And wouldn't you think a masterful man like that would git along more peaceable with a wife that would give in to him? He can't expect Stella to do that, as high-minded as what she is yet! If he does, he must be awful dumb!"

"I can't believe that Stella dreams of marrying him, mother! Even if he were attractive, which of course he isn't, Stella would never be so carried away by her feelings as to act against what she considered her own interests."

Gertrude spoke rather absently, for she was not nearly so much interested in the emotional pos-



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sibilities of Stella and Mr. Ranck as she was in that most disturbing fact which she had discovered when picking up Stella's bag. Why should her sister be withholding a letter from Harry when her mother was suffering tortures of suspense about him? And the letter was unopened. What could it mean? And why did Harry leave her (Gertrude's) letters unanswered and write to Stella? It was not like Stella to withhold ill news out of consideration for the family. What could be her motive?

Gertrude asked herself why she had not instantly confronted Stella with the letter.

Well, just at the moment of her discovery, Mr. Ranck had been coming in.

"But if he had not been there, would I have had the courage to face her with it and force her to an explanation?"

She smiled at the idea of *her* forcing Stella to anything she did not wish to do. She knew perfectly well that Stella would not even feel embarrassed at the exposure of her deception.

Gertrude wondered, as she left her mother on the piazza (sewing buttons on overalls) and went upstairs to her own room, whether later, after dinner, she might be able to get up enough spirit to go to Stella and ask her about the letter.

But her involuntary shrinking at the bare thought of Stella's withering treatment of such presumption, made her know she would not do it.

"She would not explain a thing she didn't wish

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to explain and she would simply put *me* in the wrong and make me suffer for it! And I'm not, alas, of the stuff that martyrs are made of! I just seem naturally to take the line of least resistance—poor dolt that I am!”

Yet she tried to persuade herself that it was not altogether weakness of character, but her certainty of the futility of trying to force Stella's hand, and the cruelty of letting her mother in for a knowledge of her sister's apparently heartless conduct, that made her decide not to “raise a fuss” about the letter, but merely to await developments—though she would certainly try, while waiting, to find out Harry's true address; for it seemed probable that Stella had, for some reason of her own, actually given her a false one; it was too wholly unlike Harry to write to Stella while leaving the many urgent letters of his favourite sister unanswered through many weeks.

## CHAPTER IV

**M**EANTIME alone with Mr. Ranck, Stella was cautiously feeling her way to the executing of a carefully thought-out plan. Her manner to him, the moment her mother and sister disappeared, became cool and aloof; and she declined unhesitatingly his invitation to take a spin in his car.

“May I be permitted to ask why you won’t ride with me?” he inquired with perfectly candid resentment, for he had an extraordinary way of flaunting emotions which most people feel it necessary to politely conceal.

“If you like the truth, Mr. Ranck—because I don’t want to.”

He flushed, bit his thin lip and looked furious. “This means—?” he asked.

“That I’m not nearly so fond of your society as you seem to be of mine—if, as I said, it is candour you want, Mr. Ranck.”

One who did not know him as Stella did, might have expected to hear him rage at such a snub; but experience had taught her that Mr. Ranck always ceased trying to bully the moment he recognised his equal in that gentle art.

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“Stella!”

He bent forward, laid his hand on hers and spoke ingratiatingly. “Is it that you are afraid I would not make a good husband?”

“Do you think you would?”

“Yes—because,” he said with decision, “I’d have too much sense to spoil a wife.”

“But I should wish and expect to be spoiled.”

“Women despise and hen-peck the men that spoil them.”

“And love and honour the men that bully them, I suppose you think.”

“Who bully them? No—who don’t give in to their feminine whims,” he retorted in a disciplinary school-master’s tone of voice.

“If you ask me, I think you’d make a simply horrible husband!”

“Thank you!”

“Welcome.”

“But shouldn’t you find it rather more interesting, really, Stella, to be married to ‘a horrible husband’ than to a tame sheep?”

“Why on earth do you want to marry me? You don’t expect me to believe you are in love with me?”

“Why shouldn’t I be?”

“Because you are so in love with yourself, you couldn’t possibly love any one else; least of all a woman. And you don’t know yourself as well as I know you if you imagine that you could be happy living with any one you could not browbeat. You must

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know you couldn't bully *me*; so what on earth would you expect to do with me?"

"I must say," he began stiffly—but she interrupted him.

"Now listen, Mr. Ranck. I'm going to be brutally frank with you."

"Going to be?"

"The only sort of woman you could be happy with is the sort I am not—the manageable, docile kind; the kind that *prefers* to be dominated. You know there are even yet some women in the world who would take a kick for a love pat. That's your kind. No other sort would live with you, Alfred. You must marry that sort of a woman."

"You speak as confidently," he returned coldly, "as though you had some one picked out for me!"

Stella, toying with the embroidery in her lap, did not at once answer.

"Have you?" he asked ironically

"I am not so rash."

"She must be your worst enemy, Stella—that you should want to marry her to a man such as you describe!"

"When a woman doesn't mind being bullied—"

"I should say, then, the bully would find no satisfaction in his occupation."

"But, Alfred, for your own good let me warn you that while you go a-courting, you've got to draw in your claws a little bit, or you'll scare off even the meekest of our sex!"

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“Who is the unhappy woman?”

“You’ll have to find out.”

“You are the only woman in this town I want to marry.”

“I actually do believe you think you could tame me! What an awakening you’d have, my friend! Indeed, Alfred, any woman in these times who was financially independent, and I know you’d never marry a poor girl, would be apt to give you a few shocks.”

“Even the one you’ve picked out for me?”

“The girl who, I think, would suit you, Alfred, is too lackadaisical to resist anything or anybody.”

Ranck repressed the start her words gave him. That word “lackadaisical” brought up so inevitably the limp figure of Gertrude, forever lying about in hammocks or easy chairs, with books, papers and magazines piled about her, when she wasn’t making a fool of herself labouring to “uplift” the factory employees, that he could not fail to understand.

“You are actually recommending your sister to me?”

“Dear me, no! Advising you to recommend yourself to her. She’s a dear! Don’t you think so?”

“You are the only member of this household to whom I’ve ever given a thought, Stella.”

“It seems to me,” Stella said, her tone suddenly piously sentimental, “that Gawd made you and Gertrude for each other!”

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“You can’t possibly think so ill of me then as you pretend.”

“As a husband for me, you couldn’t be worse. For Gertrude—Gawd *made* you.”

“Why will you, like all New Munich people, say ‘Gawd’?”

“I’m sure Gertrude wouldn’t. She pronounces it Gödd. That’s one consolation you’d have.”

“Does she know you are trying to marry me to her?”

“So far from it that I warn you you’ll have to do some mighty clever courting to win her over.”

“You said she was so very tractable.”

“When it comes to a thing like marriage, you’ll not only have to make her think you love her—you’ll have to make her think she loves you. In the process, you will learn to love her. For Gertrude is lovable. I am very sure, Alfred, that marriage in the abstract doesn’t appeal to you—but as you seem to think you want to marry, I know you couldn’t do better than—well, I’ll say no more. A word to the wise!”

She suddenly picked up her sewing bag from a chair at her side, thrust her embroidery into it and rose.

“I’m going to leave you now to think about it, if you will excuse me. Don’t let it worry you, for I may, of course, be all wrong. The idea occurred to me and I didn’t see why I shouldn’t pass it on to you. Good-bye. But just one more word. Under-

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stand this—if you should fall in love with my young sister and induce her to marry you, you'd have to be good to her—as good as it is in you to be. Remember that!”

She turned away and walked up the path to the house.

It will thus be seen that while an acquired (not an inherent) sense of fitness might sometimes hold in check Stella's dogged pursuit of her own ends, delicacy of feeling never deterred her for a moment.



## CHAPTER V

**A**S she strolled across the lawn, every graceful movement of her well-built body expressing her forceful, unwavering character, Mr. Ranck's sharp, critical eyes followed her appreciatively, regretfully. He felt as keen a pang as he had ever felt in his life at the realisation that the delectable joy of bringing this woman under his mastery was not to be his, for the primitive savage persisting in him to a greater degree than it appears to do in most men, this was actually the way he thought about marriage. To be sure he knew that in these days both law and custom so limited a man's power over his wife as practically to undermine the institution of the family; and that to adapt himself to this new order of things in marriage would, for one of his irascible and domineering disposition, be no easy matter. He recognised his own idiosyncrasies sufficiently to question the wisdom of his ever marrying at all. Mere love could never drive him to it, for he was far too much of an egotist ever to lose himself in loving another. Marriage would always be for him a carefully considered expediency.

His old-fashioned belief in the superiority and

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dominance of the male, made Stella's refusal far more galling to his self-esteem than he would admit to himself. Her recommending another woman in her place seemed an added humiliation. Why had she done it?

He pondered the matter earnestly as he continued to sit where she had left him.

The Swartz girls, with their wealth, education and good looks, did not have to go out of their way for suitors. True, Gertrude had never been so popular as Stella; but that, he knew very well, was not because she was unattractive, but because most men require some encouragement, some little stimulus to their vanity, before they will thrust themselves too vigorously upon a woman's attention. And this encouragement and stimulus they never seemed to receive from Gertrude Swartz, gentle and womanly though she was.

Could it be that Stella was complimenting him in wishing him to marry her sister? Did she sincerely mean that she thought him and Gertrude remarkably well-fitted to get on well together? Left to himself, it certainly would never have occurred to him. In so far as he had ever noticed Gertrude at all, it had been to disapprove of her. Her careless way of putting on her clothes—invariably minus a button or two; or with a skirt band sticking out below a girdle; or a rip somewhere—made him want to order her, whenever she came in sight, "Hitch yourself together, woman!" There

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had been times when he had found it difficult to repress this inclination.

This reprehensible untidiness seemed to be rendered all the more conspicuous by Stella's stylish trimness. If Gertrude Swartz ever were his wife, he'd see to it that she kept herself mended up and neat! He would not tolerate any woman of his household going about with her skirt trailing where it shouldn't, her shoe untied, a safety pin showing!

"I suppose, until I get her thoroughly cured of her annoying carelessness, I'd have her weeping on my hands every day! A nice prospect!"

The docility Stella had commended in her sister did not greatly appeal to him, for he hated weakness and inefficiency. But he felt in his heart that he himself would be much more secure (Stella was right) with a wife of a gentle and yielding disposition than with one of Stella's spirit. He did not see that just because of the fact that to a natural tyrant the meekness of his victim is an irresistible temptation, his greater security would be in marrying a woman with whom he would be obliged to control himself.

"Gertrude is really rather lovely looking," he reflected, "though her style never did attract me much. Her very delicacy makes a man too conscious of his own coarseness and clumsiness."

The only point in which, in his estimation, she measured up to Stella was in the ample fortune which they would both inherit.

"And of course Gertrude has intelligence and

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Stella hasn't—but I'm not sure that I consider brains an asset in a wife—except of course as they may be transmitted to one's children."

He rose at last and walked slowly and thoughtfully toward his motor.

On his way home he decided that it would not do any harm to at least turn an appraising eye in Gertrude's direction and see what he did think of her on closer inspection.

Stella, meantime, had hurried to her room to read, in private, her letter from her brother. Had she had any idea that Gertrude had seen this letter it would have startled and annoyed her. It was under the impression of her absolute security that she sat down to her desk to answer, with relentless firmness, Harry's troublesome and insistent demands.

DEAR HARRY,

I see now how wise and far-sighted dear father was in making his will as he did. He realised that only the goad of necessity would ever give you and Gertie any backbone. And as he could not make an exception of me, I have to suffer for the weakness of my sister and brother and be debarred also from my inheritance so long as dear mother is with us. You know perfectly well that mother loved and respected father too much to go against his evident wishes with regard to you. That is what you are asking her to do when you beg her, like the Prodigal Son, to give you your inheritance now, or the interest of it, in order that you may make investments. Why don't you get to work and *earn* the money

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you need, as plenty of other young men do? You'll be all the better man for it. If mother yielded to you now, you'd no doubt lose it all and presently come home penniless and expect us to kill the fatted calf for you. As to her lending you the money for this 'chance' you speak of, that is absurd when you've no security to give her. It is unmanly of you, Harry dear, to ask your widowed mother to risk money for you like that. Father's evident idea was that no young man should come into possession of money until he had proved his own ability to make money. Until he has done so, he isn't fit to have the care and use of the fortune his father laboured all his life to acquire.

That you can't do a thing without a little capital is incredible. Most of the great fortunes made in the West were made by men that did not have half the start mother gave you.

She isn't well, and she frets and worries over you awfully. So, I beg of you, write her a cheerful letter, not a begging one—and make her happy.

As for Gertrude, she is so taken up with a love affair just now (Alfred Ranck is paying her marked attention) that I suppose that's why she hasn't written to you. I'll jog her up about it. Don't mention, when you write, that I told you about Ranck; she is quite touchy about him. It is rather strange she should fancy a man like that. I suppose she's just a little ashamed of it, so don't ask her why she has not written.

Love from mother and Gertrude and from your ever devoted sister,

STELLA.

“There! I've fixed Harry safe and tight!”

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In her eyes and about her mouth there was a look of strangely conflicting triumph and shame, satisfaction and suffering.

Having sealed and addressed her letter, she unlocked a drawer of her desk and took out two unopened letters addressed respectively to her mother and sister in Harry's hand.

For three days these intercepted letters had lain hidden in this drawer. She had been unwilling to destroy them until she herself had heard from Harry. She had no curiosity as to their contents. They were no doubt only a repetition of what he had written to her—a plea that some part of his prospective inheritance might be advanced to him now, so that instead of struggling along as a poorly paid employee, he might buy some ranch land and himself become an employer. He offered to pay interest to his mother on the sum advanced; or to let her take a mortgage on the full value of the land; or to rent it from her if she would buy it.

Stella knew that even if these strong pleas from Harry had been read by her mother and Gertrude she could have managed to convince her mother of the wrong of yielding to him. And Gertrude was, of course, a negligible quantity in the family councils. But the easiest and surest way had been to withhold all Harry's letters until she had "got him where she wanted him."

She fingered the letters uncertainly for a moment. Of course they must be destroyed. But it was not

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pleasant to be forced to such expedients. While she was far from callous to the distress she caused, she did not really mind the lies she had to tell—they came easily. But to destroy other people's letters—wasn't that actually a crime against the law?—"tampering with the mails!" She shuddered. She certainly did not want to go so far as to violate the law! Her greater crime, which the law could not touch—her subtle deception in every line of her letter to her brother—far from troubling her conscience, gave her a little thrill of admiration for her own cleverness in thus carrying out the scheme begun a year ago when she had succeeded in persuading her father of the wisdom of leaving all his wealth, without any qualifications, to his widow. Naturally, since such a will excluded her as well as Harry and Gertrude, her father had never for a moment questioned her motive in urging it. And in the same way that clever sentence in her letter, "I have to suffer for the weakness of my sister and brother and be debarred also from my inheritance so long as dear mother is with us"—would entirely convince Harry of her sincerity.

Stella felt that really, a talent for diplomacy such as hers was wasted in a commonplace environment.

The only thing which cast a shadow upon her heart was the realisation that her real security from any suspicion on the part of her brother and sister and mother lay in the fact that they them-

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selves, being incapable of such guile, would not conceive it possible in her.

“I take after father. Harry and Gertrude are like mother,” she reflected, with a moment of melancholy regret at the fact. She often sincerely wished that she were less like her father.

She had been unpleasantly startled this afternoon by the discovery of Gertrude’s unexpected astuteness in having surmised what she, Stella, had long ago known—that their father must have had some reason for concealing from them all the story of his life up to the time of his second marriage.

“I wish Gertrude’s brains were as feeble as her will—as mother’s and Harry’s are!” she thought, frowning with annoyance as she felt that her sister’s keen intelligence was a thing she might have to reckon with in the execution of her purposes.

She presently rose, went resolutely and unfalteringly to the open fireplace of her room, laid the two letters from Harry on the grate, and applied a match to them.



## CHAPTER VI

**W**HILE Stella, shut up in her chamber, was writing to Harry; Gertrude in her room just across the hall, cogitating miserably on the line she ought to take with reference to her accidental discovery of Harry's letter to Stella; and Mr. Ranck, going home in his car, absorbed in cynical and sombre reflections upon women and matrimony—Mrs. Swartz, whom Gertrude had left on the piazza sewing buttons on overalls as though her daily bread depended upon it, was being visited by her sister, Mrs. Yinger, a sharp-faced little woman of middle age, dressed in the nun-like black garb of the New Mennonite sect. She was the childless wife of a well-to-do farmer whose home was ten miles out of New Munich, and she had topped off a shopping excursion to town to-day with a call upon her sister.

A more extreme contrast of character than that presented by these two sisters could not well be imagined, Mrs. Yinger being as keen-witted and vixenish as Mrs. Swartz was dull and mild. The expression of Mrs. Yinger's face never failed to suggest a chip on her shoulder; a look of mingled injury and indignation towards life. Her thin,

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tightly closed mouth seemed to preclude the possibility of her ever having a generous impulse. Even among the extremely frugal Pennsylvania Dutch New Mennonites she was considered "near."

"Won't you spare your bonnet and shawl, Meely, and stop fur dinner?" Mrs. Swartz asked hospitably when she had welcomed her sister and they had seated themselves on the porch, Mrs. Yinger holding on her lap a long mesh bag filled with her purchases, as though she feared they might be snatched from her if she put them down.

"'Dinner'! At six o'clock in the afternoon yet! I eat my dinner at twelve o'clock. I'll eat my supper till I git home oncet. Call the meals by their right names, Weesy!" she snapped. "It don't sound natural on you, talkin' so high-minded that way—'dinner' at six o'clock in the evening!"

"But, Meely, since our Stella was fifteen years old a'ready she never give us no peace till we'd have our dinner fur supper. To be sure when a body gits rich they have to live tony *according*. I don't like it. Me I like my hearty meal at twelve o'clock, too, the same as you."

"In my own home I'd see myself leave my children walk all over me! I'd have what I liked!"

"Well, you ain't got no children, so you don't know what you'd do if you had," Mrs. Swartz mildly returned. "I guess you'd do a good bit like they wanted you to after all."

"I'd think a little more about their soul's salvation

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than about leavin' them do as they pleased so much."

"Ach, well, yes," Mrs. Swartz sighed resignedly, and changed the subject. "A body'd think, Meely, you'd take the trolley to town—it's so much handier to your place than what the train is."

"Yes, but it comes three cents higher by the trolley. And I don't like that there tunnel we go through on the trolley. Jist oncet since the trolley's been runnin' I went in it 'with Mister and when we come to that there tunnel, 'My Gawd, Jake!' I hollered, 'I'm goin' blind!'—It gave me sich a scare, I ain't never been on it since. And now that automobiles is so plenty on the pike, I have afraid always one of 'em might run into the trolley car. No, I take the train like I always done."

"Yes, well, but you lose time by the train. Our Harry used to say that that there train out to your place stopped to leave the conductor see the baseball game. I'd think you'd hate to waste that much time on the way, Meely—to stop fur the baseball game."

"Ach, Weesy, you're dumb! That there was one of Harry's chokes.\* He's always plaguin' a body! How's he gittin' along out there in that West?"

"I'm awful worried that he don't write to me, Meely!" Mrs. Swartz said in a tone of distress.

"Och, you ain't got no need to worry ower Harry;

\* Jokes.

## FANATIC OR CHRISTIAN

he kin take care of hisself all right. And he's sich a good straight boy too."

Mrs. Swartz's face lighted up with pleasure at this rare praise from her grim sister. If Meely had a soft spot in her tough heart it was for her teasing, warm-hearted nephew, Harry.

"Not many boys gives their parents as little cause to worry ower 'em as what your Harry give you a'ready," she reiterated, "if I do say it."

"You think, Meely?"

"To be sure I think. Say, Weesy, I stopped in this after\* to speak somepin particular to you."

"Did you, now, Meely?" Mrs. Swartz asked with mild curiosity.

Mrs. Yinger leaned forward and spoke in a lowered tone, a look of cunning in her small eyes. "Say, Weesy, ain't your Stella *yet* thinkin' about breakin' her pop's will?"

"No, indeed! She's actin' awful good about it.<sup>1</sup> I never would of believed she'd take it so easy! My goodness, no, I wouldn't! Why, Meely, she's perfickly satisfied to do without the money herself jist because she thinks it's better fur Harry and Gertie that they don't inherit right aways, till they're more settled and steady."

Mrs. Yinger chuckled derisively. "Ain't you the poor soul, Weesy, that Stella kin make you believe that!"

Mrs. Swartz was never resentful of her sister's

\* Afternoon.

## FANATIC OR CHRISTIAN

mean opinion of her intelligence, for in her humility she shared it.

"I must say, Meely," she admitted, "it ain't like our Stella and it does wonder me that she's so satisfied with papa's will—that it does."

"If she's satisfied, then you want to keep your eye on her!—for there's more to it than what's plain on the surface—you mark my words! She's *up* to somepin!"

"What could she be up to, do you think?"

"How do I know? But this here I *kin* see—she's natured like her pop; she's all fur herself. And that's why I stopped in here to see you this after—to warn you that I jist b'lieve, if you don't watch out, Stella will git her hands on that there pile! To be sure it ain't so easy to git 'round the law. But you take warnin' anyhow and watch her!"

"Well, but, Meely," Mrs. Swartz protested, "I know Stella's pretty much fur herself like papa was, but she anyhow wouldn't take what wasn't hern."

"But it's wonderful the way some folks kin coax theirselves into thinkin' that anything they want is theirs. You jist watch out—that's all!"

Mrs. Swartz sighed helplessly. "I guess I couldn't stop her, whatever she was up to!"

"It was an awful queer will your Mister made anyhow!" Mrs. Yinger frowned. "Why would he want to leave all to you fur as long as you live, to do what you please with—as common as what

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you are yet! To be sure, he was a plain man himself; but he was smart—that he was.”

“Smart enough to know I wouldn’t leave his hard-earned money git squandered, Meely.”

“Well, to be sure, us Kuntzes wouldn’t never squander no money—that we wouldn’t,” admitted Mrs. Yinger. “Ach, Weesy,” she suddenly exclaimed irascibly, dropping abruptly the subject of the will, “how kin you stand it, havin’ the room all opened up like that there?”

She indicated the wide open windows of the parlour (always referred to by the Pennsylvania Dutch as “the room”) which opened on the piazza where they sat. “It’ll git all your grand furniture so fadey! Yi, yi, yi, sich a wicked waste!”

Mrs. Swartz sighed again. “It kreistles\* me, too, to have the room always kep’ open up this way, like the high folks here in town always has ’em. I can’t used myself to it.”

The past fourteen years of her life during which she had been forced to live in the style established by Stella’s taste, had not uprooted a single one of the deeply-ingrained habits of her Pennsylvania Dutch up-bringing and she pined with a heavy nostalgia for the life of her own kind, with its hard work, stringent economy, plain living and unsanitary inconveniences.

“We was so much more comfortable livin’ common,” she said sadly. “Leastways, I think so.”

\* Rubs me the wrong way.

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“Of course you was!” her sister severely retorted. “I’d like to see a pack of children make me forgit my Gawd the way yours makes you do!”

This remark was only an apparent, not an actual, irrelevancy; for the New Mennonite creed in which the sisters had been reared enjoined an absolute abstinence from ornament in dress and in household furnishings.

Mrs. Swartz looked discouraged. “Well, Meely,” she said plaintively, “I kin only hope that Gawd will soften my hard heart to repentance before I come to die. But so long as I’m able to be about, I hope He won’t—fur if He did, Stella wouldn’t *leave* me turn plain and wear the garb and give myself up—and then what would I do?”

“You ain’t ashamed to set there and tell me to my face that your own daughter wouldn’t leave you do somepin your conscience tole you you had ought to do! Ach, Weesy, but you’re the poor soul!”

“But Stella feels it so that she’s got an aunt that wears plain—what would she do if it was her own mother yet? It would give her sich a shamed face in front of all her stylish friends fur me to wear the Mennonite white cap all the time!”

“Do you care more fur what Stella’s stylish friends thinks than fur your Gawd’s opinion of you? Ain’t He sayed in the Scriptures that a woman’s head shall be covered?”

“Stella explained me that that there only means

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a woman's hair must be long and not short like a man's."

"Yes, well, but when her long hair become a pride to her, Gawd sayed she must cover it with a cap."

"I'm sure I'd be only too glad to cover mine with sich a cap," said Mrs. Swartz, "so thin and stringy as it is yet! It would be pride that would make me wear the cap, Meely! How kin you come ower that argyment?"

"The Scriptures says, 'Cover your hair!'" Mrs. Yinger stubbornly repeated. "And obeyin' to the Scriptures is all I'm concerned about! Yes, and that's what I tole my neighbour lady, too, out there at Martz township—she belongs to one of them worldly churches, the Baptist—and when I tole her I always obeyed to the Scriptures, so I felt purpared to meet my Gawd, she sayed, 'Oh, I don't feel purpared, I feel I'm a sinner,' she sayed.

"'A sinner!' I says. 'Do you go to dances, mebbly?"

"'Do I go to dances!' she says after me awful scandalised. 'Well, if that don't beat all! Whether I go to dances yet! Well, I guess anyhow *not!* Do I go to dances!'"

"'Ach, well,' I says, gettin' mad, 'don't keep on sayin' it after me, "Do I go to dances!" What *do* you do that you feel you're a sinner?"

"'Well,' she sayed, 'you jist go oncet to hear that there ewangelist, Billy Sunday!'"



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“‘Don’t say Billy Sunday to me!’ I says. ‘He disobeys to Christ! Christ sayed, “You mustn’t preach to fill the belly”—and that’s what this here Billy Sunday does. He’s gittin’ rich at it,’ I says.”

Mrs. Swartz, as usual, agreed. “Ach, yes, well, it gives a many kinds of people in the world. What are you got wrapped in that there noospaper, Meely?”

“My new *ombrella* that Mister bought me two months back. I wrapped it around so’s it won’t git wet if it rains.”

“But what do you fetch it along fur if you won’t hist it if it rains?”

“I always carry an *ombrella* when I travel. But Mister he paid two-fifty fur this here one and I ain’t gittin it wet!” retorted Mrs. Yinger testily. “Say, Weesy, what are you buyin’ eggs at? Mister wants to wonder what you are payin’?”

“Thirty cents.”

“Mister says he can sell you three dozen next week. Our hens is layin’ good fur us now. At market we git only twenty-eight. We’ll leave you have ’em fur twenty-nine. That’ll save you a penny on the dozen.”

“Yes, that’ll be somepin saved. All right, fetch ’em in then.”

“That’s one thing fetched me in to-day—to ast you to buy our eggs off of us.”

“But you kin any time phome to me, now that Mister put in a phome, Meely.”

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“Yes, well, the other night it rung after I was in bed and I got up to answer and here it was a *man's* voice, and me in my nightgown yet! Mebby it didn't gimme a shamed face! And ever since then it kreistles me to talk in that there phome. Mister he kin use it. I won't.”

“Could you, mebby, sell me butter too, Meely?” her sister inquired.

“No. We got a fresh cow, but she has a calf and you see, we left the calf too long *at*. So we ain't got no butter to sell. Well,” she concluded, rising to go, “I must be gittin' to the depot. Don't forgit my warnin' to you about your Stella! I'm glad fur your sake, Weesy,” she added, standing with her bag of purchases in one hand and her umbrella swathed in paper in the other, “that you're got *one* daughter which don't rule you with a firm hand! To be sure it ain't no credit to you, neither, that Gertie, too, don't use you fur sich a foot mat. It's only that she ain't got no backbone herself that makes her ac' dootiful. If I was Stella Swartz's mother, she'd walk the chalk line!”

Mrs. Swartz shook her head. “Even you, Meely, couldn't boss our Stella. She's wonderful fur gittin' her own way.”

“Well, all I got to say is I hope she finds her master when she gits married!”

“Ach, but, Meely, the women in these days don't leave their husbands master 'em the way we done when we was young. Times is changed.

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Times does change, you know. It's a way they have and there ain't no gittin' away from it."

"I know the times is changed—most everything is comin' to pass! But you'll see *what* you'll see, times or no times, if you don't keep your eye on your Stella. I know that there girl, if you don't. And I always did say she'd some day bring your grey hairs in sorrow to the tomb, Weesy!"

And with this cheerful prophecy, Mrs. Yinger took her departure.

## CHAPTER VII

**I**N looking back afterwards, Gertrude never was able to think out just how it had come about—her actual intimacy with Mr. Ranck. For it had developed so gradually, so almost imperceptibly, as to have left no definite trace of its progress. She did remember how, on several occasions, when Mr. Ranck had been calling on her sister, Stella had manœuvred first to have her join them and had then, after a while, greatly to Gertrude's chagrin, excused herself and gone away, leaving her alone with him. She remembered how really painful had been her feeling of constraint with the man, his mentality and his temperament being so antagonistic to her own as to render any intercourse with him more than a bore—almost an agony to one at all sensitive to alien atmospheres.

But it is surprising what aversions can be overcome by continued association. She recalled the first time that Mr. Ranck had, upon finding Stella not at home when he called, asked for *her*. She had, at the moment, been absorbed in a new novel and she had unhesitatingly sent down a request to be excused. Came the answer back, borne by a maid bringing a box of roses, "He says, Miss Gertie,

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that it's you he come to see and he brang you these here."

Gertrude had been startled. "Now what's to pay?" she had wondered as she arranged the flowers in the bowl the maid brought her.

After that first offering of flowers, Mr. Ranck had never again asked for Stella when he called; and he had seldom come empty-handed—flowers, candy, books, helping him out in this, to him, difficult and unnatural ordeal of courtship.

To one who really thinks about life and its problems, as Gertrude could not help doing, intercourse with another whose opinions are not opinions at all, but only violent prejudices, is of course extremely irksome.

"I feel as tired after an hour with Mr. Ranck," she remarked one evening at dinner after one of Ranck's visits, "as if I'd been doing the family washing!"

"Why?" inquired Stella.

"Well, for one thing, he so violently denounces anything or anybody that he happens, for no particular reason, to dislike. You can't reason with him. He loses his temper. It's fatiguing."

For mere honesty's sake, she did try sometimes to stand by her own ideas against his sweeping opposition.

"I have no use for disloyalty to one's political party!" he one day severely announced in discussing some political issue as they sat together on the

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piazza. "Loyalty to one's party is the first duty of a statesman!"

"Of a politician, you mean, not of a statesman," she suggested. "A statesman worthy the name is, of course, loyal first to his principles; which is infinitely more patriotic than loyalty to a party; bigger and more patriotic than loyalty to a nation. Statesmanship of the future will involve *world-citizenship*."

"Fortunately that sort of citizenship is very far off in the future," he shrugged.

"But I can see signs of its coming," said Gertrude.

"Your vision is keener than that of ordinary people!"

"Do you know," she smiled, "I've noticed myself that it is. It's strange how a large faith in the divine possibilities of humanity is looked upon by what you call 'ordinary people' as irreligious, insane, unsocial, anarchistic! Whereas—let me read you this passage from Maeterlinck's 'Wisdom and Destiny.'"

And in spite of the impatient protest of his countenance, which made her quake inwardly at her own temerity in honestly insisting upon differing from what she considered his banalities, she resolutely opened the book and read:

"If your eyes look for nothing but evil, you will always see evil triumphant; but if you will learn to let your glance rest on sincerity, simplicity, truth, you will ever discover deep down in all things, the

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silent, overpowering victory of that which you love.' ”

“What stuff! Sounds like Christain Science! After all, you know, we're not gods—only men.”

“A mere man may rise to the stature of a god.”

“I'm sure most of your sex, Miss Gertrude, find us more companionable as mere men.”

“For myself, I could do very well with a little god-likeness. It's all too rare, alas!”

He laughed as one would at the vagaries of a foolish, forward child. “If you could see your sex as a lawyer sees it!” he mocked, a fire in his eyes as they rested upon her youthful beauty, which made her mentally recoil. “In my county practice among the Pennsylvania Dutch, what do I find the young girls wanting above all else in the world?—every one of them! To get married. They see what the married life is of their sisters and acquaintances—poverty, drudgery, many children, brutal treatment and neglect. But they *want to get married*. Why? What do they get out of it? Something that a girl like you, whose life has an outlet in many directions, has no conception of.”

“Oh, yes, I have,” Gertrude placidly replied. “I'm not so stupid. It's the call of sex, of course.”

Ranck looked displeased and shocked. Most young ladies of his acquaintance would have had what he considered too much delicacy to make a speech like that. Stella would never have dreamed, he was sure, of saying such a thing.

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The next instant, however, his disapproval relaxed into a grin of amusement, for he suddenly saw that it was Gertrude's greater delicacy, the child-like purity of her instincts—however well-informed she might be as to facts—that made her speak out so unreservedly. All the same, he didn't approve of such frankness of speech in "a lady." He would, when the proper time came, certainly correct this unseemliness.

The truth was, she had, in her remark, anticipated the instruction he had meant to insinuate into her mind for the pleasure of seeing her maidenly confusion before such enlightenment. But the "maidenly confusion" wasn't forthcoming and he felt cheated.

"What you women never will admit," he ventured, "is (what physicians know to be a fact) that the 'call of sex,' as you frankly put it, is just as insistent in your sex as in ours."

He looked to see her protest against this, perhaps indignantly, but she only said, "Is it? Among country and village women whose interests are very limited, that may be true. Indeed, that's one reason why I've organised reading clubs and a night school for our factory girls."

"That's one reason?" he repeated, rather appalled. "What on earth do you mean?"

"To put something into their lives that may save at least some of them from sinking into degeneracy through the very barrenness of their existence."



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"Is that because, being a college woman," he asked with another slight shrug, "you have discovered that the more a woman is mentally developed, the more she loses her sex?"

"Not her sex—her animalism," said Gertrude.

"You've got a few facts, Gertrude, but you don't actually understand the thing you're trying to discuss. I suspect that you are inherently incapable of understanding it."

"Oh, do you?" she said, surprised and interested.

"And the economic side of it—you do wrong to do anything that's going to make the working girl averse to marriage and motherhood! Don't you see how we suffer already, in America, from a scarcity of working people? We shouldn't have any servant problem if the supply of servants exceeded the demand."

"But, you see, I don't believe, as you seem to, that a certain portion of humanity was created to be exploited. In everything that I do for the factory girls I have a most humiliating and apologetic sense of patronising them. In a rightly organised society every one of those girls would have had the same chance of an education that I've had. They've all worked and struggled all their lives harder than Stella or I have ever done. Yet all they have for it are the crusts of life—and anything more that we fortunate ones graciously hand down to them! It isn't right, you know. It's simply paving the way for another French Revo-

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lution—unless we correct things before it is too late.”

“The factory girls are no doubt paid a lot more than they are worth. When there is anything in people they’ll rise to the top whatever their environment. Factory workers are such because they’re not capable of being anything else.”

“A comfortable theory for the rest of us. I’ve heard it before,” said Gertrude.

“You are a visionary; you don’t use your common sense.”

“Our visions are all the truth we have, I sometimes think.”

“Your sort of radicalism,” he scolded her, “comes of giving a girl a little higher education. It is a pity your father ever let you go to college. It has spoiled you,” he said, shaking his head, while his warm, admiring gaze belied his words; for Stella’s prophecy had come true—to know Gertrude was to find her lovable.

“You mean by that that it has taught me to think a little,” she replied; “to see a few inches beyond the end of my nose and to see through some of the deceptions and hypocrisies by which society and the church keep the masses quiescent.”

“Now look here,” he admonished her, “surely a man who has built up a great factory industry by his own ability, as your father did; should reap his reward—he and his children.”

“A fair reward. But great industries have never

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been built up by ingenuity alone, but by the exploiting of the labourers.”

“Now, come, Gertrude, some of the kindest, most generous men in the world are to be found among our American millionaires.”

“‘Kind’? ‘Generous’? But that’s puerile talk, you know, Mr. Ranck. There would not be any kind and generous American millionaires—the great, menacing, demoralising private fortunes of this country would never have been acquired—if labour had always been given its fair share of the profits of industry. And would you enjoy being treated kindly and generously by an American millionaire? Society despises the creatures who gratefully accept charity. Don’t you see,” she pleaded, her face flushed with her earnestness, “that the thing we’ve all got to recognise sooner or later is that our present social, industrial and economic system is too worn out to be patched up and mended; that it’s got to be fundamentally reconstructed on new principles?—on the principles of the religion we profess, but which civilisation has never begun to practise—the principle of ‘love thy neighbour as thyself.’”

“Look at Tolstoy—he tried out these wild theories that you think you believe—and what did it amount to? The world looks upon him as an impracticable crank!”

“So it looked upon Jesus.”

“That is blasphemous, Gertrude!”

“What is?” she asked, puzzled.

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“To class our Lord with a mere man!”

“One of the few mere men who had the courage to truly follow in the footsteps of ‘our Lord.’”

“Who defied the church and the government of his native land!” Ranck contradicted her. “His would-be philosophy was moonshine and accomplished nothing!”

“It brought the eyes of the world upon one great soul who believed and actually practised Christianity. But I agree with you that a few individuals working alone can accomplish little—it’s the whole world social structure that must be rebuilt from the bottom up. But there! What’s the use of talking? You and I could never see this thing from the same angle.”

“No, Gertrude, we certainly could not. But—it is not essential that we should, is it?”

“Of course it isn’t,” she smiled.

“I mean—essential to our being—well, good friends.”

“I’m not so sure of that!” she laughed. “It needn’t of course make us unfriendly—but to be ‘good friends’—we would have to at least speak the same language—which I think you and I don’t do.”

“There goes another of your split infinitives! ‘We’d have to at least speak.’ Why don’t you say, ‘We’d at least have to speak?’”

“You might be glad I don’t talk Pennsylvania Dutch!”

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He never relished her occasional frank references to the illiteracy of her forebears, not only because he considered it bad taste, but because, in view of the fact that he confidently expected shortly to be a member of this Pennsylvania Dutch family, such references pricked his inordinate self-esteem.

"I beg your pardon, but I think your hair is about to come down," he said testily, expressing in his tone his double irritation at her characteristic carelessness and her family shamelessness. He had never yet told her "in so many words" what he thought of the latter, for even he drew the line at some forms of rudeness.

"It probably is," she serenely answered, raising her arms to fasten in place her abundant wavy dark hair. Her figure being slender and her hair not straight, her personal carelessness actually gave her a peculiar charm and grace which in spite of his own extreme nattiness, Ranck could not fail to feel. In fact he was constantly astonished to find himself secretly attracted and fascinated by the very things of which he disapproved.

"I certainly shall have some training to do if ever I do have her on my hands!" he reflected on his way home that day, with large complacency.

That a modern wife might decline to be "trained" or to change radically any little pet faults and habits to please the taste of her lord, never occurred to him. He considered it to be quite as much within a man's province to correct the faults of his

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wife as of his children. As for Gertrude Swartz, while he realised that she had brains and that she used them; that she was an independent thinker and had decided opinions of her own, many of which she would have to change or keep to herself once she belonged to him, he at the same time felt the yielding softness of her disposition and had been the close witness for years of her wholly negative place in her home and her almost abject submission to Stella; and the prospect of moulding her to his own ideal of what she ought to be was becoming alluring; for in spite of the streak of effeminacy in his character or perhaps because of it, to domineer over some one was almost as essential to his well-being as whiskey to an inebriate.

That he did not find himself, after many weeks, making any progress in his courtship, growing any nearer to Gertrude either in confidence or tenderness, did not greatly trouble him, or lead to any doubts as to his ultimately winning her; for Gertrude's amiable toleration of him was, for such egotism as his, reassurance enough. It was his feeling for her, not hers for him, that mattered. That he had come to find her companionable as a friend and utterly alluring as a woman, was enough.

But one day, when he was at last seriously considering that he might now reasonably approach the question of marriage, he was unexpectedly visited at his office by Stella.

## CHAPTER VIII

**H**ARRY SWARTZ, after a three months' mysterious silence, had resumed his correspondence with his family without apologies or explanations.

A letter which Gertrude received from him one morning had somewhat the effect of a dynamite bomb exploded in the family circle.

DEAR GERT,

Some time ago, Stella told me in one of her letters that Al Ranck was making up to you. I thought of course that it was only one of Stella's fancy whoppers and never bothered about it. But in your last two letters you have spoken of Ranck frequently if not oftener and I'm worried. Take it from me—Al Ranck is a freak and a cad. He must be hypnotising you if you don't see it for yourself.

Your affectionate brother,

HARRY.

Gertrude read this letter aloud at the breakfast table and the result was that Stella, without loss of time, sought a consultation with Ranck at his office.

"I've got to talk to you," she told him as soon

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as they were seated in his inner sanctum. "I've not been away, you know, all summer. I've not felt like going; there have been too many things at home that I've had to keep my eye on."

"Can't Gertrude attend to some of your tasks?" he frowned. "Is she entirely incapable domestically?"

"The things I have to keep my eye on," answered Stella significantly, "are not things I can relegate to Gertie's care! Far from it! And so, though I'm rather suffering for want of a change, I can't go away. This morning I had a sort of shock."

He regarded with approval and satisfaction the good style and neatness of the fine black dimity frock she wore. Mourning was very becoming to her. Why couldn't Gertrude take example by her sister and keep herself "pulled together" better?

"A shock?" he repeated inquiringly.

"Gertie asked mother for money to go away."

"Well?" he quickly asked, a little sharply.

"Gertrude hates summer resorts and she is not very fond of visiting her friends; she never will visit any one for more than a week at a time. But she told mother she wanted money to go away for a month. Of course I didn't let mother give it to her."

"And the shock?"

"Can't you see?"

"It certainly is not obvious to me."

"She is becoming uneasy at accepting so much



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attention from you. She wants to go away to escape it. Gertrude is very conscientious, you know, and she evidently thinks it is not right to let you keep on giving her so much of your time—under the circumstances.”

“What ‘circumstances’?”

“That you have not succeeded in making her care for you. I’ve seen her trying often to dodge your calls. But when she does escape them, there is always your offering of flowers, or something to be acknowledged; so she has not been able to escape you.”

“And why, may I ask, should she wish to escape me?”

“Because you haven’t made her love you.”

“Does she think I love *her*?”

“No, she doesn’t. That’s just it. If she did, the rest would be easy for you. Gertie—”

“Call her Gertrude, please!”

“Yes—Gertrude. She is so very susceptible to affection. Gertie really has an awfully affectionate disposition. If she thought you loved her—really loved her, you know—she would melt to you. But it was only two weeks ago that she asked me, ‘Why do you suppose Mr. Ranck wants to spend so much of his time with me? We’re very uncongenial.’ I told her that evidently he did not think so. I did not venture to say more. You see, you are not managing your case very well. I was distinctly alarmed when she asked mother for money this

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morning to leave home. She wants to break up your habit of coming to see her."

"Do you mean to tell me that a girl of her intelligence expects a man to get sentimental and slop over?"

"As if brains had anything to do with it! I haven't nearly her brains, but I couldn't stand nearly so much sentimentality and 'slop-over,' as you elegantly express it!" she added sarcastically, glad of a chance to pay him back for once in his own coin, "as Gertrude could stand. Not only stand, but require!"

"'Require'! I couldn't make a spooning ass of myself if I wanted to! I'm afraid Gertrude will have to get over her sentimentality!"

"It's you that will have to get over your unsentimentality—or give up all idea of ever marrying Gertrude. Or any other woman that hasn't a hump! And that's straight!"

"Huh!" he grunted.

"As I told you in the beginning, she will never marry you if you don't make her not only care for you, but think you care for her. Now don't be stubborn and stupid!"

"Look here, Stella!" he suddenly demanded, "why are you so anxious to see Gertrude married to me?"

"Because if left to herself, she's so indifferent and indolent, she never would marry at all; and naturally," added Stella, her tone becoming pious, "I'd like to see my sister happily married."

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“Oh—that’s it—you’d like to see your sister happily married?”

“What else could it be?”

“Therefore, you won’t ‘let’ your mother (I believe you said) give her money to go away?”

“I put my foot right down on it. I said that if I didn’t get away, she ought not to go; and that of course I couldn’t get away, mother couldn’t be left alone, and so forth, and so forth. I’m helping you all I can—and I’m trying to tell you how to help yourself.”

Ranck regarded her narrowly. “You are trying to ‘help’ me? But why should *I* find your sister so difficult when you, apparently, manage her so easily—forbidding her to go away—she, a grown woman!—and” (his eyes grew narrower) “prohibiting your mother from supplying her with money! You have authority over your mother, do you?—and over her—er—her money?”

Stella promptly recognised the danger sign to her plans.

“It’s like this,” she hastened to explain. “Mother gives Gertrude and me each an allowance; and as *I’m* not taking anything extra for a trip, I said I didn’t think Gertrude ought to. Of course I have no more rights over mother’s money than Gertrude has.”

“You each have an allowance—an equal allowance?”

“Of course.”

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She did not explain, however, that *she* practically controlled her mother's entire income.

She saw, with a great relief, that his momentary suspicion had passed. It had given her a fright—for the most ardent wish of her heart just now was to get Gertrude "married off."

When, a little later, she left him, she felt very hopeful. He had not thanked her for her pains, nor verbally accepted her advice. But she knew that he would act on it.

"At least so far as in him lies. Whether he *can* wax tender is a question. If he forces it, what an awful reaction of devilishness he'll have after he is safely married! Heavens! Poor Gertie!"

There suddenly came upon her one of her rare moods of remorse; of recognition of her own perfidy, and of deep melancholy thereat. A feeling of pity, also, for the fate she was bringing upon her gentle, unsuspecting sister, moved her.

"But Gertrude has just got to be disposed of, more's the pity. Oh, sometimes I think I'd be happier if I were just like her—entirely without ambition!"

To Stella there was only one kind of ambition.

Gertrude's failure to obtain from her mother the necessary money to escape from home long enough to break up Mr. Ranck's persistent habit of calling on her, gave her some hours of rather dark anxiety.

"I must put a stop to it somehow!" she desperately told herself. "He seems actually to be courting me

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—in his own original way! If only I had the backbone just to turn him off! But I hate to hurt the feelings of one who seems to find my society so much to his taste!”

But it was just when she had reached the quite desperate resolution to get a teaching position somewhere out of town, that things took a turn. Ranck became kind and gentle.

At first it only struck her as funny.

“He treats me as if I were an aged, dying relative, his great-grandmother, to be most carefully considered. That’s his idea of courting a girl!”

But gradually, the substitution of this new gentleness for his habitual and critical coldness; a new and very intelligent interest in her interests—her books, her factory work; an unobtrusive chivalry which he began to practise towards her, together with a rather pathetic melancholy never wholly absent from his manner, voice and expression, softened her heart towards him. His companionship became, first, less irksome, then quite endurable, and presently, really interesting. Once when he chanced to stay away for several days, she actually found, to her astonishment, that she missed him!

Of course he had occasional relapses when he would speak to her with all his old-time sharpness. But strangely enough, this seemed only to throw into relief the now almost constant kindness of his manner to her.

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He even became, at a hint from her, quite civil to her mother.

At last Gertrude awoke to the fact, incredible as it seemed, that a very real friendship had grown up between them and that this friendship was becoming rather necessary to her happiness.

He, on his part, watched with a grim satisfaction the slow fading of her indifference towards him; the gradual development of a real interest in their relation; and at last, the first beginnings of a maidenly consciousness of him as a man—the pains she took not to offend him with her natural carelessness as to dress; with references to her Pennsylvania Dutch birth; with radical views of religion and of society; with split infinitives.

“Do you know what you have done for me?” he earnestly asked her one evening as they strolled together under the trees about the grounds of the Swartz home—his voice pitched deep with the stress of his strong and very genuine emotion. “You have taken from me the sting of loneliness. I’ve always been a solitary creature!—considered difficult and cranky even as a boy, by my mates as well as by my own family. I’ve always found it hard to make friends—and even harder to keep them. In you, Gertrude, I am hoping I’ve at last found a friend that’s going to stick by me. If I could only believe it!”

“Oh!” Gertrude eagerly responded, her heart leaping, her nerves, for the first time in her acquaint-

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tance with him, thrilling, "indeed you have! For our friendship has come to mean a great deal to me too, Alfred—more than I would have supposed possible a few months ago."

"A few months ago you didn't like me?"

"Not a bit!" she laughed; and he noted with a thrill of his own nerves the happy note in her voice; she *was* a dear! It was amazing how he had grown to care for her.

"You've changed, you know," she said. "Or else it is just that I have come to understand you better."

"And you are going to stick to me?"

"Of course I am—as long as you deserve it."

She had not wanted to add that condition, but somehow, from some deep inner consciousness it came out in spite of her—as from an instinct of self-preservation.

"You'll turn out like all the rest," he said despondently. "You'll presently decide I don't deserve it and throw me over!"

To feel that any one needed her or was in any least way dependent upon her, was enough for Gertrude. The under dog always called forth her sympathy.

"No, I sha'n't ever throw you over," she returned warmly. "You can count on me."

"I'm going to try to believe that, Gertrude—and to deserve it."

To hear Alfred Ranck taking a humble tone like that almost embarrassed her.

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“I’m not hard to satisfy, you know,” she hastened to say. “There are only two things I ever ask of any one—to be kind and to be interesting.”

“And of the two you put kindness first?”

“Oh, dear no; I’d much rather you’d be interesting. And it comes easier to you, too, doesn’t it?”

“It ought to be easy to any man to be kind to you—you of all women!”

He said it fervently and sincerely; indeed his heart said far more than did his lips. But she would never know the effort it cost him to make these pretty speeches to her. To say nice things to any one, especially to a woman, even to one whom, he now realised, he loved to his utmost capacity, was as foreign to his nature as flying to a fish.



## CHAPTER IX

**B**UT Mr. Ranck found it impossible always to act up to his unnatural rôle of a friendly kindness. He could manage to hold himself in hand during an hour's call; but beyond that his native irritability and inherent inclination to antagonise would be too much for him and would, on the slightest provocation, begin to assert themselves.

A crisis came in his relation to Gertrude one Sunday morning on their way home from church.

Although Ranck had no physical vices he did have the inveterate and, in his case, vicious habit of church-going; vicious because only a habit, adhered to not from principle or conviction, but because of his profound worship of Respectability.

Gertrude's equally inveterate and wholly religious habit of staying away from church was extremely annoying to her Pursuer. For when they were married he would certainly require her to appear with him regularly in his pew in the Episcopal church. It was still done by the best families in small towns.

His oft-repeated invitations to her to let him take her to church had always been declined. But

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his persistence finally won for him a reluctant acceptance. It was their discussion of the sermon on the way home that precipitated the crisis.

"That," he pronounced as they came out from the church and strolled slowly homewards, "was the best missionary sermon I ever heard."

His tone challenged her to deny it; so, always peaceably inclined, she did not reply.

"Of course," he added with a shrug, "from your superior standpoint, Gertrude, it was no good!"

Knowing that if she said what she really thought about that sermon it would irritate him, she repeated his own verdict. "It was the best missionary sermon I ever heard."

"You don't mean that!" He was not going to let her off by any such evasion.

"But I do mean it—all the other missionary sermons I ever heard having been so much worse."

"I knew it! Now, Gertrude, it's a pity we're not all so superior!"

"But it seems such a waste to send good, great, self-sacrificing men (the sermon, you know, said missionaries were such men) to Turkey or China, instead of keeping them home to convert Americans to Christianity. Bernard Shaw says we really might give Christianity a trial to see whether it's workable."

"Bernard Shaw is an unbeliever and a scoffer!"

"A scoffer of hypocrisies and shams. If a man's doubt, Alfred, is more earnest than is your merely

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perfunctory and inherited faith, then it is nobler than your faith."

"But I'm sure it takes more than a perfunctory faith to carry a man to heathen lands to teach!"

"It would seem that the evils to be found in Turkish or Chinese or any 'heathen' civilisation, while different from those of our own, can't be so very much worse. What could be worse than the barbarities of our industrial system, our politics, our slum districts, the hypocrisy and inconsistency of our religious professions, our philanthropies, our—"

"Oh, come, come," he stopped her. "To speak of American institutions as 'barbarous'!—you talk very foolishly, my dear Gertrude!"

"I know I do—when I waste my bright and illuminating remarks on a side-tracked, hide-bound old conservative like you, my friend!" she smiled. "Alfred, the only time I ever feel really irreligious and indeed blasphemous is when I am sitting in church hearing the loud and fervent responses of the liturgy spoken by Big Business men, women of fashion, government officials, factory owners and corporation lawyers of a certain type—while in the alley back of the church the people on whom they fatten live in squalour and want."

"Rhetorical, but inaccurate."

"I know—the alley is two blocks away."

"You admit yourself that our regular church-goers are the best, the most influential element in our town."

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“The best by your standard of judgment, Alfred.”

“And who, by your superior standard, are the best?”

“Not necessarily the people who live in comfort and security and have all the advantages. At the end of a service I want to *slink* out of church, ashamed to have been there, to have countenanced by my presence the imbecility of the mummery I have heard and the unintelligence of the sermon! I do sometimes wonder at myself that I should feel so sincerely ashamed of doing what all those other people count a virtue. It’s lonesome to feel so different from one’s neighbours!”

“To look upon your rector, the cultured pastor of a large and intelligent congregation, as ‘unintelligent’—and as you imply, ‘insincere’—don’t you think, Gertrude, that’s it a bit presumptuous in one so young?”

“Alfred, if ever I once heard a preacher stand boldly forth and denounce a wrong that was popular with his rich church members, such wrongs as the long hours and poor pay of shop girls, or of trolley employees; or the private ownership, for personal profit, of great public utilities; or the accumulation of menacing fortunes through the exploiting instead of the serving of society—if ever a preacher dared to stand forth with an opinion about anything that was not the opinion of the majority of his Respectable Members; if ever once, like the Master he professes to teach, he would act as though willing

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to lose the whole world for the sake of the right—well, I should not care what his creed. His moral courage, his disinterested loyalty to his conviction, would be so uplifting that, like Jesus, he would draw all men unto him.”

“Our rector preached only a week ago against the white slave traffic and in favour of prohibition!”

“But I said a popular wrong. Could anything be more unpopular these days than those two evils? He doesn’t denounce the popular white slave traffic of another sort—the exploiting of thousands of young girls in shops through long hours, at five, eight and ten dollars a week. Why? Because it is the Church’s attitude that it will support the ruling class. The Church is not democratic.”

Alfred lost his patience. “I don’t like a woman to be so opinionated, so critical” he said testily. “It is unwomanly!”

Gertrude checked the laugh which threatened.

“By the way, Alfred,” she cheerfully turned the channel of their talk, “you must stop and dine with us to-day. That young lawyer who has lately come to town to be Mr. Brooks’ partner, Mr. David Phelps, will be with us.”

“Mr. Phelps will dine with you!” repeated Ranck in surprise. “Since when has he become so intimate in your home?”

“Ever since he first met Stella, a month ago. Didn’t you see him in church with her this morning?”

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“Oh, he’s making up to Stella, is he? She wouldn’t consider him!”

“He hasn’t asked her to yet. But why are you so sure?”

“Stella hopes to marry above, not beneath her station.”

“I admit that no one could be more alive to the advantages and the Christian responsibilities of ‘station’ than Stella is. But what is wrong with the station of a manifestly well-to-do lawyer, the partner of Mr. Brooks?”

“Stella hopes to rise through marriage, not stay where she is now. To be at the top in New Munich is too tame a career for her ‘vaulting ambitions’.”

“Which, let us hope, will not ‘o’erleap’ themselves.”

“And Phelps is a man Stella would not tolerate,” said Gertrude. “He believes in everything which she abhors—labour unions, the ‘rights’ of the working classes, and all that sort of rot! Why, he actually was the attorney for the State Federation of Labour out in Dakota and won two cases against Capital!”

“Oh, was he?” exclaimed Gertrude. “He has seemed to me from the first to be a rare, fine man. I do hope Stella will marry him if he so honours her as to ask her to, for I should love to be his sister!”

“‘Honours her’?” Ranck repeated. “He is by his own admission a self-educated man; he worked his own way up without help from any one. He was in fact, a waif.”

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“But he is not at all crude, Alfred—and we’re all self-made so far as we are made at all.”

“Stella is ambitious.”

“So it would seem is Mr. Phelps.”

“But not for the same things!”

“For which the Lord’s name be praised!” said Gertrude fervently. “One can’t somehow think of such a vulgar, trivial thing as ‘social station’ in connection with Mr. Phelps—one is ashamed to. He is too big; almost a great man, Alfred.”

“That remains to be seen—whether he is great. He is starting out here very well of course as the partner of Brooks. But with such a stand as he takes on the relation of Labour and Capital, I doubt whether he will ever get anywhere.”

Gertrude smiled and Ranck instantly demanded with irritation, “What are you laughing at?”

“Your implied definition of a great man.”

“A lawyer who takes such cases as Phelps constantly takes—a labourer against his employer, a railroader against a powerful company—unclasses himself professionally and socially. Stella knows that.”

“I am sure she does. And yet, Alfred, Mr. Phelps has impressed Stella as I’ve never seen any one impress her before. You know she is not exactly emotional!—yet I’ve seen her actually pale and blush at the sound of his step and voice! Yes, *Stella!*”

“Huh!” grunted Ranck. “But she will never lose sight of her ambitions for any man living.”

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“So I always thought until Mr. Phelps turned up in town.”

Ranck gloomed darkly. “If he has fascinated Stella, one must at least admit he has power of some kind! I trust you are not also under its spell?”

“Me? Oh, I adore him much more than Stella does. But you see, my adoration is quite without hope, he is so evidently infatuated with her. And there is never the least chance for me when Stella is in the field.”

“Then I can only hope that she will continue to be in the field,” said Ranck in a tone that sounded almost like a threat.

When they reached the Swartz’s gate he found himself feeling too out of sorts to trust himself to stop to dine.

Walking home alone, angry, and brooding over a medley of petty matters, he told himself that he would have to speed up this business of proposing and getting married, or he would certainly make a mess of it and fail a second time.

Gertrude, meantime, sitting at dinner opposite Mr. Phelps, was wondering whether it was the effect of this young man’s impressive personality as she had felt it in the past month, that had made her realise, by odious comparison, that poor Alfred could never be anything more to her than a friend to be pitied.

She was not taking much part in the table talk. Stella seemed inevitably to dominate any group



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in which she found herself and Gertrude as inevitably obliterated herself in her sister's presence, being not only too indolent to press her own claims to some attention, but being so convinced of her inferiority to Stella in personal charm that she thought no man could possibly wish to look at or talk to her when Stella was by.

But David Phelps, being a man who was quite unselfconsciously thoughtful for others, would not, in spite of his manifestly absorbing interest in Stella, permit Gertrude to submerge herself entirely. Gertrude did not flatter herself that his efforts to draw her into the conversation were made because of any interest he felt in her, although she was sure he had often found her rather gratifyingly sympathetic with his attitude towards some of the social issues they had discussed. He had practically told her so. Nevertheless she attributed his present evident desire to include her in his talk with Stella and her mother, entirely to the kindly unselfishness that seemed so to radiate from him as to warmly envelop every one within its reach.

He was about thirty-five years old. His big, rather raw-boned figure, usually relaxed and lounging, suggested a somewhat formidable amount of force in reserve. His face, clear-cut and intellectual, expressed virility without sensuality. In repose his countenance was serious and aloof; but when he smiled it softened and broke up into twinkling kindness and humour.

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As Gertrude watched him to-day she wondered whether, after all, the real test of a man were not in the little things of daily life rather than in its larger issues.

"But when a man can be fine in both ways!" she thought with a thrill. "And when," her heart added sadly, "he can't be fine in any direction!"

"Hear her sigh!" exclaimed Phelps. "No wonder after such a morning as she's had—that missionary sermon and Mr. Ranck's amiable society! I wonder you're able to sit up to your dinner. Why do you go to church? Your sister's answer to that question is that she's a Christian. But it's because I'm a Christian that I do not go. How about you?"

"It's because I try to be a Christian that I don't go."

"Och, but, Gertie," her mother remonstrated, "you're all up-mixed!"

"No, mother, really."

Gertrude had often wondered in the past month why it was that neither she nor Stella ever felt embarrassed for their mother before Mr. Phelps. "Is it that we are both so deeply aware of his large-minded understanding?" she asked herself to-day. "He is the very most comfortable person I've ever met!"

"Mr. Phelps," Stella gravely reproved him, "please don't encourage my sister in her silly scepticism. Why don't you believe in Christianity?"

"But I do, that's the trouble. I really *believe*

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in the love and brotherhood that Christ taught. The Church doesn't."

"Why of course it does!" said Stella indignantly.

"No. The Church absolutely refuses to come out openly for the emancipation of the masses and therein denies the teachings of her Founder Who said, 'Love thy neighbour as thyself.'"

"But, Mr. Phelps," exclaimed Stella triumphantly, "that was the very text our rector used this morning for his missionary sermon—a perfectly beautiful sermon! And you say the Church denies that text! There now, you see what unfair statements your prejudices lead you to make!"

"Your rector's sermon was very clever."

"Of course it was."

"His agility in hopping all around and over that text without once hitting it in a vital part was perfectly admirable. Admirable! I think he must be an Englishman."

"You don't understand the Church, Mr. Phelps; that's the trouble," said Stella, discouraged.

"Do you?"

"I'm an active worker in it and a supporter of it; why shouldn't I understand it?"

"Why indeed? But the Church itself doesn't understand Christianity. Really, Christianity is great stuff, if we'd only try it."

Gertrude smiled, but Stella stiffened with disapproval.

"You can always tell," affirmed Phelps, "exactly

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where to find the Church. You have only to find out where Big Business and vested interests stand and there's where the Church will stand."

"Well," Stella naïvely asked, "why should the Church go against those who support her?—why should she smite the hand that feeds her?"

"That's her way of reasoning," answered Phelps. "She tells herself, 'Freely ye have received. Carefully keep.' No, Miss Swartz, as a force to provide spiritual inspiration, we can no longer look to the Church."

"I don't agree with you," said Stella so coldly that Gertrude, in sympathy with Phelps, came to the rescue and changed the subject.

"You spoke a minute ago, Mr. Phelps, of my enjoying Mr. Ranck's amiable society. Do you know Mr. Ranck very well?"

"Too well, alas!"

"Ach, yes," broke in Mrs. Swartz, "I'm all the time tellin' our Stella I think he's too ugly-dispositioned that way fur our Gertie and I—"

She stopped in confusion as she met Stella's swift, sharp glance. Phelps, seeing this glance and Mrs. Swartz' confusion and at the same time Gertrude's crimsoning face, had a moment of horrible embarrassment as he realised that he had "put his foot in it."

"It seems to me, Mr. Phelps," Stella hastened to cover the breach, "that you people who call yourselves 'liberal,' see only one side of the struggle

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between Capital and Labour—the labourer's side. You won't even look at the capitalist's side."

"The world has looked only at the capitalist's side for so many centuries, Miss Swartz! It is only just waking up to the fact that there is any other side to look at."

"I think you are quite mistaken," maintained Stella, who never hesitated to step in where angels would have feared to tread; who would have confidently disputed with Charles Darwin the "Origin of Species," or with Paderewski his interpretation of Chopin. "I think society is reacting violently against the inroads made by Unions and other labour organisations."

"Don't you know that the history of civilisation is the history of the emancipation of Labour?"

"I don't care what the history of civilisation is. I think every sort of labour organisation ought to be put down with a strong hand, for they are always, at bottom, a menace to law and order."

Phelps smiled. "If there were more people as honestly and openly class-partisan as you are, it would not take us so long to break up the present system of special privilege. It's your mealy-mouthed compromisers, your beat-about-the-bush fellows, that are the real enemies to reform. But don't you see," he added, his tone suddenly grave, "that the fact that human beings, poor and unlearned in the *finesse* of self-defence against a distorted social system, are exploited to create comfort and

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ease and indeed princely luxury for the employer, makes unionism of workers imperative?"

"No, I don't see anything of the sort," said Stella with an earnestness that betrayed an almost passionate concern for this man's erroneous opinions. "The average employer is very much more considerate of his employees than they deserve or appreciate; and the so-called reformers are fanatical and dangerous."

"Reforms in the making are always called fanaticism. One might almost define fanaticism as ardent devotion to a great new Cause. A man is dubbed a fanatic because he proclaims that solitary confinement in prison is inhuman and criminal and he is almost jailed himself for trying to ameliorate prison conditions. Another splendid fanatic would establish juvenile courts to save unfortunate children from utter ruin, and his life is made miserable by the political strap-hangers who fleece and despoil the people."

"With such views as yours, Mr. Phelps, why have you become a lawyer? It is the moneyed people, not the poor, who make a lawyer's success."

"I am a lawyer because I want to fight the monstrous injustice that is done through legal forms and legal tribunals. The man who is ready, for the sake of the progress of the race, to stand up against the jibes and jeers of those who wish everything to remain just as it is (because things as they are are comfortable for them) must have the hide of a

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rhinoceros—or the vision of a Jesus—or the brass of a Bernard Shaw! As I think I've got a tiny bit of all three, I'm in for the fight."

They rose, now, to go to the library for coffee; and Gertrude, a few minutes later, acting against a very ardent desire to remain, excused herself and went to her room. For not only was she sure that Stella and Mr. Phelps preferred to be alone, but she had a pressing matter to attend to.

The time had come, she realised, when she must force her indolent resolution to grapple with the uncomfortable situation in which she found herself.

Her walk home from church to-day with Alfred had somehow brought her up with a shock. "I've actually been letting myself drift almost into an engagement!" she thought with a shudder. "To a man with whom I have not really a thought or a feeling in common! Why doesn't he realise it? Why does he think he wants to marry me?"

How to avoid hurting him was the question she must settle, if it could be settled. For some time past, now, she had been keenly and painfully aware of Stella's eagerness to be rid of her. "She will be bitterly disappointed when she finds I won't marry Alfred. She will make it very hard for me!"

She did not feel at all equal to the double struggle with two strong wills, her sister's and her lover's.

"There is only one really safe thing for me to do—go away where they can't bully me. I'll get a teaching job."

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It was the last week of August. In a few weeks all the schools, public and private, would open. Perhaps it was not too late to secure a position.

She sighed as she thought of her mother's distress at losing her, too, as well as Harry.

"But if I stay here they'll get me, between them."

Meantime, Stella and Mr. David Phelps, luxuriously cozy in the library before the log fire, were talking confidentially.

"I'm afraid I made a dreadful *faux pas* in my remark about Ranck—did I?" he anxiously inquired almost as soon as they were alone. "Your mother's implying that he belonged to 'Gertie'—surely, surely that dear young sister of yours isn't—but I don't want to get in any deeper! However, I suppose I may say with safety that I agree with your mother—Ranck is too 'ugly-dispositioned for Gertie.' Tell me—relieve my mind—how is it?"

"They are practically engaged."

"Good heavens! Can't you stop it? That man would make any woman wretched. He's devilish. Your sister is so intelligent—why doesn't she see it?"

"It is so entirely her own affair that I never discussed it with her."

"I stand reprov'd! All the same I am tempted to make it my affair to warn her off—unless you think she would consider it intolerable impertinence?"

"I'm afraid she would, Mr. Phelps."



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"You really think," Phelps asked incredulously, "that she is in love with that man?"

"Devotedly in love with him."

"What on earth does she find to love?"

"I would not presume to ask her."

"I'm very sorry to hear this!"

"Why?"

"Your sister is lovely. To throw herself away on a grouch like Ranck—a perverted—"

"You are talking to Mr. Ranck's prospective sister-in-law."

"I'll quit. I apologise."

In his heart Phelps admired Stella's attitude of loyalty to her sister in her refusal to hear criticism of the man her sister loved.

Perhaps it was for the very reason that Phelps was the antipodes of what is commonly known as "a ladies' man" that he had, from his youth up, been pursued by women. It had happened that circumstances had never thrown him with the finer type with whom he might have found friendship. He scarcely realised that there were girls and women with whom a man may have something more than a sex relation. In Stella Swartz's physical attractiveness combined with her coldness, her manner of down-rightness, he thought he had discovered for the first time a woman of character, of purity, of transcendent honesty. Her uncompromising adherence to her own convictions, however absurd those convictions, seemed to him strong and true.

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He felt confident that in time he could not fail to bring one so frank, so upright, to an understanding of his own clearer vision of life.

It has always been so; a man's imagination will endow the mistress of his senses with every feminine virtue of the catechism.

## CHAPTER X

**W**ITH her college credentials and the prestige which the notorious wealth of the Swartz estate gave her in the corner of the state where she lived, Gertrude had no difficulty in obtaining inside of two weeks a very good high school position in a city eighty miles from her home.

To avoid discussion of her project she told no one of it until everything was settled three days before her departure. Though she felt sorry for the blow she knew her going would be to Alfred Ranck's hopes, and though she winced at the prospect of Stella's opposition, she dreaded most of all her mother's distress and it was to her that she broke the news first.

"But, Gertie, I never thought I was raisin' you to be a school teacher, as rich as what your pop was!" her mother sadly protested when she heard it. "And as high-toned as what he wanted his children to be yet! He wouldn't favour it, Gertie; he wouldn't near favour it! Look at the New Munich school teachers—what kind of homes they come off of—they're most all renters, Gertie. I don't har'ly know one of 'em that comes from folks that owns their own homes."

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"You see, Mother, if I stay here, Stella will make me marry Alfred Ranck."

"I know," Mrs. Swartz agreed with a heavy sigh. "She certainly will, Gertie—that she will."

"I'd rather teach school."

"I don't blame you—that I don't."

"Of course I'd be safer if I could go farther away than Moncaster. I ought to go to Europe or to California for a year, until Mr. Ranck got over it. But Stella won't let you give me more than my regular allowance, so I'm forced to teach, Mother."

"It does look as if it's the only way you kin git rid of Mr. Ranck," her mother sorrowfully admitted. "That it does."

"I hope he and Stella won't pursue me to Moncaster!"

"What's your wages to be, Gertie?"

"One hundred a month. I'll come home once a month, Mother, and now and then you and Stella can motor over to see me."

"Yes, well, but if we do, I'll have to keep away from your school, Gertie—I talk so Dutch, it might make your scholars laugh oncet and give you a shamed face."

"Not more than the American French which I am to teach them would make a Frenchman laugh."

"Mebby Stella won't leave you go after all, Gertie."

"You know I went to college, Mother; didn't I? Well, I'm going to Moncaster next Monday."

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Again her mother sighed heavily. Gertrude comforted her as best she could. "You surely would rather have me go away for a while than have Mr. Ranck for a son-in-law, wouldn't you, Mother?"

"Och, my souls, yes, Gertie, that I would! But promise me you'll come back home again just as soon as you've gave Mr. Ranck time to get safe over it."

Gertrude readily gave the promise.

"What'll become of them classes of factory girls you teach, Gertie?"

"Well, since I shall be earning my own living I shall use the seventy-five dollars a month which you give me, Mother, to pay a teacher to go on with my factory classes. And I shall explain to the classes that it is their own labour which pays for the teacher—your money all accruing from their labour, of course. I did tell them once that I was their beneficiary, they were not mine."

But this was too deep water for Mrs. Swartz.

"You're awful kind-hearted to them workin' people, Gertie; that you are."

They were sitting on the wide piazza that surrounded three sides of the house and as Stella, with an embroidery bag, joined them at this moment, Mrs. Swartz at once broke the news to her.

"Mind you what's going to happen, Stella! You couldn't near give a guess!"

Stella, as she seated herself and brought forth her sewing, noting her mother's agitation and Gertrude's

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pale stillness, felt her heart leap with satisfaction at the announcement she was surely about to hear.

“Well, Mother?” she asked quite casually, repressing her eagerness.

“Gertie’s just been tellin’ me—” Her voice broke and she paused.

“Yes? What has she been telling you?”

“It’s to be next Thursday a’ready, and she only told me to-day. I don’t see how I’m a-goin’ to used myself to it, it’s so suddint! And how she is ever going to get ready so quick—”

“Oh, but Gertrude, my dear, your trousseau—and a wedding—don’t you want a church wedding? I’m sure mother is more than willing to spare no expense to give you a beautiful wedding. We’ll go to New York together to get your trousseau. What’s this about next Thursday? You don’t want to be married at a squire’s office!”

“Och, Stella, it ain’t that there that Gertie’s goin’ to do next Thursday. You listen on me oncet!—and you’ll be awful surprised. I can’t get over it! I certainly wasn’t lookin’ fur anything as unexpected as this here!—though to be sure it ain’t near as worse as it would be if she was a-goin’ to git married to that there Mr. Ranck—that it ain’t!”

Stella’s sewing dropped to her lap and she turned almost fiercely upon Gertrude.

“What’s all this? What are you proposing to do next Thursday?”

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"To go to Moncaster to teach French (an American brand) in the high school."

"In heaven's name, why?"

"To get away from the fate you've wished on me, Sister. Alfred Ranck's attentions are becoming alarming."

Stella's face flushed red and her eyes snapped. "It's rather late in the day, don't you think, for you to decide that Alfred is too attentive?"

"No, thank heaven, it is not too late."

"But it is. You have gone much too far to draw back now. It would be dishonourable and cruel. For four months you have accepted from him every attention that a man could pay to a girl whom he hoped to marry—and then all of a sudden you decide you'll throw him over! You can't act like that, you know!"

"He has not yet asked me to marry him. I'm going away before he does."

"That is cowardly!"

"I admit it."

"Cruel and cowardly! You are willing to brand yourself like that?"

"Rather than marry poor Alfred, Stella, I'd brand myself with any old epithets you choose."

"Don't be frivolous!" cried Stella breathlessly, holding down her rising wrath. "You will expose Alfred to the derision of all New Munich—every one will say you jilted him!"

"I'll tell the society editor of the *Intelligencer* that he jilted me. I can stand it if he can't."

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“Gertrude!” Stella desperately pleaded, “Alfred needs you! It will kill him to have you throw him over like this!”

“You should have considered his possible suffering, Stella, before you set him on to me. How could you think that I would ever marry him?”

“What do you mean by saying that I ‘set him on’ to you? He’s a man, not a puppet—he surely would not court you if he did not love you, however much I might ‘set him on’! Why do you talk such nonsense?”

“I don’t think Alfred is capable of loving any woman. Why he wants to marry me I can’t imagine.”

“Why didn’t you stop him long ago? I tell you that at this stage of the game there is nothing for you to do but stand by it. That’s final!”

“But he may never ask me to marry him at all. He may realise as I do that it is as impossible for him as for me.”

“Whatever he may realise,” Stella retorted, “he is far too honourable to withdraw now, after courting you so openly for four months. No, Gertrude, you have gone too far to turn back now.”

Gertrude did not answer and Stella, in her tense anxiety, keenly scrutinised her sister’s face to learn whether her arguments had had any effect. But Gertrude’s pale and rather pensive countenance did not enlighten her.



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"I trust, Gertie," she said, "that we shall hear no more of this nonsense. The very idea, dear, of your talking about running away and teaching school!—after accepting a man's devoted attentions for—"

Gertrude rose and turned away. From the threshold of the French door which opened on the piazza, she spoke: "I leave on Monday morning, Stella, for Moncaster."

Stella started up from her chair; but as Gertrude disappeared she thought better of it and sank back again with a little gasp.

"It's a-goin' to be awful hard on me, Stella!" Mrs. Swartz mourned, "to have Gertie and Harry both off!"

"She sha'n't do it! I'll stop it! I'll help to save poor Alfred from such an injury as she would do him. I'll phone for him to come here at once and reason with her—"

"No, no, Stella! Leave him be! I'd sooner Gertie would go away, lonesome as I'll be, than see her git married to Mr. Ranck! Don't you phome to him that she's goin' till she's went a'ready—now mind you don't! He'll git her that scared she'll marry him to git rid of him!"

"I hope he will be able to scare some sense into her! I certainly shall send for him!"

She again started up from her chair, but her mother clutched her skirts and held her back.

"Look-a-here, Stella, don't you try to force

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Gertie into marryin' a man she don't take to. Meb- by next summer till she comes home again—"

"She'll stay away a whole year? Is that what she plans?" demanded Stella.

"She's signed up sich a lease to teach in that there high school till next June yet. I don't know how I'm ever goin' to worry through!"

Stella sat back in her chair and thought, a sharp frown on her forehead.

"Moncaster is only eighty miles away. Does she think she escapes Ranck by going there? And she'll be away nearly a year!"

She held her hand to her eyes a minute; then suddenly she lifted her head, smiled and took up her embroidery.

"Very well. Let her go. She's making her own bed."

"What do you mean by that?—'she's makin' her own bed'?" he mother fearfully inquired.

"You'll know soon enough. Never mind. Let her go! Oh!" she added with a start as the colour flew to her face, the hard lines of her mouth relaxed, and a look almost of softness came into her eyes. "Here comes David Phelps!"

## CHAPTER XI

**G**ERTRUDE was puzzled at the sudden collapse of her sister's opposition to her leaving town. In the few days before her departure Stella really aided and abetted her project, adding trifles to her outfit, buying her a mileage book for her occasional visits home, helping her pack her trunks, doing a dozen sisterly, helpful things to express her acquiescence in Gertrude's plans.

"What she really seems to want," Gertrude concluded, "is to get me away from home, if not by marrying me off, then by any other available means. But why? I am so very little in her way!"

In view of Stella's amiable attitude towards her going, she ventured to plead with her not to speak to Alfred about it.

"I shall write to him as soon as I get to Moncaster. I don't want to see him before I go; he might get pathetic on my hands! Promise me, Stella, you won't warn him."

"Suppose he calls before you go?"

"I shall not mention my going."

"Do you think that a fair way to treat him?"

"I have never so warmly encouraged him that I

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need feel any obligations or responsibilities for him," Gertrude maintained.

"You have accepted his attentions and his gifts to such an extent that you are sure he means to—wants to," she corrected herself, "marry you. So I think it is certainly due him that you give him an opportunity to talk it out with you. Your sneaking off without telling him seems to me underhanded."

"It seems so to me too. I don't pretend to any virtues I don't possess."

It required remarkable little urging to extract the required promise from Stella. When on the afternoon before her departure Phelps dropped in to have five o'clock tea with them on the piazza, Stella, before Gertrude joined them, discussed the matter with him.

"Gertrude is doing an outrageous thing!" she announced.

"How interesting!—though I can't imagine it. Well?" he invited enlightenment.

"She is deliberately jilting a man whom she had led on to think she meant to marry him!"

"Ranck? I'm mighty glad to hear that, Stella!"

"But she is treating him outrageously! She gave him every reason to suppose she meant to marry him."

"She doesn't look like a Jezebel. However, these mild appearing women, we're told, are often the very ones to play the devil with a man."

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"I'm glad you realise that."

"Glad? Why?"

"Because sometimes I've thought you were inclined to see Gertrude through very rose-coloured glasses."

"And you don't wish me to?"

"I'm tempted to beg your help in making her see her duty."

"Her duty to marry Ranck? Nothing doing, my friend—though to oblige you I'd like to go through fire."

"I'm afraid Mr. Ranck will do something to himself when he discovers Gertrude's perfidy!"

"Good riddance if he did. Of what use are such as he to the community? And as for 'perfidy'—what a word to apply to anything Miss Gertrude could have done!"

Stella's eyes flashed green for an instant. But Phelps did not see it, for at this moment the butler came out to the piazza with the tea tray and Gertrude and Mrs. Swartz joined them from the parlour.

"None fur me," Mrs. Swartz declined the cup of tea Phelps offered her. "I don't favour this here pickin' a piece between meals. If I do it I don't feel fur my reg'lar vittles. Give it to Gertie. This here thing of hollerin' fur tea every day at five o'clock—well, I know it's awful tony, but the folks that comes here afternoons and says they're 'faintin' fur a cup of tea,' they wasn't brang up to

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it neither. They do it to be high-toned. But me I'm wonderful common. I guess you seen it at me a'ready that I'm verry common, Mister. Ain't?"

"But it isn't 'common' to be kind and motherly as you always are."

Mrs. Swartz's face beamed. "To think how different you talk to me towards what Gertie's beau does! Yes, me I'm glad she's a-goin' away to get rid of him—fur all I'll miss her somepin turrible. But it's the only way she kin shake him off—her bein' too easy-goin' to tell him right out that she don't take to him and that he kreistles her."

"'Kreistles' her?" repeated Phelps, much interested.

"P. D. for 'rubs her the wrong way,'" Gertrude explained.

"And P. D. means, I suppose, Pennsylvania Dutch? But what's this about your going away?"

"I leave home to-morrow to take a high school position at Moncaster."

Phelps was greatly astonished. So much so that he seemed to lose sight of the reason given by Mrs. Swartz for Gertrude's flight. "That's fine!" he declared enthusiastically. "I'm delighted to hear it."

"Oh, thank you!" returned Gertrude dubiously. "Are you, too, glad to be rid of me?"

"Glad that you are unwilling any longer to be a parasite, but insist upon becoming a producer and serving a community—instead of living on it in

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idleness from wealth created by the labour of others. I congratulate you."

"But my motive, I am afraid, Mr. Phelps, is not so exalted."

"Then exalt it."

"I shall try to."

"I hope, Gertie, you'll explain to folks at Moncaster that it ain't that you *got* to work. You just tell 'em over there how well-fixed your folks is in New Munich and how grand you got it at home, and always had. Ain't, you will?"

"I'll try not to sail under false colours, Mother, by pretending to belong to the only class for which Mr. Phelps has any respect—the self-supporters. You see, Mr. Phelps, I shall still be drawing my allowance from mother."

"Well," he conceded, "so long as we live under the capitalistic system, no one can wholly escape its conditions."

"But as I shall not need my allowance, I am using it to pay a teacher to take over my factory classes."

"Your factory classes?" he inquired sceptically. "What are they?"

"The object of my classes," Gertrude recited in a platform-lecture tone of voice, "is Intelligent Entertainment. We cultivate a taste for literature. I read them Dickens, Mark Twain, Bret Harte, 'Jane Eyre,' 'Little Women,' 'Vanity Fair,' 'The Wandering Jew,' 'Les Miserables,' 'The Count of

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Monte Cristo.' Both they and I enjoy it, though of course they prefer the movies."

"Naturally—since there they are not accepting patronage."

"When I first tried to get up these classes," said Gertrude, "they would not have a thing to do with me. They were scornful and suspicious of me. They don't feel that way now; but I, even yet, feel apologetic and ashamed in coming to them as a Lady Bountiful."

"I'm glad to hear it, for you ought to feel so," said Phelps.

"But she feels nothing of the sort," Stella interposed. "She enjoys airing her superior knowledge to a lot of ignoramuses! That's one thing I seem unable to teach Gertrude—that she wastes herself in sacrificing her time and strength for those girls of father's factory. They are unappreciative and ungrateful. Several experiences of my own in that line have made me determined that I would never again put myself out to do a favour for any one of the working class. Of course I contribute to organised charities."

"For your own sake, you know, you can't take such a stand as that," said Phelps. "It was when Jesus met the Samaritan, met a few children, met an adulterous woman, 'then did humanity rise three times in succession,' Maeterlinck says, 'to the level of God.' Happy is the man who can turn his back on reward and punishment and render



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service for the sake of the service itself. He who stops to calculate is spiritually lost. But I preach! What has led you to decide to teach, Miss Gertrude?"

Gertrude checked the reply that sprang to her lips—"Stella's wish to be rid of me at home." Instead, she answered, "Not the lofty purpose you would impute to me, I'm sorry to admit."

"But," he exclaimed in sudden enlightenment, "if you are leaving home and friends merely to elude your 'beau,' as your mother calls him, why I could so easily save you that trouble. Say the word and I'll smash him for you."

"Och!" cried Mrs. Swartz breathlessly, "if he ain't comin' in here now!"

They all looked up to see Ranck entering the gate and walking down the path towards the porch. "I'll just stay settin'," Mrs. Swartz announced. "I most generally get out the way when he comes, he's so ugly-dispositioned and don't like me none; fur he's so tony that way and I'm so common. But with you here, Mr. Phelps, I ain't mindin' him any."

Gertrude did not ask them to refrain from mentioning to Alfred her impending departure, for it occurred to her that if he could learn of it in the presence of three other people she would be spared a scene with him.

"You seemed to be having a very solemn discussion as I came in," Ranck suggested as Stella

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gave him a cup of tea. "Was it about anything interesting?"

"About my feeble attempts at philanthropy in the Swartz factory," answered Gertrude.

"Your classes there? I greatly disapprove of them," affirmed Ranck. "I wish you would drop them. I think it is dangerous to educate above their station those destined to drudgery."

"I agree with you," said Stella with emphasis.

"It might give them," said Gertrude mildly, "a distaste for drudgery almost as strong as we all have."

"Now, Gertrude," protested Stella, "they are really perfectly contented in their lot so long as they don't know any better; and we are unkind to do anything to make them discontented."

"Then we ought to abolish the public schools," said Gertrude.

"We could not do that; but I do think the labouring classes should be allowed to go to school only long enough to learn to read the Bible."

Mr. Phelps' eyes met Gertrude's and they laughed involuntarily. "Do you think," asked Phelps, "the Bible such a very safe book to put into their hands?—when they might read the advice to the rich man, 'Sell all that thou hast and give it to the poor'; or, 'Behold the hire of your labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth'; or, 'Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.'"

As he paused, Gertrude recited,

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“Parson do preach and tell me to pray,  
And to think of my work and not ask for more pay;  
I'm to call all I gets “the Chastening Rod,”  
And look up to my betters and then thank God.’ ”

“Gertrude,” Stella reproved her, “why will you always treat serious questions so frivolously? Anyway, I'm sick of the subject of the worthy, saintly, martyred labouring class! Mr. Phelps has them so on the brain and tries so hard to get them on mine and on my conscience too! That's one consolation I shall have for your leaving home, Gertie! I shall hear no more of the supernal virtues of our factory girls!”

“‘Consolation’?” repeated Gertrude. “You will need consolation, Stella?”

Ranck leaned forward in his chair so suddenly that he nearly upset his teacup. “You are leaving home?” he demanded, his face turning red.

“To-morrow, Alfred. To teach French, of the American variety, in the Moncaster high school.”

“But why, in heaven's name?”

“Why? To—in short, I insist upon becoming a producer instead of a parasite,” she quoted Phelps; “upon ‘serving a community instead of living on it in idleness from wealth created by the labours of others.’ ”

“What nonsense is this?” he asked, his voice almost choked.

“I'm not sure what it is, Alfred. But that's

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why I'm leaving home. Mr. Phelps says so at least."

"You are not serious? You are not really going to teach in a public school?"

"Why shouldn't I? I'm of very little use here."

"I hope, Alfred," said Stella, "that you will be able to persuade her to give it up."

"Gertrude," said Alfred stiffly, "will you let me talk this out with you alone?—will you come into the library?"

"It's so comfortable here, Alfred."

"I wish to speak with you."

"Say on—I can bear it much better sustained by Mr. Phelps' protective presence. If you got me alone you'd have me at too great an advantage."

"I don't understand you!"

"I'm not surprised at that."

"Why have I not been told of this sooner?"

"I told mother and Stella only a few days ago."

"But why did you decide upon such a step without consulting them—and me?"

"I'm twenty-three years old, Alfred."

"Gertrude, come into the library with me."

"Not on your life! I shall stick close to Mr. Phelps."

Phelps' big hand closed over hers. "Only over my dead body, Ranck, do you meet this damsel alone!"

Stella and Alfred exchanged glances.

"Oh, well," said Stella reassuringly, "Alfred won't tease you any more, will you, Alfred?"

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Alfred relaxed and leaned back in his chair; but his face was bleak.

Gertrude drew away her hand.

“Moncaster is not far away and Gertrude will be home often,” added Stella.

“I cannot imagine why she wishes to do such an eccentric thing!” Alfred snapped.

“Can’t you?” said Phelps.

“Yes, and it’s good you can’t!” Mrs. Swartz offered consolation; “fur it would make you madder’n ever!”

Stella rose abruptly. “Mr. Phelps, will you help me to carry the tea table indoors?”

Phelps, caught off his guard, rose at once, picked up the table and carried it around the piazza towards the dining-room.

“Come, Mother,” said Stella, following him, and Mrs. Swartz, always averse to Ranck’s society, got up hastily and joined the procession.

Before Gertrude realised what had happened she found herself alone with Alfred.

## CHAPTER XII

**A**LFRED'S bitter resentment at Gertrude's refusal to remain in New Munich and become his bride, had made her realise with consternation, on that last evening at home, that she really had, a few weeks before, been drifting straight into that very trap. The sense of a danger escaped made up to her somewhat for the irksome exile from home in the weeks which followed. For that it was irksome she felt more poignantly every day of her absence; perhaps all the more so because of an experience on the eve of her departure that had followed closely upon her painful contest with Alfred. She had that same evening paid her last visit to her factory classes to introduce their new teacher to them and had been surprised, on leaving the building at ten o'clock, to find Mr. Phelps also just coming out of the door. He had asked permission to walk home with her and had explained his presence at the factory merely by saying that he had business with the Superintendent. As he was not the lawyer for the estate this seemed odd to Gertrude.

"A few weeks ago, Mr. Phelps," she said to him as they strolled through the streets, "I heard you

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tell Stella why you were a lawyer. But do you think you will find scope in New Munich for such large ambitions?"

"If I can do half as well in upholding the law as your renowned corporation lawyer, Danny Leitzel, has done in getting round it, I shall be satisfied. And your own father—he seemed to find scope here for pretty big ambitions."

"Business ambitions, not social-economic ones."

"His great success—do you think it satisfied him? Did he get any happiness out of it?"

Something in the tone of this apparently casual question gave Gertrude the impression that it was not really casual, but pertinent to a matter not at once manifest.

"Happiness?" she repeated. "Well, he was proud of his success, as self-made men usually are. But no, I know he was not very happy. I've never observed that an engrossing interest in business is conducive to happiness, have you?"

"Destroys the capacity for it rather."

"My father used to have long periods of mental depression when I, in my sympathy for him, would suffer dreadfully. Business cares we always supposed to be the cause of it."

Mr. Phelps offered no comment upon this, though he seemed impressed and interested.

"Would you mind telling me," he presently asked, after a silence, "how your father got his start?"

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"I would not mind if I knew. Father never talked to us of his life out West."

"Out West? Then you knew he started out West, did you?"

"Yes. Why?"

"I came from out West myself."

"I know you did."

She looked at him and the expression of his face made her catch her breath. "Do you mean," she exclaimed, "that you know something of my father's life out there?"

"Very little. I believe your mother was his second wife?"

"Yes."

"Did he ever tell you anything of his first wife?"—and Gertrude felt a repressed eagerness in the question.

"No, Mr. Phelps. It would interest me very much," she added after a pause, "to hear what you know of my father's life in the West."

"Nothing much. I wish I knew more. I only know that when his first wife died, in childbirth, he came into some money with which he built up his business here."

"You mean he inherited the money from his first wife?"

"He came into it through her—yes. Did he never tell you that?"

"No, Mr. Phelps—he never told us."

There was another pause before Gertrude asked: "And the baby died with the mother?"



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“Yes.”

She looked up into his face with a swift scrutiny. Was there some mystery here? Her heart beat fast, for she had been certain for many years that there was something unexplained about her father's first marriage and his life in the West. The startling idea came to her that perhaps this man at her side knew himself to be her half-brother, the son of that mysterious first marriage! His age would just about fit in with that theory. But she rejected it almost immediately. The fact that he was courting Stella was proof against such a supposition.

But suddenly a question flashed into her mind.

“Why did you ask me, Mr. Phelps, how my father got his start—when you already knew?”

“Knew that he had come into his money through his first wife? I wondered whether *you* knew that?”

“But why? Is there any—any mystery about it?”

“‘Mystery’? No—no mystery.”

“I have often wondered why father was always so silent—so secretive really—about his early life. Can you tell me why he was?”

“I never saw your father, Miss Gertrude. That is, I don't remember seeing him.”

“Naturally, if you never were East before you came here six months ago; for my father never went West after he moved here just before his marriage to mother.”

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“Didn’t he?”

“No. So how did you ever come to know anything about him?” Gertrude persisted.

“Only through hearing him spoken of. He was remembered there long after he left.”

“‘There?’ Where?”

“Out in Dakota. And so you think,” he rather hastily added, “that he was satisfied with his success here, though not particularly happy?”

“Father simply loved power and influence and he had both here. So, although he had spells of misery, he was, in a way, satisfied. Stella is exactly like him.”

“God forbid! I mean—oh, I beg your pardon!” he exclaimed with an embarrassed laugh. “I admire your sister so much, I should not want to think of her as overwhelmingly fond of power and influence! Her love of power would never lead her into wrong. She is the very soul of uprightness!” he warmly affirmed with all the confidence in his own perspicuity which a man in love always has.

Gertrude wondered whether it was a secret knowledge of some oblique business operation of her father’s that made Mr. Phelps so emphatically refuse to admit Stella’s likeness to him.

“Why is it,” Phelps asked reproachfully, “that you have not managed to bring your sister to your saner views of life?”

“I’ll leave that feat to you,” Gertrude smiled. “It seems to me that one’s attitude towards social

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questions is not so much a matter of opinion as of temperament."

"That means, does it, that given a temperament like Stella's, you think that I hope in vain ever to convince her of the error of her thinking?"

"I'm afraid so. Indeed I know it."

"That's fatalism. Man is surely a reasonable being."

"Woman isn't. And in my own experience I really don't find man very conspicuously reasonable either. Not that you can notice it."

"Perhaps not; some one has said that education is just the giving up of one set of prejudices for another set."

"Mr. Phelps," said Gertrude suddenly, "tell me, if you don't mind, something of your life out West, before you came to New Munich; won't you?"

He did not answer her at once; and when he did, her rather keen sensitiveness to this man's spiritual atmosphere made her feel a note of caution in his tone.

"Of course I don't mind telling you," he said. "Until about a year ago, I thought I was a nameless waif. Then through the death-bed reparation of an—of an old man who had greatly wronged me, I discovered that I was not. I had been left, a very small child, in the care of a poor couple on a Dakota ranch, who were given a few hundred dollars in payment for keeping me until I should be called for. And as I never was called for, they brought

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me up with seven of their own children, as a sort of Mother's Helper! From the time I was five, I did every sort of work, from walking the floor with the baby at night, even to the family washing! By the time I was ten, the ranchman began to take it easy while I did *his* work in addition to my domestic duties. Very soon, as he found me capable, the only exercise he ever took was to flog me outrageously whenever he thought I was losing energy. I stood it until I was sixteen. Then one day when he, never having observed how stalwart and muscular I had grown, started to beat me with a horsewhip, I relieved him of the job by just taking the whip from his hands and giving him a cowhiding that left him, I am sure, sore for a month! It didn't begin to pay the interest, let alone the capital, I had received from him in similar wise! But it relieved my feelings. I had long since determined not to leave my gentle foster parents until I had satisfactorily beaten up old Quickman for the way he had persecuted me all my life. I left him whining on the barn floor and walked out, never to return. But before going, I forced him to hand over to me from his trousers pocket twenty-five dollars he had received that morning for an old horse he had sold to a neighbour—to pay me in part for the ten years of hard work he and his wife had had out of me—for which they had paid me in beatings, hunger and a bed in a loft. From a very young child, the name Quickman had for me a grim humour—for a

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lazier, more futile beast never encumbered the earth than that old fellow who made a slave of me. I've often wondered how on earth that family ever got on at all after I left. So," he concluded, "you see I started my career of working for the rights of children and men by believing in my own rights and taking them when I could."

"And don't you know," asked Gertrude, deeply interested, "who it was that left you on the ranch people's hands?"

"The—the old man I spoke of. No relative of mine. The phase of my childhood that I regret most is that, with a naturally affectionate disposition, hungry to be loved and eager to give out love, I grew up on harshness and injustice, all my natural instincts repressed and perverted. Nothing that comes to one later can make up to one for a childhood like that! Well!" he concluded, with a deep breath, this part of his story, "I'm trying to forget it. Fortunately for me, a good deal of the stored up bitterness in me was worked off in that beating I gave old Quickman as a parting gift, a little token of remembrance! When I left him, I lit out for Fargo, the largest city in Dakota, and got a job in the packing industry, going to night school the while. In a few years I was able to take a clerkship with a law-firm and at the same time study law. At thirty I was a member of the firm. Then a year later came the death-bed letter of the old man, by which I learned that at least I was born in wedlock.

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But my parents had both died before I was given to the ranchman. I know next to nothing about them except that they were both poor."

"But they had left you unprovided for?"

"No, they had not. That's why I came East—to look up my inheritance. And once here, several circumstances induced me to settle here permanently."

"And was it by mere chance that you selected New Munich for your abiding place?"

Again he hesitated before replying. "No, it was not," he admitted.

But he offered no further explanation.

That night she had been unable to sleep for thinking—not of her rejected lover, but of the tale Mr. Phelps had told her of his life. Who was the old man that had left him with the ranch family and had afterwards made a "death-bed recompense" or "confession," from which Mr. Phelps had learned that he was "born in wedlock"? Why had Mr. Phelps come to New Munich to look up his inheritance? Was his history bound up in some way with her own father's career? If so, would he ever tell them about it?

She had wondered whether he had ever told Stella as much of his past life as he had confided to her.

"I am sure he has not. Stella would not be interested in any one's *struggling* past. If he could tell her the history of a family of great position and wealth, she would be fascinated."

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She was greatly relieved to find, after a few weeks in Moncaster, that Alfred did not intend to annoy her with either letters or visits. Evidently their last interview had been too conclusive to admit of the least doubt on his part.

A statement in a letter from Stella about this time puzzled and slightly troubled her.

“Mother has engaged Alfred Ranck as attorney for the estate in place of Mr. Schulz.”

Mother of course acted only on Stella’s advice. Mr. Schulz had been her father’s attorney for twenty-five years. Why the change?

“Mr. Schulz is getting too old,” Stella explained.

But Gertrude reflected that Mr. Schulz still had one of the largest and most responsible practices in New Munich. So that Stella’s “explanation” could not possibly be genuine.

She was sure that Alfred looked upon her as upon an enemy whom he hated. “Stella knows that, yet she engages him as attorney for the estate.”

But the weird suspicions that for a moment flourished like weeds in her brain, she quickly brushed aside as being quite too noxious to be nurtured for a moment.

She had been teaching French in the Moncaster high school just three weeks when she received from both Stella and Phelps the announcement of their betrothal. Though she had been expecting it it came as a shock.

She thought often in the weeks that followed on

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the mystery of that sex attraction by which a woman like Stella could hold such a man as Mr. Phelps in the hollow of her hand; for that she did so hold him was manifest to any one who saw them together for ten minutes.

“Her overwhelming attraction merely as a woman outweighs so completely her uncongeniality to him mentally and spiritually!” she marvelled. “Everything, the most precious things in life, seem to be subservient to this strange power of sex!”

She realised of course that Mr. Phelps did not understand Stella. “He mistakes her outspokenness for frankness and honesty. Most people do.”

She wondered whether he really hoped to convert Stella to his radicalism; for of course he could not look for happiness with her while she was so intensely antagonistic to his ideals.

“But he does not see that the prejudices of a mind like Stella’s cannot be controverted by arguments. He will never convert her.”

She marvelled no less at the miracle of Stella’s coldness and her ambition having both succumbed to the force of Mr. Phelps’ virile personality.

“The third miracle will happen if they actually succeed in hitting it off happily together!”

The announcement of the engagement deterred her for a long time from making a week-end visit home.

“I’ll wait until I’ve grown accustomed to the thought of it,” she resolved with a great heaviness of spirit.



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This resolution, firmly adhered to, postponed her first visit home until the Christmas Holidays, when the betrothal, Stella wrote her, was to be celebrated by a great party.

## CHAPTER XIII

**T**HE Christmas season at home, however, was marked by far other events than the gay celebration of a happy betrothal.

A scarcity of employment in New Munich at the time when the thermometer was at its lowest, reduced the price of labour; and the consequent reduction of wages at the Swartz factory precipitated threats of a strike.

Gertrude arrived home in the very midst of a painful difference of opinion as to this situation between Stella and her betrothed, Phelps urging upon her reasons for yielding to the demand for higher wages at the factory and she utterly repudiating his advice and calling to her counsel Mr. Reingruber, the superintendent of the factory; Alfred Ranck, her lawyer; and the Reverend Doctor Mowry, her rector. None of these agreed with Mr. Phelps' opinion as to the right way to settle the trouble. So, when Gertrude came home, the eagerness with which Mr. Phelps greeted her, pained rather than pleased her, so certainly she knew his hope in her to be doomed to disappointment.

"Here is at least one person to back me up!" was the exclamation with which he shook hands with

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her when, on the morning after her arrival, he found her alone in the library. "You've heard all about this mess we're in?"

"Yes."

"Stella just phoned me that Reingruber is coming here at ten o'clock this morning to make a new suggestion. She asked me to be here with her."

"Yes. She has asked the Reverend Doctor Mowry to be present too."

Phelps frowned. "He is so entirely useless in a practical way and so abominably mischievous in a religious and spiritual way! I have much more patience with Reingruber. He at least doesn't pretend to have any but selfish motives. Well," he repeated, "it's good to have you at my side to uphold me! You do back me up, Gertrude?" he anxiously inquired.

It was the first time he had called her that and it brought the colour to her face. She had turned white upon his entering the room.

"Don't disappoint me!" he pleaded. "I've been so sure that self-interest would not bias your judgment—I want to go on believing in you!"

"I'm so sorry," she faltered, "but I know I can't be of the least use to you!"

He looked at her for an instant, dropped her hand and turned away.

"But, Mr. Phelps!" It was she who pleaded now. He turned back to her with a reassuring kindness.

"Never mind," he said. "It is hard, I suppose,

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to see the righteousness of acting against one's interests. I won't judge you, Gertrude."

"But you are judging me—and wrongly!"

"I'm at least not condemning you. Why should I? It has always been so—ever since the young man of great possessions turned sorrowfully away when Jesus told him to give all he possessed to the poor."

"I'm no more self-interested than you are, Mr. Phelps."

"Of course, my dear child, I know you think you are not. It is so easy to bolster up one's case with sophistries. Stella does not do that, you know. She is quite frankly and honestly opposed to democracy, to equal opportunities for all. I don't think she is even self-interested. She is convinced that my theories would be socially disastrous."

"But I am not. I share your beliefs. I think Stella ought to agree to the demands of the workers at the factory."

"Then why," he exclaimed, "do you say you can't be of use to me?"

"For the simple reason that my opinions are a very negligible quantity in the family counsels."

"But why should they be?"

"Why indeed!" Gertrude smiled. "Look at me! I'm perfectly futile!"

"You're certainly not a good fighter," he smiled. "But it's a relief to know that you are at least with me in spirit. I am surprised at myself—the disappointment I felt when I thought you were an

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apostate! And my happiness in knowing you are not."

"You can always count on my faith in your aims," Gertrude assured him, "if that will do you any good."

"If your brother were home?" he asked. "Where would he stand?"

"Where Stella told him to."

Phelps smiled. "She is a Major-General, isn't she? But, Gertrude," he added, regarding her speculatively, "what you want to do is to get up some backbone. Where it is a case of principle, of justice or wrong to thousands of your fellow creatures, a spineless attitude won't do; won't do, my dear!"

"But what can I do? I've no more legal right in the Swartz estate than you have. And if you can't influence Stella, how can I?"

What did it mean?—that sudden veiling of the gleam in his eyes? Gertrude gazed at him mystified, wondering, as he stood in silence before her with lowered lids.

"As one of the heirs of the estate," he presently said, "you surely have an equal right with Stella to influence your mother."

"But not an equal power. You ought to know by this time, Mr. Phelps, that Stella runs this family."

"Very efficiently and unselfishly!" he warmly responded. "If only she could be brought to change her ideals!"

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The sound of a movement in the room made them both look up. Stella was standing in the doorway regarding them with a light in her eyes that made Gertrude quickly draw her hand from the clasp in which Mr. Phelps held it, and step away from his side.

Stella smilingly came forward as Phelps turned to her with both hands outstretched.

But further greeting than a clasp of the hands was checked when there followed her into the room Mr. Reingruber, the factory superintendent.

He was a short, fat, puffy individual, though his florid, good-natured countenance was sharp and alert. The men who worked under him called him "a good sport" and the women and girls of the factory pronounced him "a jollier." He was manifestly a man to whom none but business ideals could possibly appeal.

"Ah, we're all here, I see, all here, all here, that's good!" he talked busily as he shook hands with Gertrude and Phelps and hustled them all into seats around the fire. "I see, Miss Stella, you've invited your gentleman friend to hear my plan. Very good, very good! Don't know how he'll take to it. I can tell how any man in business is goin' to take a proposition, and I can calculate pretty close which way most any preacher or any lawyer will wobble on it. But *this* lawyer!" He clapped Phelps resoundingly on the shoulder and laughed boisterously. "He's a new one on me, ha, ha! A new

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one on me! You see what queers it is that he's a-goin' to marry into all this capital and yet wants to down Capital and favour Labour! Aw, Phelps, you must have bats in your belfry! It's good for you, Miss Stella, that you ain't easy inflooned. Now if it was Miss Gertrude, here, she's so easy-goin'—I'd be worried good and proper if *she* was runnin' our business and was engaged to as smooth a talker as what Friend Phelps is on the wrongs of the labouring classes! Eh, Miss Gertrude, eh? Ha, ha, ha!"

Gertrude realised that Stella's allowing her, since she happened to be by, to remain at the conference indicated how extremely negligible she considered her, since if she had held her presence to be of the least moment to the impending discussion she would either have bespoken or forbidden it.

"Well, what is it you have to 'propose?" Stella inquired, drawing back her skirt and holding a beautifully shod foot to the edge of the fender.

Though Phelps' concentrated attention was on the face of the factory superintendent, his eye did not fail to note the pretty foot.

"I've got the scheme that will avert a strike!" Reingruber announced triumphantly. "It's worked in other towns and I'm sure we can put it over in little old New Munich. Human nature's like Gawd, the same yesterday, to-day and everywhere. It'll mean a little investment of money, Miss Stella, but not near what you'd lose if we had a strike."

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"What is it?" Stella asked, looking wary at the mention of an outlay.

"Get an up-to-date evangelist with plenty of pep in his hot air, to come here and hold a religious revival. It'll stop the strike and it's the only thing that will stop it."

"Except your adding to the wages you now pay what that evangelist would cost you," suggested Phelps.

"Yes, but when the revival expenses are paid, they're paid and done with," said Reingruber; "whereas the higher wages go on forever world without end, amen. Increasin' wages on demand, as I've always told you, Miss Stella, is ruinous policy. It establishes a precedent and spoils the employees so bad that Labour has more power than Capital."

"Of course," agreed Phelps. "The capitalistic system works havoc both ways, is outworn, untenable and must go."

"Doomed!" sonorously pronounced Reingruber. "I don't think!" he cheerfully added. "Not yet anyway. Not in your lifetime, Phelps."

"But how on earth would a religious revival stop a strike?" asked Stella, bewildered.

"Experience proves unquestionably," said Reingruber, "that labour troubles cease and capitalistic rule flourishes undisturbed and unimpeded in the wake of an evangelistic campaign. That's why the vested interests of any big city always enthusi-



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astically support the successful evangelist. All employers of labour welcome him with open arms."

"The doctrine being," Phelps further elucidated the matter, "that when the labouring man 'gets religion' he's so sure of 'flowery beds of ease' in heaven as a reward for patient submission to 'God's will' here, that he no longer demands a flowery bed on earth."

"Exactly," Reingruber corroborated him. "They get so busy chasin' up heaven, they stop worryin' about things down here; they just call the hard places here 'Providence' and let it go at that."

"Also, the 'converted' labouring man actually comes to believe that the 'vested interests' are the divinely ordained guardians of the poor," added Phelps.

"Then you think," asked Stella, frowning thoughtfully, her question addressed to Reingruber, "that it would pay?"

"If only ten per cent of the trail hitters stick, it will still be a good business proposition!" Reingruber affirmed. "Anyway it's our only hope. A Gospel shouter or a strike. Take your choice. The evangelist, though high priced, will be cheaper in the end."

"Do you know any evangelist?" Stella anxiously inquired.

"I wouldn't be an up-to-date factory superintendent, Miss Stella, if I didn't, in these days,

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have my finger on an evangelist available when needed."

"I'm glad Dr. Mowry is coming. I'll ask his advice."

Phelps leaned towards her and spoke with grave earnestness. "I can't believe, Stella, that you will lend yourself to such an exploiting of the people who work for you!"

"David, dear, you overlook so many things in a problem like this! Mr. Reingruber's plan pleases me for the very reason that it would be offering to the workers themselves something so much better for them than the higher wages they demand—religion with all its rich blessings. I am more than willing to pay the expenses of giving to them on their own low plane something so uplifting and comforting for them. The advantages of the plan would not all be theirs, of course, since it would incidentally avert the strike. And of course since it is I (that is, Mother) who bears the expense of the religious campaign, it is only fair that she should reap some of the benefit. Isn't this perfectly reasonable?"

David looked at her sadly, leaned back in his chair and did not reply. But as Gertrude chanced to catch his eye they both involuntarily laughed.

Stella flushed angrily. "I do not see the joke!" she said stiffly.

"That *is* the joke, Stella," said Gertrude. "The least bit of a sense of humour, my dear, would save you a lot of mistakes!"

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The butler's announcement at this moment of the Reverend Doctor Mowry checked Stella's retort.

The rector, a man of about forty-five, wore the conventional dress of a priest of the Episcopal church and, one might add, the conventional expression of countenance as well; earnestly solicitous; serenely composed; there seemed to be a judiciously restrained benediction lurking about his mouth. These expressions were as obviously assumed to befit his calling as was his garb. Gertrude had often wondered whether that carefully adjusted expression of Dr. Mowry's ever relaxed when he was alone or asleep, and what he looked like then. His face was not very intelligent; his mouth not strong. His manner of accosting this little group of his parishioners suggested a faint touch of the professional actor.

Both Stella and Reingruber injected into their greeting of the rector a deferential recognition of his Office which he accepted complacently. A flicker of his eyebrows noted the absence of this deference in Gertrude's tone as she responded to his salutation. Phelps' response was so matter-of-fact as to just escape curtness.

While Reingruber hustled about to wheel a big armchair near the group and seat the rector therein, Gertrude said in an aside to Phelps, "It will be interesting, won't it, to see what a clergyman will do with a situation like this?"

"He will save himself by indirectness; because a

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straight cut would of course land him outside the pale. The very absoluteness of Christ's Gospel creates a Jesuit order!"

Before they could resume the discussion of the evangelist, the butler again announced an arrival—Mr. Alfred Ranck.

## CHAPTER XIV

**H**ER four months' absence had not, Gertrude quickly perceived, softened Alfred's resentment against her, but had, on the contrary, to judge from his conspicuously inimical manner towards her, only deepened his sense of injury. His stony stare, his ignoring her outstretched hand, his scarcely perceptible nod in her direction, created a situation so strained as to be embarrassing to every one in the room save himself and Stella. Gertrude reflected that this unfortunate man's presence seemed invariably to bring with it a sense of strain and gloom.

Phelps, with his ready tact, quickly covered the awkwardness of the moment by rising and addressing the company. "I would draw attention to the absence of the one person essential to this interview, the one most concerned in our discussion, Mrs. Swartz. Shall she not be summoned?"

"I am of course acting for Mother, David," responded Stella. "I must spare her at her age such distressing anxieties as are involved in strike possibilities! She would have a nervous breakdown if she had to cope with them!"

"You are right," he acquiesced with a tender look

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of approval for her daughterly thoughtfulness, as he sat down again at her side.

Dr. Mowry, invited to express his opinion as to the advisability of an evangelistic campaign, answered equivocally: "Naturally a clergyman is not in sympathy with the undignified emotionalism, the hysteria, of that form of religion; it is quite unchurchly. At the same time we recognise its use in the social economy. It undoubtedly has its genetic place in the progress of the race. It is also undoubtedly a very effectual leaven in industrial turmoil. The protection it gives Capital is a real social benefit. These are facts we cannot ignore."

"You bet you can't!" Reingruber responded lustily. "Ah, excuse me, Reverend!" he hastily added, then laughed at himself loudly. "You put it fine, Reverend, fine!"

"It is of course a concrete condition we have to deal with and not theories," pronounced Alfred with an antagonistic glance at Phelps.

"It is indeed a concrete condition you have to deal with," Phelps returned, "some phases of which you would do well not to ignore."

"Will you specify the phases?" asked the rector, a touch of chill disapproval in his tone as he turned to Phelps.

"To specify one—the masses are coming to realise that no effectual social reform can be perpetuated under the capitalistic system. It's been tried and failed. No use to put new fire escapes on a rotten

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and tottering building. Industry has got to be socialised; to be controlled and managed not for profit but for service."

"That sort of talk, Mr. Phelps," said the rector coldly, "savours of revolution!"

"The possibility of revolution is one of the phases of the problem I would advise you not to overlook."

"We are concerned just now not with the reforming of the world but with the definite case in hand," Ranck frowned; "the case being that my client is threatened with a strike of her employees because she refuses their demand for an increase of wages."

"Suppose we discuss her reasons for her refusal," suggested Phelps.

"She considers," Ranck replied for Stella, "first, that to yield would establish a bad principle. Eh, Dr. Mowry?"

"Absolutely so," agreed the rector with decision. "To yield to such a demand always works infinitely more harm than good."

"Her second reason for her refusal," resumed Ranck, "is that the expenses of the factory are at present so heavy that an increase of wages would lower the profits of the works so much as to make it not worth while to keep them up."

"The answer to that," said Phelps, "is this home with its high scale of expenses in the up-keep, its retinue of servants, its garage full of cars, the owner's heavy contributions to charity and to the church, the comfort and luxury in which the inmates live—

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as over against the poverty and squalour in which nine tenths of the employees of the factory live.”

Stella shrugged her shoulders but answered patiently: “Would you expect me, David, to dispense with things which I have had all my life and which are not luxuries but necessities to me—in order to pay higher wages to people who are too degraded to use wisely what they already get? They waste, they drink, they get into debt, they don’t keep their houses or their children clean. You never see a girl of that factory without pepsin gum in her mouth and the movies could not be supported in this town if it were not for the patronage of my Mother’s factory employees.”

“Chewing gum and movies are a sedative, Stella, for the pangs of hunger—physical, mental and spiritual. Living under the same circumstances you yourself would, I think, resort to chewing gum and movies.”

“Don’t be flippant, David dear!”

“Stella,” he suggested, “since you think it would establish a bad precedent to increase wages on demand, why don’t you, instead of spending thousands of dollars on this evangelistic campaign, build sanitary and attractive houses for your employees and charge a very low rent for them? Which would be a more religious course of action on your part?—and which would conduce to a more religious state of mind in your employees?—the evangelist or the new houses?”



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"No go!" affirmed Reingruber. "No sooner would you get them landed in their new houses than they'd go on strike again to further raise their standard of living. There's no satisfying them. No'p! The evangelist is surer and safer and will last longer, Miss Stella, believe *me!*"

"You are no doubt right," Phelps admitted. "The new houses would probably be only a plaster over an open wound; not a cure. Which proves that the Capitalist system must go."

"The evangelist, then, it shall be?" asked Reingruber. "The sooner I send for him the better."

"You advocate the evangelist, Mowry?" Phelps asked, looking at the clergyman very directly.

"Mr. Phelps," Dr. Mowry gravely replied, "you don't want social justice. You are a partisan in a war between classes. Arraying class against class is not the way to bring about social justice."

"But it isn't the social reformers, Dr. Mowry, that would array class against class; they are so arrayed under the present order. I would bridge the gulf between classes and consolidate society by establishing a truly democratic system."

"There never was a time, Mr. Phelps," Dr. Mowry affirmed with a touch of severity, "when so many statesmen were working at the problem of curbing the wealth of the rich."

"Statesmen?" repeated Phelps, staring incredulously at the rector. "Statesmen trying to curb the accumulation of wealth?"

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Reingruber guffawed outright and laughed until his fat cheeks shook.

"Come on, now, Phelps," he protested, "you can't expect Reverend to be on to the political game the way a lawyer like you is on to it."

"The men who are working to curb the accumulation of wealth, Dr. Mowry," said Phelps, "don't often get to Congress or the Senate! Those who are doing the accumulating take good care of that!"

"You advise me, Dr. Mowry," interposed Stella, "to get the evangelist here?"

"I think it the safest and sanest way of restoring order here at the present time. When we have evolved into a higher civilisation we may find other and better means of settling such difficulties. But," he smiled upon them all in a fatherly way, "a truth out of time is not a truth. To live at all is to compromise. Mr. Phelps' theories are not fitted to the time."

"But my theories were taught by Jesus two thousand years ago, being only the Gospel of brotherly love, Dr. Mowry."

"I believe as much as you do, Mr. Phelps, in democracy, in social justice. But you social reformers see only one class, one point of view, to the exclusion of a just appreciation of the whole situation."

"A just appreciation of the whole situation," answered Phelps, "must recognise that it can't be readjusted but must be swept away and a new

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situation created on a wholly new foundation, the foundation of Christian principles.”

“I would advise you, Miss Stella,” said her rector, turning to her, “not to sell your soul to demagogues.”

“But to get a sensational evangelist here, Stella, to dope your chattels into insensibility to their deprivations and injustices,” smiled Phelps.

Dr. Mowry stiffened. “I consider you a dangerous agitator, Mr. Phelps!”

“I’ll have to try to bear up under it, Mowry.”

“I do not trust your ‘reform’ propaganda. There is too much ‘hot air,’ too much hot headedness in the views of fellows like you!”

“Is there no ‘hot air’ in capitalistic propaganda that you distrust? I advocate for every man and woman who will do his share of the work of the world, security against sickness, accident, old age, unemployment and death; a government that restricts its activities to securing the common weal; that takes over all public utilities from private greed. Is this demagogism? Is it hot headedness? Do you distrust it? Do you prefer a system which gives, in our own democracy, incomes of fifty millions to a few dozens of men while thirty-four millions of our people live below the poverty line?”

“Capitalism has its evils, Mr. Phelps, we sorrowfully admit it and are all seeking to correct them. But you greatly exaggerate them. And as I said, you lack a genetic sense. Well, Miss Stella,” he

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added, rising, "if you decide to get the evangelist here rely on my sympathetic support. I am not narrow-minded; I recognise other means of salvation than those of my own particular group. I am always ready to countenance and support any and all means of spiritual regeneration."

"But you know," said Phelps, also rising, "that the purpose for which the evangelist is summoned here is an absolute subversion of the teachings of Jesus."

"No, Mr. Phelps, I am glad to say I know nothing of the sort. You are, I am afraid, quite incapable of any but a one-sided view of the matter. Now, Miss Stella,"—he held out his hand.

He shook hands all round with a conventional-pastor remark for each—until he came to Phelps. To him he offered his hand in silence. Phelps looked at him, smiled, and deliberately put his hand behind his back.

"If you did not wear that priest's garb, Mowry, I could give you my hand. But I respect the teachings of Jesus too much to be tolerant of a desecration of them."

Mowry's face turned white. But, amidst the silent consternation of the others, he shrugged his shoulders, his lips curled contemptuously, he bowed ceremoniously, and turned away.

## CHAPTER XV

**Y**OU went quite too far, David," Stella reproved her lover when Dr. Mowry, Ranck, and Reingruber had left and she found herself alone with Phelps and her sister, "when you refused to shake hands with Dr. Mowry. You cannot presume to think yourself a better man than he! Why, he is perfectly revered in New Munich!"

"By the poor, the destitute, the labouring people, Stella? Or by the well-to-do, the smug and the comfortable?"

"He does an immense amount of work among the poor. He is noted for his extensive charity work."

"Knowing that, I went to him three months ago with a tale of a hideously unsanitary condition in a tenement district on the outskirts of this town, owned by a corporation made up of several of his Vestry. I told him that if I only had his chance at the ears and consciences of the people once a week, I thought I could certainly change some things! He promised me that he would bring the matter up. But he was so lukewarm that I knew he would do nothing. Two weeks later he preached

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a highly rhetorical sermon dealing in glittering generalities on our duties to the poor; and the congregation wept and went away lauding his saintliness and increased their donations to charities. I went to see him and asked him why he had not given them the concrete facts. He said he did not see the need; nor was he accustomed to have people tell him how to write his sermons! 'But,' I asked him, 'will that sermon of yours cleanse that rotten district?' 'Indirectly and in time it will.' 'Indirectly and in time—when babies are dying, little girls becoming diseased, boys corrupted?' 'If I specified details as you wish me to,' he answered, 'it would offend my church members who own that infected district; they would leave my church; their contributions to the Charities of the church would be withdrawn and the charity activities consequently curtailed. I would be doing more harm than good. It would be tactless and unwise.' 'But the infected districts would go,' I said. 'I'm not sure even of that.' 'You could make sure of it!' I said. 'You could force it to go if you would. Why won't you?' 'Because I would lose more than I'd gain. One must use one's common sense in a case like this and look on all sides of it. There is more than one side. Compromise always accomplishes more lasting good than violent partisanship. It would be the height of imprudence to raise a vulgar sensation about the case.' 'What crimes of cowardice are committed in thy name, O Prudence!'

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I suggested to him. He answered, 'I don't propose to vulgarise and desecrate my pulpit by ventilating nastiness, uncovering putrid sores! Remember I have sensitive women—ladies—in my congregation!' ”

“So,” concluded Phelps, “I gave him up.”

“I think his course in the whole matter was entirely wise and right,” declared Stella. “To have raised a vulgar sensation about it would have been beneath the dignity of his Office.”

“But I am sure, David,” Gertrude here spoke for the first time, “that you did not let it go at that?”

“I've got the Labourers' Organisation on the job and am suggesting their challenging the Mayor (who is one of the owners of the district) to force its being cleaned up. The 'vulgar sensation' will be raised if I can raise it!”

Stella's lips grew hard, but before she could rally her forces for a reply, Mrs. Swartz entered the room, a newspaper in her hand, her face shocked and troubled.

“Och, Gertie, it reads in the paper that you are going to speak at the Suffrage meeting next Sa'urday!” she exclaimed agitatedly as she joined the group about the fire. “About Woman in Labour! Now, Gertie, you wouldn't near do a thing like that there, would you? To have it printed out in the newspaper yet! It gives me an awful shamed face!”

“But, Mother, why?” asked Gertrude in astonish-

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ment. "You never before minded my talking at suffrage meetings."

"But about woman in labour, Gertie! Excuse me, David, fur speakin' right out in front of you, but I guess you seen it anyways in the newspaper. Anyhow, Gertie, how kin women's woting help a woman in labour? It may mebbly make liquor come away—it ain't fur me to say it won't fur I don't know fur sure—but it certainly can't have no effec on a woman in childbirth! It stands to reason. And I don't want fur an unmarried daughter of mine to be so bold as to stand up before a congregation and talk about sich things; it ain't nice, Gertie. Do you think?" she appealed to Stella and David.

Stella laughed and David laid his arm about Mrs. Swartz's shoulder. "It's a mistake," he told her reassuringly. "Gertrude will explain to you what she is going to talk about."

"About woman in industry, Mother."

"Och!" exclaimed Mrs. Swartz in a confusion and embarrassment that her modern-minded maiden daughters did not feel at all. "To think I made sich a break right in front of David! It's you, Gertie, that must have the shamed face fur me. Ain't?"

"Never, Mother!" Gertrude cheerfully lied. "And here's James with the glad tidings that luncheon is served," she added as the butler appeared. "I'm grossly enjoying home cooking after five months at a Moncaster boarding house."



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“Yes, I guess anyhow home eatin’ tastes good after sich wittles as they give you at an eatin’ place! Will you eat along, David?”

It was a few hours after luncheon that day, when David had gone, that Stella went to Gertrude’s room to make a most surprising announcement.

“You may as well countermand your order for that new evening gown, Gertrude, since you say you won’t need it at Moncaster. I’ve decided not to give the dinner dance to announce our engagement.”

Gertrude was startled. “You don’t mean your engagement is broken off?”

“Nonsense! Of course not.”

“You gave me a shock!” breathed Gertrude, her hand at her heart.

“Thank you for your solicitude, sister—but why on earth should I break my engagement?”

“Why indeed! You’d be crazy! A man like David! Oh, Stella, do you realise how blest you are?”

“You act, Gertrude, as though you were in love with David yourself!”

“What woman could help being? Of course I am.”

“Well, don’t be fool enough to let him see it; the women all fall for him so absurdly, he is in danger of being spoiled!”

“You’re hardly in a position to criticise them, my dear,” Gertrude smiled.

“No. I think that’s one reason why I accepted

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him, with all his very serious faults. It's such fun to see other women envying me."

"Do you think many women would envy me the possession of Alfred?"

"That's another matter."

"Rather! Why are you giving up the party?"

"David has persuaded me that in view of the suffering here this winter among the poor an elaborate party would be rather bad form."

"'Bad form'? David never called it that! Bad principle, perhaps."

"I think myself a great party might be in questionable taste just now. I do not concede that so long as I have the money to pay for it it would be bad principle."

"You say David 'persuaded' you, Stella?" Gertrude asked, puzzled. "But I've never yet seen any one persuade you, dear. I confess to a curiosity as to how David got you to give up anything you wanted as much as I know you wanted that party."

"Do you think he resorted to a club?"

"Some kind of a club, surely. What was it, sister?"

Stella looked at Gertrude curiously, wondering how it was that so often her young sister penetrated straight to the heart of things not visible to the naked eye. It was true that David had held a club over her—he had refused to be present at a costly party given at a time when, as he said, his human brothers were perishing with hunger and

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cold just outside his door. With his hands on her shoulders and his kind eyes looking down into hers, he had given her his ultimatum.

“When we announce to our friends the wonderful news, dearest, that you and I are going to live our lives together, it must be through some other channel than by an orgie of feasting, drinking and dancing, unless we ask to the feast the four thousand underfed people of this town of thirty thousand souls.”

“But, David,” she had firmly returned, “I intend to give the party. Our love is the greatest thing that ever happened to us. Why should we not proclaim it to our friends with feasting and dancing?”

“When there is such great suffering all about us?” he had gravely questioned.

“‘The poor ye have always with you,’ He said, you know, David.”

“We cannot give this party, dearest.”

“David, we are going to give it. I am proud of you and I want my friends to see and share my pride and happiness.”

For answer he had held her to his heart. “You know, my love, that I want you to have everything in the world that is good for you to have.”

“It is not for you, dear, to decide what is good for me.”

“Right you are. But it is for me to decide what is right for myself. So, if we have this party it must be a simple affair; no city decorators and caterers, no engraved invitations and elaborate

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dressing. Not while there is starvation at our doors, Stella!" he had pleaded.

"But don't you see, dear, the more elaborate the party, the greater the number of people that will have to be employed? It's far better to give employment than to dole money out to charity."

"It happens in this case, however, that the employment would be given to Philadelphia firms, not to the needy here in New Munich."

"It would be putting money in circulation," maintained Stella. "It's good for the poor to have the rich spend money."

"Did you ever hear those lines of Ernest Bilton's, Stella?"

"Now Dives daily feasted and was gorgeously arrayed,  
Not at all because he liked it, but because 'twas good  
for trade.

That the people might have calico he clothed himself  
in silk,

And surfeited himself on cream that they might get the  
milk;

He fed five hundred servants that the poor might not  
lack bread,

And had his vessels made of gold that they might get  
more lead;

And e'en to show his sympathy with the deserving poor  
He did no useful work himself that they might do the  
more.

You'll think this very, very strange, but then of course,  
you know,

'Twas in a far-off country and a long while ago.'

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“No, my dear,” Phelps concluded, “you and I cannot, with our friends, consume in one night’s revelry an amount of capital that would keep a dozen families for a month.”

“Dear, nothing you can say will convince me that I am wrong and I intend to give the party.”

“No, my dear.”

“But, David,” she had laughed, “what an idea, to suppose that you can control me!”

“I shall not be among those present at your party, Stella.”

“David! You would not so disgrace and mortify me! Not to turn up at the party given to announce our engagement!”

“You will not be disgraced and mortified, for you will not give the party knowing that I will not come to it. Believe me, dear, I am very, very sorry to disappoint you!”

“Talk about the Czar of all the Russias!” she had exclaimed.

“It is my misfortune if I am forced to seem disobliging and autocratic.”

“But you won’t be disobliging and autocratic—to me!” she had coaxed. “I have so set my heart on this party, David dear!”

“Will you give it simply, without superfluous expenditure?”

“You must leave such things to me, David. I am the best judge.”

“Then, my dear, don’t count on me.”

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Now Stella had learned to know David well enough to understand that he would not willingly take such a stand and so oppose her without reasons which seemed to him incontrovertible; and that having taken his stand he could not, by anything she might do or say, be moved from it.

“He would let me break off our engagement and he would not give in!” she told herself with rage in her heart at her helplessness, even as she thrilled under the strong hand of her master, as is a woman’s way, alas, poor worms that we are!

And here she was now, telling her sister not to buy a new gown since the party would not be given. It was really amazing even to herself that she should have come to such a pass.

“A pretty outlook for our married life!” she ruefully thought, as she left Gertrude’s room and went to her own. “Will he always find a way to conquer me?”

She reflected that even her “economic independence” was not a weapon in her hands in dealing with David.

And Gertrude, standing at her bed-room window looking down into the snow-covered grounds of her beautiful home, thinking of David and Stella, wondered for the hundredth time what was the nature of a love that seemed to flourish so richly on such meagre soil as was the shallow meeting ground of their two minds and souls. Stella’s very opposition to him was idealised by David into force of character,

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honesty. His infatuated senses clouded both his perception and his judgment. While Stella on her part, quite as antagonistic to his views as he was to hers, was fascinated, in spite of what she called her better judgment, by his personality, his strength, his gentleness; and at the same time her very soul was thrilled by the power of his great love for her.

## CHAPTER XVI

**G**ERTRUDE was relieved to find, during her three weeks' vacation, that Alfred in his frequent calls at the house to consult with Stella as her mother's legal adviser, so far from trying to renew his old relation with her, continued to treat her with marked coldness. But she was puzzled at Stella's acquiescence in this failure of her matrimonial plans. It was not like Stella to give up so easily anything she had set her heart upon.

"Can David have anything to do with her giving it up?" Gertrude wondered. "If to get me away from home was all she wanted, she has of course accomplished that. But she must know that I am apt to come back to stay, now that all danger of my marrying Alfred seems over."

Stella's purposes were so inscrutable that Gertrude decided she herself was becoming morbidly suspicious and that her sister did not, after all, harbour any cryptic designs with regard to her.

By the middle of her third week at home the evangelistic campaign was in full swing and was having an immense "go." There were hundreds of "trail hitters," the number steadily growing, and already all danger of a strike had ceased. The



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people of New Munich were fairly rioting in an orgy of religious emotional dissipation.

Mr. Reingruber rubbed his fat hands together with satisfaction at the success of his plan.

"This'll keep 'em quiet for the next three years!" he declared. "It's the best business investment you ever made, Miss Stella!"

"Besides being a very great stimulus to the religious life of the town," said Stella, "especially to the lower classes."

"To be sure, certainly—might as well call that an asset too—the religious life of the town—of course. And helping our own business helps all business. By the way, it must not get out, you know, that *we* got Reverend Jake here. It wouldn't look right. They'd be on to us. It might 'squelsh the spirit.'"

"Be on to us, Mr. Reingruber?"

"Well, you see, if the common people knew what a rake-off Reverend Jake gets, in these hard times, it might damage his usefulness. By the way, yesterday I took Mrs. Jake (you know she's really the brains of the team and he's the noise and the clown) into Betz's jewelry store and left her choose a bracelet for herself. I charged it to the Swartz estate of course. That all right?"

"Well," said Stella dubiously, looking at Reingruber with a shade of suspicion in her eye, for "Mrs. Jake" was a very comely young woman and Reingruber was known to have "a weakness for the

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ladies"; "if you think it was necessary, Mr. Reingruber."

"I wouldn't have done it, if I hadn't o'thought it was necessary."

"What did she choose? Something very expensive, I suppose!"

"A forty dollar wrist watch."

"Hum—m! Oh, well, I suppose as you say, it's cheaper than a strike. I shall be awfully glad when it's all over! Mr. Phelps hates it all so. Oh, by the way, Mr. Reingruber—"

"I know what you're a-goin' to say," he nodded as Stella hesitated, "I'm not to speak to Phelps about the bracelet for Mrs. Jake. I'm on. It don't look good, that's a fact."

"I dislike such methods myself," returned Stella coldly.

"But it's done everywhere they go," protested Reingruber. "I got that handed out to me first thing."

"Well, upon my word!" exclaimed Stella.

"You bet you!" nodded Reingruber. "But we haven't got any kick comin', Miss Stella—it's workin' fine—fine! We'd have lost ten times as much through a strike!"

At five o'clock that same day, David joined Stella at tea in the library to talk with her about "your Pulpit-Pounder," as he called the evangelist.

"I am going to ask him to use his great opportunity here, since he has the public ear, to en-

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lighten the people as to the real conditions in this town."

"What on earth do you mean, David?"

"I am going to ask him to bring home to the public the fact that here in New Munich there are strong men compelled by the starvation of their wives and children to the humiliation of accepting alms; women whose infants are undersized because they went hungry for months before their babies were born; dozens of girls driven to prostitution to keep soul and body together; babies who are starving when a dollar a week will keep a baby alive; children attending the public school who have gone hungry all winter; able-bodied men who through lack of employment are forced to stand in the bread-line for hours before they are handed a chunk of bread and a cup of soup by charity, men who have always been as honest, as hard-working and as self-respecting as ever your father was in his early days or—"

He stopped short, a slight confusion in his face as he met her look of astonishment.

"What do you know of my father, David?"

"Nothing much; I've heard a bit about his early life; that's neither here nor there. I shall ask your teacher of religion to tell the public that three fourths of the department store employees in New Munich receive less than seven dollars a week though eight dollars is conceded to be the minimum sum upon which a woman can support herself;

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that in many of our back alleys, usually just behind the churches, families of four and six are huddled into one small room; mothers of small children obliged to go out to work all day; children neglected; sickness in nearly every poor home; three meals a day of bread saturated in water with an occasional luxury of soup made from pork bones."

"You would have the people incited to riot!" cried Stella, "though you know, David, that the very purpose of this campaign, for which I am spending thousands of dollars, is to avert a strike; to give the people something higher to think about than this mere material advantage."

"To drug them into accepting the conditions I have described. Exactly. And I propose to do the other thing—to stimulate society to a recognition of the wrongs they must correct in order to avert something worse than strikes!"

"What could be worse?" demanded Stella severely.

"Revolution would be worse."

"David, you are wild!"

"My dear, I have gone to every Christian minister in this town with my tale of this dreadful winter's suffering among the poor and asked them to speak of it in their pulpits in such a way as to sting the public conscience. How do they respond? With rhetorical generalisations and blanket phrases, ending up always with a patriotic eulogy upon this 'great free land of opportunity,' this 'home of democracy.' They never strike straight from the

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shoulder with a concrete case of industrial infamy; they can't risk offending their members who support the church and whose interests would be damaged by such straight speaking."

"David, every church in this town has given enormously this winter to relieve the suffering among the poor."

"And not one has given a penny or a word to destroy the conditions which create poverty. Also understand this—the worst sufferers are those who will starve before they will appeal to charity!"

He rose. "Well, Stella, I'm off now to see Jake." (Every man, woman and child in New Munich referred to the evangelist as "Jake.") "I thought I would let you know before I did it."

Stella rose too, looking pale and anxious. "Of course I know there isn't the least use in my trying to stop you!"

"Not the least," he responded, a touch of sadness in his voice and in his thoughtful eyes. "How I wish, my dear, that we pulled together!"

"Then why don't you pull with me, David? Don't you see how you work against your own interests in damaging mine?"

"What profiteth it a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

"But that is exactly what Jake preaches to the people!" she exclaimed triumphantly. "Tells them to save their souls and not bother about this world!"

David laughed involuntarily. Stella turned away

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looking hurt. He caught her hand, drew her back and held her before him. "Your logic is so deliciously feminine, my love! You must allow me a bit of amusement over it. Now hear me—I'm giving Jake until Saturday night to declare to his vast audience of all classes the facts with which I shall supply him—with the alternative that if he does not do it I will expose him."

"Expose him?" repeated Stella, startled. "You mean you will expose me too?"

"I mean I shall tell him he dare not ignore my request. On Saturday night I want you and Gertrude to go with me to the show."

"The show?"

"The circus, the revival. If your revivalist does not speak up, *I will!*"

## CHAPTER XVII

**G**ERTRUDE had never gone to the theatre to hear a great play with a more thrilling sense of expectancy than she carried to the evangelist meeting on Saturday night.

Her sense of security in David's quiet strength, the absence of anything of the demagogue in his attitude, his earnest conviction as to the rightness of his course, made her feel confident of the outcome of this momentous meeting.

Not so Stella. The very thing that gave confidence to Gertrude, gave only dread to Stella.

"He will stop at nothing, nothing, to carry out his fanatical ideas!" she told herself as they rode to the "tabernacle," the vast wooden structure which had been temporarily erected for the revival meetings.

Reingruber had tried to reassure her just before the meeting. "I've given Jake his dope all right! He'll leave Phelps high and dry without a perch for either leg!"

Gertrude had never before in her life seen an evangelistic meeting and psychologically it was very interesting to her, though the evangelist himself did not interest her at all. He did not even disgust her. He seemed to her just a poor fool, half im-

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postor, half self-deceived, whose antics one would turn one's back upon and to whose speech one would not listen if one could avoid it. He simply bored her. It was the audience that interested her. To see people of all classes taken out of themselves and carried off their feet emotionally by a mountebank, a creature shouting himself hoarse with hollow sounds that meant nothing, was a mystery to her. She could not understand it.

"Here's the train for Heaven!" he would bawl in the tone of a railroad dispatcher. "Heaven first stop! Get your tickets at this window. Tickets here! First stop Heaven! This way all! Step lively for the Heavenly Gates before they're closed forever—and forever! Get your tickets quick, I say! All aboard! All aboard on the fast line for Heaven!"

The vast "tabernacle" was filled with moans and groans and shouts and the sawdust path to the mourners' bench was trod by throngs.

"I have been requested," the preacher hoarsely announced towards the end of his "sermon," "to make a certain statement to you people who assemble here night after night to receive the bread of life and to be washed in the blood of the Lamb. I have been asked to tell you that there are in this town to-night people who are hungry and ill-clad and poorly housed. But it don't need me to tell you folks that you've got poverty in your town; nor to tell you what brought it. Booze! That's what



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did it. That's what does it in nine cases out of ten. Nothing like booze, my brothers, my sisters, for keeping a family poor. And if, through no fault of your own, you're poor, remember that your Master had nowhere to lay His head and are you any more worthy of the comforts and luxuries of this world than He was? Remember too, that if you haven't got everything you want in this life, the apostle Paul says, "This light affliction which is but for a moment will work out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." "

"Amen!" and "Gawd be praised!" came the groaning responses from the audience.

"And anyhow," the preacher went on, "you don't come here to hear me tell you about the poverty of your fellow-men, but about the riches of the Kingdom of Gawd! You come here to hear the story of Christ and Him crucified! That's what you come to hear. And if I try to give you any other line of talk, you'll say, 'I asked for bread and I got a stone.' That's what you'll say and right you'd be, too! So I'm not a-going to disappoint you and try to talk sociology to you—I don't know anything about sociology. Never read a line of it in my life. Never was inside of a college (though I saw one or two a'ready). What I stand here at this sacred desk for is to give you, not sociology or any other high-brow ology, but the Gawspel of Jesus Christ! I'm here to help you save your dying souls! To throw out the lifeline to you, my drowning brothers

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and sisters! Oh, I plead with you to seize and hold fast to the life line and let yourselves be dragged to shore before it's forever too late!"

Just here a thrilling thing happened. A man in the audience suddenly sprang to his feet, shouting in a rich Irish brogue, "Save me! Aw, save me, I'm sinkin'! Throw me that there lifeline! Fur the love of the Virgin, pull me in, Mister!"

Rushing down the sawdust trail, making wild motions with his hands as though pulling himself along by a lifeline, he sprang upon the platform and stood beside the preacher.

"Saved!" he shouted. "Saved by the blood of the Lamb! Saved by the tears of the blessed Mother of God!"

He turned to the evangelist. "May I speak, your Holiness, and testify to the power of the spirit?"

"Sure, Mike!" responded the evangelist, imitating the Irishman's brogue to the great hilarity of the audience. "Only leave the Virgin Mary out. We don't do business with her at this shop!"

"May she forgive me fur draggin' her blessed name into this vulgar affray!" exclaimed the Irishman, rolling his eyes upward. "Ladies and gents," he continued, "you've heard his Holiness give me leave to speak and testify to the power of the spirit. I want to tell you that me soul is saved this night! Saved from me own cowardice, ladies and gents, me cowardice in settin' there and lettin' yous all deceive yourselves so pitiful! You are told you are

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not to ast fur your pie in this world but to wait till you git it in the next world. But I tell you it's your right to have your fair share of pie in this world if you're doin' your fair share of the world's work! One world at a time is all you've got to live in. It's our business to make this here one as near heavenly as we kin fur all of us, not just fur some of us. Him," twirling his thumb towards the evangelist, "expects to git his pie in Heaven, but I take notice he's eatin' it here too! He looks well-fed anyhow! And if he kin eat pie both here and in Heaven, why can't you? He don't want to tell you about the hundreds of folks in this here town to-night that are cold and hungry. So I'll tell you. Us labouring men are working this winter fur two dollars a day. Now how in hell is a man going to support his family on two dollars a day? Tell me that. Well, I'll tell you, fur I do it. There are five in me fam'ly and compared to some others we live fine. We got two little rooms in the top floor back, of Baumgardner's tenement house. In these here two rooms me and me wife and three kids cooks and sleeps and eats and washes and irons and sews and lives and entertains our society friends and says our prayers and cultivates our minds and our tastes! My Missus has to leave me and the kids at six o'clock in the morning to go out office cleaning. I leave at seven to work in the subway where I stand in water ten hours a day. My wife leaves our youngest boy, two years old, at the day nursery

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while she's away workin'. Every now and then I'm laid off because the water in the subway gits too deep fur us to work. All us subway workers is gittin' rheumatism from it.

"Now fur some other cases—a woman in the room next oun she's got tuberculosis. Her doctor tells her she must have milk, eggs, fresh air and sunshine. She's got four children and her Mister earns two-fifty a day workin' twelve hours a day. But this winter he's been laid off from work about three days a week.

"As fur mesilf, last October I got out of work, so we took two lodgers into our two rooms. Seven of us in two small rooms. We took in washings too. We had to wash and dry the clothes in them two rooms. Well, me four-year-old boy got typhoid fever and died. Then me wife got it. She pulled through though, and yesterday the charity society sent her to the seashore fur two weeks. It's the first charity I ever accepted and I tell yous, ladies and gents, it don't go easy with me! Now, I've told you me story as a sample of many. There's twelve fam'lies livin' in Baumgardner's tenement house. Baumgardner owns five sich houses and lives on the rents. The only work he does is to collect them rents. What does he give the community fur the fat livin' he gits from them fifty fam'lies of starvin' and sick men, women and children? Not a damn thing! What does—"

"Here!" cried the evangelist, "that will do! No

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profanity in this sacred edifice! Get out of this, you blasphemous Irish blackguard!"

"Same to you, parson!"

"Get out of this, I say! You're an Irish Catholic, that's what you are!"

"And proud to admit it, Riverind!"

"You're a disturber of the peace and—"

"Hold your wind, Riverind, I'm done and I'm goin'. I'll step down now and leave yo' to go on preachin' the Gospel of Jesus—and don't forgit to tell 'em, Riverind, that Jesus commanded us, 'Love thy neighbour as thyself.' "

There was a spontaneous burst of applause as Mr. Murphy stepped down from the platform. The evangelist, with ready tact, covered it instantly by a quick motion to his choir to sing, and

“‘There is a fountain filled with blood.’ ”

swelled above the applause, and drowned it.

The audience stopped applauding and joined in the singing.

"Did you know that Pat Murphy was going to cup up like that?" Stella demanded of David as, fifteen minutes later, they moved with the throng out of the tabernacle.

"I don't think he knew it himself. He seemed to be acting on a sudden impulse. But if he had not spoken, I would have."

As he was handing Gertrude and Stella into their

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automobile, Pat himself emerged from the crowd and stepped up to him.

“Good-evenin’, Mr. Phelps.”

Phelps grasped the Irishman’s hand. “Good for you, Pat, and thank you!”

“I guess I made a first-class fool of mesilf, Mr. Phelps, but that damned blatter got me goat so, with his soft-soap, sob-stuff about lovin’ Jesus and givin’ your heart to Christ and all the rest of that Protestant dope that I jist couldn’t hold mesilf down no more, Mr. Phelps! But when, whilst I was spreadin’ mesilf, I seen *you* in the audience, I tell you I was ashamed of mesilf. I ain’t no public speaker and I ought to leave public spaaches to me betters!”

“Pat, you beat me to it, and made a much better effect than I would have. I’m glad you had the courage—”

A heavy hand was suddenly laid on Pat’s shoulder and Mr. Reingruber and a policeman confronted him.

“Come along here, Murphy, we want you!” commanded the officer gruffly.

“Want me? What d’you mean?”

“We mean that you’ll spend the night in jail; and a few more nights, I’m a-thinking!” said Reingruber.

“On what charge?” Pat indignantly demanded.

“To hell with the charge!” exclaimed Reingruber.

“I’ll put you in jail and find a charge afterwards.”

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The policeman had locked his wrist to Pat's and now jerked him along roughly.

"Say!" pleaded Murphy, holding back: "My kids at home needs me; their mother's away and they ain't got no one else!"

"Why weren't you at home with them, then, to-night, Pat—instead of being here raising a disturbance?" demanded Reingruber.

"One of me lodgers offered to stay with 'em. Let me go, won't you? You ain't got no just charge agin me. I didn't break no law—"

"Shut up and come along here—"

"One minute!" exclaimed Phelps. "Reingruber, Miss Stella will speak to you. Stella!" Phelps turned to the automobile. "Tell Mr. Reingruber you will not permit this outrage!"

"He must know his own business, David. I don't know anything about it."

"What is your charge, Mr. Reingruber, against Mr. Murphy?"

"Disturbing the order of the meeting and inciting to riot."

"There are plenty of witnesses to prove that charge false."

"There'll be enough to prove it true, Phelps!"

"Stella, will you speak the word and have this man released?"

"I think he deserves to be punished for interrupting the services to-night, David, and I am glad Mr. Reingruber thinks so too."

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Phelps looked at her for a moment strangely. "Very well," he said quietly. "Good-night. I am going with them to bail him out. He shall not go to jail. Good-night, Gertrude."

He lifted his hat and turned away.

"Home!" said Stella to the chauffeur. Her voice was hard and her eyes cold. But Gertrude saw that her chin quivered like a hurt child's.



## CHAPTER XVIII

**B**UT David and Stella did not quarrel over the Irishman's case. When David called next day to tell Stella that he had bailed Murphy out and would defend him at his trial, she met it in cold silence.

"Unless, Stella, you will order your superintendent to withdraw the suit against Murphy."

"I shall not."

"Why do you wish to persecute this poor wretch who never harmed you and who (you heard his story) has surely suffered enough hardship to make a devil of him!"

"Mr. Reingruber and Alfred Ranck both advise me to let the case come to trial. They say that Pat Murphy is a menace to the industrial life of this town; that he is constantly stirring up strikes and troubles among the labouring people. They've been watching for a chance to catch him up, and this, they think, is too good a one to be lost. Also, they want to make an example of him to check a growing reckless aggressiveness among people of his class."

"Stop to think a moment, Stella—if I had not bailed him out, his convalescent wife would have had

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to return to her children and would probably have died. This two weeks at the seashore which charity is giving her is her only hope."

"She is not so important, David, as is the social welfare of this whole town, to which Pat Murphy is a menace."

"Very well, Stella, we shall not quarrel about it. But you will lose your case. I shall clear Pat Murphy."

"I don't think you will."

"I shall."

She laid her hand on his arm and looked at him gravely. "David, do you wish to be released from our engagement?"

"When I do, Stella," he answered as he covered her hand with his, "I shall not hesitate to tell you so."

"Even though you made me suffer?"

"But so long as you care enough to suffer I shall care too much to make you suffer."

"You are sure?"

"Quite sure."

"But, David, we are so awfully different, so really uncongenial! And yet I love you as I never loved any one before! So much that I cannot think of life without you!"

"I know that love will open your eyes, my dear."

"And I, alas, have no hopes whatever, David, that love will open yours!"

"It is love—love of you, of life, of beauty, of

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children, of my country and my race, that has opened my eyes and keeps them open."

"You are an unpractical visionary, dear. I despair of your ever becoming sensible—and selfish. One has got to be selfish to get on in the world."

"Then to get on in the world is to lose one's soul, is it?"

"Not getting on is to lose it!"

"If I did not know, my dear, that it is not your true self that speaks such things, it would make me very unhappy to hear them."

"Not my true self? What self is it then?"

"The falsely educated child of your father!" he impetuously exclaimed.

"David! You talk as though you had known my father! What do you mean?"

"A man who—who has built up a business like his—"

"Well?" she questioned as he paused.

"Must have been ruthlessly ambitious. However," he abruptly added, "I have a large faith that you will recover from your rearing. If I didn't, my dear, I should not be here."

It was only a few days after the Pat Murphy episode that Gertrude returned to her school. David saw her off at the station and they had a few minutes alone before her train time.

"David, may I ask you something?" she inquired of him as they stood together on the platform at

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the depot. "Do you know something strange about my father?"

"Something strange?"

"Well, anything at all?"

"Little more than what I've already told you, my dear. Better get your mileage out—your train will soon be here."

"You are evading, David; you know something you don't want to tell."

"If I said yes to that, Miss Curiosity, it would too greatly emphasise what little I do know."

"David!" Gertrude smiled. "I'd like to see any one get out of you anything you didn't want to tell! Do you think you will clear Pat Murphy?"

"If Reingruber does not get too many false witnesses."

"When do you think the trial will come off?"

"In about two weeks."

"I shall be anxious to hear the outcome."

"I shall write you."

"If you need me for a witness, call on me."

"Bully for you, Gertrude! You'd be invaluable! But," he added dubiously, "Stella, you know, would not like it."

"Of course not. But I'm even more accustomed than you are to Stella's disapproval."

They laughed together. A moment later Gertrude's train was called. They clasped hands, their eyes met in a long look that was a mutual caress; and they parted.

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Gertrude worked hard at Moncaster, but she liked her work and she knew that in these days it was her salvation. She longed, with a longing that was agony, to be at home. But she knew that it was far better for her to be away. Her daily, almost hourly, battle with herself left her spent; too listless for any further effort after her strenuous five hours of teaching; so that she rather avoided making acquaintances or letting herself be drawn into the social life of the town. Her routine at Moncaster was, therefore, monotonous and, except for her very human interest in her pupils, very colourless.

It need not have been. Overtures were made to her by some people of the town who at any other time she would have found interesting. The superintendent of the schools, a young man of parts, tried to make love to her. But in spite of a valiant effort to shake off her preoccupation and melancholy, she remained indifferent to everything but her work.

The time came, however, when she could no longer ignore or put aside the attentions of the superintendent. She wrote about it to her mother.

“I ran away from New Munich to avoid marrying Alfred Ranck and I foresee I shall have to run back to avoid marrying Dr. Baer. When a man is so charitable as to want to marry me I hate to be so disobliging and unappreciative as to refuse him, so my only safety lies in flight. If I stay I know I shall let myself be led like

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a lamb to the altar. If I had no home to go to, Dr. Baer's chances would be fine. But as I have, you may look for me any day, mother dear.

"Your spineless, though very affectionate

"GERTRUDE."

She was actually on the verge of ignominiously resigning her position and going home to avoid hurting the feelings of her admirer, when a telegram from David summoned her immediately.

"Be on hand to witness in Pat Murphy's case on Saturday.

"DAVID."

As she received the message on Friday she did not have time to go through the formality of resigning, so she merely obtained a week's absence, telegraphed Stella she was coming and went home at once.

On her homeward trip she forced herself to face a fact that was vaguely troubling her and which she realised she was mentally dodging because she hated to dwell upon it. Why had she telegraphed she was coming home when she would get there almost with the telegram?

It was because, knowing instinctively and with secret pain, that Stella was glad to have her away and disliked her visits home, she winced miserably from the annoyed surprise with which she was sure Stella would greet her unexpected arrival. This annoyance would perhaps be less frankly manifest if Stella were warned beforehand. Why her sister

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wanted her away she had never been able to find out. It could hardly be jealousy of David's friendliness to her. Stella did not like that, to be sure, but David was so manifestly whole-heartedly hers!

"Anyway, it was before David appeared on the scene that she tried to marry me off to Alfred."

That Stella's reason was a stronger one than the far-off possibility of David's growing too fond of her; and very much stronger than the mere fact of the uncongeniality between them, Gertrude was sure.

She wondered whether David had told Stella that he had wired to her to come home to bear witness at Murphy's trial. Although she dreaded Stella's opposition to her testifying in court, she knew that, upheld by David, she could fearlessly face an army of Stellas on such an issue.

However, a much more severe test of her courage than her championship of Pat Murphy awaited her.

The moment she laid eyes on her mother she saw that something had gone wrong; Mrs. Swartz looked white and troubled.

"What is it, Mother?" Gertrude quickly asked as she greeted her. "What's the matter?"

For answer her mother bowed her head on her daughter's shoulder and wept.

"Mother!" cried Gertrude, her arm about her mother's neck, alarm in her eyes; for the only time in all her life that she had ever seen her mother give way to weeping was at her father's death. "Tell me, Mother! Is it Harry?"

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"No, Gertie, it ain't Harry. It's—but here's Stella; she'll tell you."

"It's nothing—nothing to cause alarm," Stella laughed as she kissed Gertrude. "Only one of mother's funny misunderstandings. Come out to dinner and I'll tell you."

Dinner had been announced immediately upon Gertrude's arrival and as they seated themselves about the table Stella explained her mother's distress.

"I'm going away, Gertrude. I've got to."

"But that's not what mother is weeping about. She didn't cry when I left. What is it, Stella—please don't keep me in suspense!"

"I'm going far away for a long time."

"Well? Do you mean you are going to be married and move away?"

"I mean," said Stella impressively, "that I must go away to test my love; to see whether I care more for David than for all my ideas of life."

It did not sound convincing somehow; Stella was always so perfectly sure of herself. And Gertrude knew that her mother, down deep in her heart, would rejoice in a respite from her elder daughter's dominance.

"It will also give David a chance to earn me," said Stella. "He can't have me for nothing! If during my absence he makes good; uses his undoubted talents for the advancement of his own career instead of ruining his prospects by bothering with other people's concerns; in short, if he comes



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to his senses and gives up his present foolish course—I may return and marry him. In any case I would not marry before I had first tried out a plan I've always dreamed about. I want to spend a winter in some European capital and see something of real society, before I settle down."

"You mean," said Gertrude with a flash of understanding, "that you may possibly marry a foreign title and settle down abroad?"

"Such things have happened to American women less attractive (I may say) and with less money than I have! However, I did not say anything about marrying."

"Surely, Stella," said Gertrude breathlessly, "you are not willing to risk losing a lover like David for the sake of chasing such a bauble as a foreign title!"

Stella smiled confidently. "I don't think I run any risk."

"You are so sure of David?"

Stella raised her eyes and looked at Gertrude. There was the glint of steel in her glance. "David is the sort of man that loves once. It is unthinkable that he will ever change towards me. Just bear that in mind!"

Gertrude smiled sadly. "It isn't necessary to warn me off, my dear! He is very safe from my wiles. But do you mean that you will deliberately trifle with such love, such constancy, as you believe is David's? You won't hesitate to stab him?"

"He is stabbing me every day, every hour! He

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opposes me at every step!" Stella answered with unexpected bitterness.

"When shall you go?" Gertrude asked.

"The third of next month."

"So soon? Well, I shall of course resign my position at Moncaster and come home to mother."

"No, Gertrude."

"But yes, Stella. Why not?"

"Why on earth don't you accept that Dr. Baer that wants to marry you?"

"I don't happen to love him. It isn't necessary to discuss that. And mother will want me with her."

"No, she will not. You must keep your school. Mother is going with me."

Gertrude, her face suddenly white, dropped her fork on her plate and looked at Stella.

"Fur a whole year too—now think!" murmured Mrs. Swartz.

"Take mother! To Europe! For a year!" repeated Gertrude almost gasping; for there was nothing in the world her mother so disliked as being forced to spend so much as one night away from home. Her husband and children had never been able to persuade her to go with them on their jaunts to the seaside or to the mountains. To take her away for a year to Europe—it would kill her!

"Oh, Stella!" Gertrude cried, "please, please don't force a thing like that on poor mother!"

"Mother has never travelled, never seen any-

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thing of the world. I mean that she shall have that pleasure now that she is free; father gone, you and Harry provided for. She is sad and lonely and she needs to get away and have a complete change."

"But it's the changes that's made me sad, Stella!" Mrs. Swartz faintly protested.

"We shall give you a homeopathic cure, then, mother dear," said Stella.

"You propose to close up our home?" asked Gertrude.

"I'll rent it furnished."

"Rent our home! Let strangers come in here where we've lived all our lives!"

"It isn't necessary to be sentimental. It's a perfectly practical arrangement."

"It'll kreistle me wonderful to think of strangers usin' my linens!" mourned Mrs. Swartz.

"Mother will be utterly wretched, Stella!" pleaded Gertrude.

"She will have the time of her life! The first freedom from care, from the burden of housekeeping, that she has ever known in her life."

"And she will be so lost without that care, and so homesick and so shy and unhappy among strangers! And for a year! Oh! Anything may happen to her in consequence!"

"You only talk that way because you are selfish, Gertrude dear; you have chosen to go away from home, yet you want this home kept open so that

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any time you choose you may return to it; and you want mother to stick here just to pamper you when you do return. Think of her a little!"

"Mother! Tell Stella how you hate to go!—that you want to stay at home!"

"I did a'ready, Gertie. I tole her I don't want no more freedom than what I got a'ready. And I seen all of the world I ever want to see that time Mister took me to Coney Island along."

"Of course she thinks she does not want to go," interposed Stella. "When did you ever know her to want anything for herself?"

"But suppose, Stella," her mother ventured to argue, "that our poor Gertie got sick or lost her school—where would she go to, seein' our house is to be closed?"

"She will keep her school until we come back. In summer she can go to the mountains or to Maine."

"I don't feel fur goin' at all," said Mrs. Swartz hopelessly. "But, Gertie," she explained Stella's conduct to her sister, "Stella she says she always wanted fur to see what it's like out there in Europe, or wherever, and if I don't go along she can't go; that I got to go as her chaproon and gardeen; and to be sure I don't want to keep her from enjoyin' herself—fur all Meely says it gives sich brigands out there in Italy or Europe or wherever!—that you ain't safe to go out doors carryin' your purse!"

Gertrude leaned back in her chair unable to swallow

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a bite. Stella's announcement of any plan of hers was always so final; there was no earthly use in disputing it. She had decided to take her mother abroad and nothing that any one might argue or plead against it could stop her. Her obstinacy combined with her sophistry would meet and conquer any least or greatest opposition.

"Mother will die!" Gertrude's heart protested in agony. "She will never live through a year away from her home among strangers! She will die!"

"I am having some lovely black clothes made for mother," said Stella.

"But I'm afraid I'll forgit myself so often and talk to folks, and I'm so Dutch that way, it'll give Stella an awful shamed face when I talk!" lamented Mrs. Swartz.

"Why can't you travel alone and leave mother at home where she wants to be?" Gertrude urged. It was not at all clear to her why Stella wished to take her mother with her.

"As though mother could be left here all alone with no one to see after her, Gertrude!"

"I would be here."

"Now, Gertrude, I want you to stop interfering! If you please, not another word. Mother and I have talked it all out and settled it and I don't want you to come here and try to upset things."

"I didn't pass my promise yet, Stella, that I *would* go along. I have awful afraid of them brigands! And I don't want to go so far from Harry

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and Gertie. And I'd never sleep a wink if I thought of strangers in here usin' my things!"

"There, there, mother! It will be all right and you will have a grand time. Leave it all to me. Haven't I always managed things for the best?"

"Och, Stella, I think it would be so nice if you'd leave Gertie come home to me and you'd go on out to your Europe alone, or with some of your tony friends. Ain't?" she timidly pleaded. "Couldn't you see it that way, Stella?"

"What's the use of talking that way when you have signed a lease for the renting of the house and all our plans are made? It is settled that you and I," Stella affirmed, "are going abroad."

"But, Stella, Meely says that out there in Europe—"

"I don't care a cent, mother, what Aunt Amelia says about anything under the sun and you know it. Now there's not the least use in your arguing, for everything is arranged and can't be changed. Say no more!"

"How does David take it?" Gertrude asked dully.

"Awful hard!" Mrs. Swartz dolefully answered for her daughter, shaking her head. "He does now certainly take it hard, David does."

It was at this instant that a ring at the front door was followed by the entrance of a maid to announce, "Mr. Phelps."

"We will have coffee in the library," Stella said to the butler as she rose from the table.

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“Do you want for me to come too, Stella?” her mother quavered, “or shall I stay back?”

“Come if you want to, since it is only David.”

She led the way to the library. And Gertrude, slipping her arm through her mother's, followed with a heavy heart.

## CHAPTER XIX

**D**AVID, during his visit on that evening of Gertrude's return home, did not once mention the Murphy trial in Stella's presence. But when she left the room for a moment to answer a telephone call he spoke hastily of it to Gertrude.

"The trial has been on for ten days now, and it has been going badly for us. Be ready to-morrow to come to the courthouse as soon as I phone for you, will you, Gertrude?"

"Yes. Depend on me."

The grateful look of his tired and (Gertrude thought) hurt eyes made her long to comfort and mother him.

Stella's return prevented her asking him whether he had told her sister that she was going to testify for Murphy.

At breakfast next morning, as Stella did not refer to the trial, Gertrude also held her counsel and did not speak of it.

"Surely if she knew I meant to testify she would try to prevent me," she reasoned. "So I think she cannot know."

But Stella's very silence, her making no reference



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whatever to the trial now going on, seemed a rather sinister sign.

As it was raining very hard, Gertrude took the precaution after breakfast to tell the chauffeur to be ready at a moment's notice to take her down town. Then, with the morning paper, a magazine and an apple, she settled herself in the library near the telephone, her hat, rain coat, umbrella and overshoes near at hand to answer David's summons.

Stella, apparently not on the lookout, went to her room—to write letters, she said.

But Gertrude found that she could not put her mind on her reading. Her distress and anxiety about her mother's impending travels, no less than her apprehension as to the part she would be called on to act in court, made her walk the floor with nervousness while she waited.

"I suppose Stella thinks," she told herself, "that mother's idiosyncrasies will not stamp her in Europe, especially on the Continent, as they stamp her here; that they will be regarded over there simply as American eccentricities, not as peasant characteristics. That is why she is willing to take her."

But it was not at all manifest why she should so ardently desire to take her and against her will.

"It seems that this is the explanation, however, of her wanting to marry me off, or by some means to dispose of me, to get me away from home; and Harry too; so that she could close the house and go

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abroad with a free hand! She has been planning it all along—before she ever knew David! She says it has been her dream! But *why* does she want to drag mother about with her?"

A suggestion of Stella's possible motive came from a very unexpected source.

It was Mrs. Yinger's custom to drop in to visit her sister after market on Saturday morning; and at about ten o'clock, as Gertrude restlessly paced the library floor, she heard her aunt arrive and her mother join her in the vestibule.

"Why, Meely, what fur do you wait here in the westivule? Why don't you come insides?"

"I'm too wet. I'm soaked. It's makin' down somepin awful. Here," she added, carefully removing the newspaper from her umbrella, "put this here noospaper near the kitchen range to dry fur me till I'm ready to go. I ain't leavin' my new ombrell git wet that Mister bought me!"

"Well, Meely Yinger, if you ain't! Leavin' yourself git soaked to the skin sooner'n leave your new ombrell git wet! Yi, yi, yi!"

"Yes, well, if I'd of knowed it would give a storm I'd of brang my old one along. But when I seen how it was makin' down, I stopped in a grocery store and ast 'em fur a noospaper to wrap this here one up good."

"Well, take off your gums," Mrs. Swartz advised, pointing to her sister's overshoes. "And gimme your wet shawl and bonnet to git 'em dried fur you;

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and come on in. You'll git yourself sick if you expoge yourself so!"

"I ain't well anyhow," Mrs. Yinger admitted as she handed over to the butler her wet garments. "I got indigestion. So the doctor claims anyhow."

"Then you want to be careful, Meely," her sister advised affectionately as she led the way to the library.

"You ain't been out to our place this good while a'ready, Weesy. Why ain't you?" Mrs. Yinger asked suspiciously, when she had greeted Gertrude and was seated before the fire.

The removal of her back hood, revealing the white gauze cap of her Mennonite garb, seemed to emphasise the sharpness of her features and the cunning shrewdness of her countenance.

"Out at my place," she added, "we could set and talk in the kitchen where we'd feel at home. I can't home myself in your grand rooms here."

"Nor me neither," Mrs. Swartz sighed. "I do like to come out to see you, Meely, and set in the kitchen the way I was always used to! But to be sure!" she concluded with another sigh.

"Well, why ain't you been out?"

"Stella won't leave me go because—I mean," Mrs. Swartz hastily corrected herself to avert the scorn such a confession of weakness would bring upon her head, "she couldn't spare the automobile."

"Ain't it yourn? And ain't the money yourn that pays that there police you hire to drive it?"

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"Ach, he ain't no police, Meely. He's our what-you-call-it—a name these here stylish automobile drivers goes by when they're fancy-dressed like a police that way. Yes, I pay him sixty dollars a month yet! Ain't it somepin scand'lous?"

"Near as much as the Methodist preacher used to git by the half year when we was children; ain't? To keep his family of thirteen! Do you mind of him—how grand he used to preach the glad tidings of damnation?"

"Och, yes, I mind," Mrs. Swartz gently agreed with a soft look of happy reminiscence. "I heerd he died out in Berks County a month back. His wife died a year ago and his daughter Emmy died of her sixth baby."

"Yes, they're died off pretty good, that family," nodded Mrs. Yinger.

"Och, well, the Lord gaveth, the Lord tooketh away!" sighed Mrs. Swartz piously.

"Why wouldn't Stella leave you have your own automobile?" Mrs. Yinger abruptly demanded, "to come to see your own sister?"

"I think, Meely, our Stella has afraid fur me to wisit you fur the same reason that she wants Gertie away—ain't, Gertie?—fur fear of what some of yous might say to discourage me from goin' to this here Europe with her."

"Huh!" grunted Mrs. Yinger. "And she has right to worry! That's what I'm here fur to-day—to discourage you from this here foolish journey!"

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I'm strickly opposed against it, Weesy! And you'll live to see the day when you'll be as much opposed as me! I ain't sayin' no more about your givin' in to that there managin' daughter of yourn; I sayed all I got to say on that there and you know what I think. But this I will say—that I think you're bein' worked! Stella she's gittin' you away out there to them dangerous furrin countries (where they can't even speak English) so's when she's got you where no one that knows you kin hear you holler she'll squeeze out of you all she wants of the fortune your Mister left you. It seems to me I see now why Stella didn't *make* any over her pop's will. Mebby she persuaded him to draw up that there will the way he done—she seein' her way to gittin' it all, after while, in her hands! Yes, I guess mebby!"

"Oh, Aunt Meely!" Gertrude protested, startled and indignant; but her mother broke in:

"It's no use your talkin' agin my goin' along with her, Meely; I passed Stella my promise that I wouldn't worry her no more *about* it. So I got to keep my promise. And anyhow, she says it gives jist as good people in Europe as what it gives in America—even if they are a little rough that way."

"But listen to this here, Weesy! Our Mennonite preacher he tol' me that out there if you won't turn Cat'lic they torture you till you do! It's a common thing, he says, fur them ancient Romans

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over there, he says, to pull out people's tongues that sasses 'em!"

"Now think!" exclaimed Mrs. Swartz. "Well, I promise you, Meely, I won't sass no ancient Romans!"

"Are you ready to turn Cat'lic?" her sister demanded argumentatively.

"Well, before I'd have my tongue pulled out I'd even turn Jew, Meely—that I would! But you needn't worry—Stella she's too good educated fur to leave me git into any sich trouble."

"Yes, good-educated yet!" repeated Mrs. Yinger sarcastically. "She'd better be, after all you spent to *git* her polished off. Why jist look at the way you used to spend on them music lessons she took off that worm-doctor with long hair that I seen here any Saturday I dropped in—"

"Och, my souls, Meely, that wasn't no worm-doctor!"

"He looked like one—like the kind that gives medicine shows in the Square. Look how he weared his hair," she reasoned.

"Yes, I know, but he was a way-up pi-ano teacher, Meely. It used to read in the papers how he learned his job off of sich a foreigner named Leipsic."

"Well, but look how poor he learnt Stella and Gertie anyhow! Why, whenever I ast 'em to play me a piece, what do they set and play yet? A nice hymn toon? or 'My Grandfather's Clock'? Or any *real* music? Not much! They set down and pound

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them keys and call it a *A-tood-by-Liszt*. If I wasn't a consistent Mennonite I'd call it a *A-tood-by-damn!* That's what!"

She set her lips and folded her arms in stern indignation.

"But, Meely," Mrs. Swartz, looking crestfallen, feebly protested, "there's a many in New Munich plays Etudes."

"That's no excuse fur your girls. I guess that's why you feel safe to go to this here wild foreign Europe over there—because others has went and escaped to come home. All right, go ahead then; but you'll see what you'll see! Ain't she will, Gertie?"

"It's safe enough, Aunt Meely. But mother doesn't want to go and I know she ought not to."

"Well, Weesy, I'm in hopes Stella'll soon feel as discontented out there as what I am and jist so anxious to come back; fur leave me tell you somepin," lowering her voice and leaning towards her sister. "I'm in hopes she'll soon git homesick fur her beau!"

"You mean that there lawyer, Phelps, that's been runnin' with her?"

"Yes, him. He's been keepin' comp'ny with her steady. Say, Meely, will you keep it to yourself if I tell you somepin?"

"I'll try to—I can't go no furdern that."

"Well, it ain't put out yet, but they're *promised* to each other."

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“Phelps and Stella? Then what does she want to risk her life goin’ out there to Europe fur? And if she stays long, he might git discouraged and make up to another one. Stella’s smart enough to know what men are!”

“I guess she kin feel pretty sure of David. He’s awful took with her. And her! Well, Meely, it’s the first time I seen our Stella take so much to any man! Why, she blushes all up when she hears his footsteps on the flagstones yet!”

“It would be a new sight to me to see your Stella blush oncet!” Mrs. Yinger tartly remarked.

“She thinks a heap of him! So I have hopes she won’t be contented away. So has he. He takes it awful hard that she’s goin’. He’s a wonderful nice man—indeed that he is! He’s most the nicest man I ever knowed. He’s gave me his promise he’ll look after our poor Gertie whilst I’m off.”

Mrs. Swartz wiped her eyes and Gertrude seated near her pressed her hand.

“Stella had ought to have got that there Alfred Ranck fur her husband and Gertie this here Phelps—ain’t?” said Aunt Amelia. “It often does wonder me what Providence is up to, the way things goes! It seems to me I could run this here world a lot better!”

“Meely! Somepin might happen you, sayin’ things like them! It don’t sound right!”

“What’s Stella keepin’ it a secret fur—this here



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engagement of hern? Some more underhand work, heh?"

"No, she was a-goin' to give a big dinner and a dance, now we're out of mourning; and at this here dinner she was a-goin' to put it out that she's engaged. But David he sayed he wouldn't give his countenance to it."

"Well, I'm certainly glad to hear she's gittin' a man that puts his foot down on so much spendin'. But why do you say 'out of mourning'? You still wear your crape wail, Weesy, I take notice."

"Well, Stella she says I look more refined in black than what I do in colours, so she wants fur me to wear it whilst we're away travellin'."

"Ach, Weesy, but you do leave that there girl walk all over you! Don't I wish I was her mom!"

Mrs. Swartz shook her head sadly, but offered no reply.

"Well, Gertie," her aunt turned to her, "when are *you* a-goin' to find a man to suit you?"

"Gertie's awful indifferent," her mother complained. "She ain't even started a Hope Chest."

"I don't fault her fur that; I wouldn't want none of them Hope Chests. Why, look, if you'd ever git stung then you'd have all that junk around. Gertie!"

"What, Aunt Meely?"

"Do you go to church Sunday evenings?"

"No."

"Then how can you expect to git married?"

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"I don't expect. But what has it to do with going to church Sunday evenings?"

"If you don't go to church Sunday evenings and leave some nice Christian young man see you safe home, you can't expect to be anything but a old maid! Say, Gertie, can't Stella's beau stop her goin' to Europe?"

"He's awful opposed agin her goin'," Mrs. Swartz spoke in. "But Stella says he can't conquer her in this, fur all he got ahead of her about the party."

"If that's all the better they agree together it's a poor outlook!" sniffed Amelia. "First thing you know they'll be gittin' divorced."

"Och, but, Meely, that wouldn't be right neither. When you're married you got to keep it up."

"Right you are, mother," spoke in Stella's voice as she suddenly appeared between the portières that separated the library from the dining-room. She was dressed in walking suit and hat, looking, as usual, extremely stylish. "I don't believe in divorce," she added, strolling into the room, drawing on her gloves as she spoke.

"I'm not so sure you don't!" retorted Aunt Amelia. "I think you'd mighty soon up and leave a husband if you could git more by leavin' him than by stickin' to him! Ain't you a Suffrage?"

"No, I'm not a Suffragist, though I do believe in Woman's Economic Independence."

"What's that agin?"

"It's all the go, Meely, these days," Mrs. Swartz

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spoke in. "Gertie she explained me about it—it's a wife havin' her own income even if she has to earn it yet."

"Well, then, I don't believe in it. It certainly would gimme a shamed face to work fur my livin' when I had a Mister to keep me."

"Ah, but you do work for it and don't get it," argued Stella. "You work much harder than Uncle Jacob does, but you can spend only what he allows you to spend."

"Well, I never was much fur spendin' anyhow. And I certainly don't hold to a wife's workin' out. I'd sooner be kep'. I always was kep' and I hope I always will be kep'. Gertie," she sharply demanded, "are you a Suffrage?"

"Yes, Aunt Meely," Gertrude admitted apologetically.

"Now look at that! Well, I only hope you won't leave it get out that you are one. It would give me a shamed face if it got out in our neighbourhood that I had a niece that was a Suffragetty yet! Us Mennonites we don't favour politics or woting even fur men; and fur a woman to be a Suffragetty!"

"What would you substitute for a government by man suffrage, Aunt Meely?" Gertrude asked meekly.

"*What's* that you say?"

"What sort of a government would Mennonites have—without men's voting?"

"Yes, well, Mister he often said too he wondered

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what fur a government we could have without woting and politics. He says he don't know right what fur a government we *could* have so."

She turned suddenly upon Stella. "Where are you a-goin' now?" she asked in a tone that accused her of always gadding.

"To my dressmaker's, Aunt Amelia. But I came in to ask you, first, whether you will stop and have luncheon with us when I come back?"

"No, I won't. That there police (or valet or whatever) that you got to wait on the table, he kreistles me! He's too stuck-up! He thinks hisself better'n other ones! No, I ain't eatin' here! I don't enjoy myself eatin' at your place. Anyhow me and Mister picked a piece\* at the caffee. Me I called fur one cup of cocoa and one sandwich and then I says to the waiter, 'What's a cup of hot water?' 'What *is* it?' she ast, lookin' awful dumb, 'why, it's a cup of hot water, that's all *I* know what it is.' 'Och,' I says, 'don't be so dumb! I mean what fur price is it?' 'It ain't nothing,' she says, and she brang it. So, then, I mixed the cocoa to the hot water and me and Mister each had a cup of cocoa and we divided the sandwich—so we had each a good piece and a drink fur seven and a half cents each, the cocoa bein' five cents and the sandwich ten. Now, Stella, if yous all practiced economy like that yous would be richer than what yous are, a good bit. I often sayed to Mister, 'I guess a

\* Luncheon.

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family could live on what the hired help wastes at Weesy's! Well, if it's near your eatin' time, I got to go. I stopped only a minute anyhow to try to talk Weesy out of this goin' to Europe. Tell your walet to bring me my wet things from the kitchen in, Stella."

The shrewd little woman understood perfectly the alacrity with which Stella obeyed this request, helping her to put on her overshoes, laying her shawl about her shoulders, wrapping up her umbrella in a newspaper.

"You're awful polite; ain't, Stella?—when you want to hurry me off quick!—so's I don't tell your Mom what a poor soul she is yet, to leave you work her like you do! Well, well, Stella, one of these here days you will git learnt to your sorrow that—"

The telephone bell at this moment took Gertrude with a bound across the room to answer it.

"Yes, it's Gertrude," she replied to David's inquiry—while her mother, aunt and sister paused in their talk and waited. "Yes, I'm all ready. Oh, I don't mind the rain, I'll come in the automobile. Very well, I'll come right away."

She hung up the receiver and hurried out to the hall. "John!" she spoke to the butler. "Please tell Henry to bring the car to the door as quickly as he possibly can."

But as she turned back to the library and began hurriedly to put on her wraps, Stella interposed.

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“I’ve already ordered the car for myself, Gertrude. Where do you want to go?”

“I must go down town. I’ve got to have the car, Stella.”

“What for?”

“I haven’t time to tell you now, but it’s imperative.”

“You shouldn’t order the car without consulting my convenience. You can’t use it now unless you are going in the same direction I am. I have an appointment at the dressmaker’s and I am late. I ought to have been there a half hour ago.”

“Can’t you telephone and put the dressmaker off?”

“When she barely has time as it is to finish our gowns before we sail? No, I can’t possibly put her off.”

“Order a taxicab for yourself, Stella, please! I must have the car!” Gertrude begged.

“But I tell you I must keep my appointment with Madame Hergesheimer.”

“Then you will have to take me down town first and go to your dressmaker’s afterwards—please, Stella!”

“I can’t do that; I am already a half hour late,” answered Stella, starting towards the hall; but Mrs. Yinger unexpectedly planted herself in her way.

“Here, Weesy, it’s fur you to settle this here question between these here two girls of yours!

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That ottomobile is yourn and it's fur you to say who is to git it."

"Aw, leave Gertie have it, Stella, this oncet if she's in sich an important hurry; won't you?" coaxed her mother. "You're got it all the time when she's off at Moncaster."

Mrs. Yinger called to the butler who was standing just outside the library door. "Here, you, porter!" She spoke aggressively to hide her awe before that functionary and maintain her self-respect. "Is the ottomobile at the door?"

"Yes, ma'am."

Mrs. Yinger turned to Gertrude. "Then, Gertie, you go on out and git into it. Your mother has spoke and I'm seein' to it that my sister, poor soul that she is, gits her own way fur oncet if she gits it over my postrate body! It may be the last time I ever git the chanct to take her part agin you, Stella Swartz! Fur goodness only knows what'll happen her over there in that foreign country of Europe!"

She made way for Gertrude to pass her, then instantly blocked the doorway again against Stella.

"Aunt Amelia! You can't come here and interfere in our family affairs that don't concern you!" Stella exclaimed threateningly.

"It concerns me to take my sister's part for oncet! I may not be able to stop your takin' her off to Europe, but you ain't gittin' past this here door till Gertrude's started off in that there ottomobile!"

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For a moment Stella looked baffled. But only for a moment. Suddenly, with an air of yielding to the inevitable, she said impatiently, "Oh, well, Aunt Amelia, if you won't listen to reason, I can't waste my time! I'll take Gertrude down town first if I've got to. Let me pass!"

"All right then," said her aunt making way but following closely as Stella hurried across the hall to the front door. Outside on the porch Stella called to Gertrude who was just stepping into the car, "Wait! I'll go with you and leave you down town. Good-bye, Aunt Amelia," she called over her shoulder.

But her aunt kept close behind her to the very door of the car.

"Seein' what a storm it's givin', Stella," she said, "I'll go along in your ottomobile as far as Gertie goes if it's near the depot she's goin'."

"Oh! All right, Aunt Amelia," Stella answered sweetly, stepping aside to let her get into the car—while she angrily said to herself, "That won't help you, you old meddler! I'll fix you!"

But Aunt Amelia was too shrewd to be deceived by such ready acquiescence. With a quick movement, as she seated herself in the car and before Stella could follow her, she jerked the door shut. "Drive on—quick!" she shrieked to the chauffeur, giving him a vigorous punch between the shoulders—and before Stella realised what was happening, the car had started. She called loudly to the



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chauffeur to stop, but the chugging of the machine drowned her cry and the car moved on.

"There now!" chuckled Mrs. Yinger. "Fur oncet I got ahead of Stella! She wouldn't have took you down town first, Gertie; I seen she hadn't no sich intentions. And I seen, too, it was some important to you to *git* down town. Where is it you're so anxious to go to?" she inquired with frank curiosity.

"To the courthouse. I've told Henry. He can go right back for Stella. Her dressmaker lives at the opposite end of the town from the court house."

"The courthouse! My gracious! What are you got to go there fur?"

"I haven't time to explain to you now, Aunt Amelia."

"Well, say, Gertie, don't it tickle you any to see Stella git beat fur oncet?" her aunt again chuckled. "Ach, well," she added resignedly, as Gertrude remained unenthusiastic, "you always was a poor soul, Gertie; you take after your mom. Me I'm glad I'm not a-goin' down to my grave without havin' got ahead of Stella Swartz oncet anyways!"

"Shall I tell Henry to let you out at the depot?" asked Gertrude.

"No, I got to go back to Weesy's fur my things. Anyways I want to see how Stella's takin' it—me gittin' ahead of her so neat! Did you see how neat I done it? Jist that neat! If she had oncet got in here she wouldn't of left the valet take you down town first!"

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It occurred to Gertrude that perhaps her aunt was right. Perhaps Stella had deliberately planned to prevent her getting to the courthouse this morning in time to testify. Stella had a telephone in her own room and Mr. Reingruber or Alfred Ranck may have warned her just when to be on the lookout to head off her sister.

“They evidently consider me a formidable witness,” thought Gertrude. “Well,” she resolved, “I shall try to justify their opinion of me!”

## CHAPTER XX

**A**FTERWARDS, when Gertrude thought of that half day spent in a court room and realised that, with David by, it had not been at all the horrible experience which it certainly would have been otherwise, she decided that for her his presence could make the very desert blossom as the rose.

He had informed her beforehand of the status of the case at the present moment. Ten witnesses had been found to swear that Pat Murphy had created disorder and tried to incite a riot at the evangelistic meeting; that he had jumped upon the platform, cursed the preacher and attempted to assault him.

The fifteen witnesses whom David had secured to testify to the truth had, by their admissions under cross-questioning, damaged his case almost more than they had helped it.

“Did Pat Murphy openly ridicule and criticise the evangelist in the presence of the audience?”

“Did he accuse the evangelist of getting a fat living out of the community without giving any return for it?”

“Did he swear at him?”

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“Did he harangue the audience in a way calculated to arouse class antagonism and to create social discontent and even anarchy?”

To most of these and similar questions the confused witnesses had reluctantly given affirmative answers.

“You must do what you can,” David had told her, “to correct the wrong impression already made upon the jury and give them the truth. You’ll have to work your wits, Gertrude!”

Thus forewarned, Gertrude had, during her hour on the witness stand, held herself well in hand; had kept a sharp lookout for every least opportunity to score; and had manipulated her facts with really artistic effect and *finesse*. Her testimony had brought out some circumstances very weakening to the prosecution; for instance, the indisputable fact that the evangelist had given Mr. Murphy permission to speak from the platform; that the Reverend Jake had imitated Pat’s Irish brogue to the wild hilarity of the audience; that he had called Pat an Irish blackguard and had spoken in open contempt of Pat’s Catholic faith and most irreverently of the Virgin Mary.

At this point she had suddenly turned and deliberately addressed the jury—“I hope some of you are Roman Catholics!”—and the laugh that had followed had caused the judge to call her to order.

She had further testified that Pat had not sworn at the preacher nor threatened to attack him.

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It had become clear to her during her cross examination that though her testimony had probably modified the effect the other witnesses had produced, it had not been enough to offset it entirely; so she had ventured upon a bold move; she had requested and received the court's permission to make a statement. She had then affirmed that one half the entire cost of the evangelist's campaign had been paid for by the Swartz estate, the object being to divert the labourers in the Swartz factory from a strike.

"But in spite of this fact," Gertrude had said clearly and impressively, in the very face of Reingruber's horror and Ranck's rage at what she knew they thought her utter stupidity, "in spite of the fact that my own mother practically financed this evangelistic campaign, I nevertheless affirm that Mr. Murphy did not create disorder, did not threaten nor swear at the evangelist, did not incite to riot; that the sole object of his addressing the audience was to expose the intolerable conditions existing among the poor of New Munich; that the evangelist, on the contrary, after giving Mr. Murphy permission to speak, caricatured him before the audience and spoke slightingly of his Catholic faith; and that one strong reason for the evangelist's antagonism was Mr. Murphy's exposure of a certain citizen who was helping to finance the revival.

"I can't stand by in silence and see a man unjustly

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punished even when my telling the truth will react against my mother's (and of course my own) financial interest."

These statements, apparently so entirely disinterested, had created a sensation in the court (and in the hearts of Reingruber and Ranck) and had carried the day for Pat. He had been acquitted almost unanimously.

The Swartz estate owning considerable stock in the one large and influential newspaper of New Munich, that journal's report of the trial, and its healing interpretation of Gertrude's damaging revelations, seemed to her and to David an amusing though saddening case of diplomatic juggling to divert public opinion from the truth. It praised extravagantly the Christian spirit of the philanthropic and public-spirited citizen who used her wealth freely and abundantly not solely for the gratification of her own desires, but for the religious uplift of those who worked for her; doing it so secretly that her left hand knew not what her right hand did.

Stella, though keenly chagrined at the outcome of the trial and bitterly angered at Gertrude's part in it, revealed quite blatantly that the sharpest sting for her in the whole affair was the sympathetic association at the trial, of her sister and her lover. Indeed so frankly did she express her disapproval, not to say her deep hurt, at this association, that Gertrude, in spite of the impending departure of

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her mother, was moved to shorten her week at home to four days.

Even during these four days, for the sake of peace in the family, she avoided David as though he were her worst enemy, while her soul hungered and thirsted for the sound of his voice, the look of his eyes, the tender touch of his strong hand.

Stella's parting words to her were a reaffirmation of her determination never to forgive her the wrong she had suffered at her hands through her part in the trial.

"So long as I live and breathe," she said, her cold eyes fixed with a steady stare upon Gertrude's pained face, "I shall never forget what you have done to me!"

"To you, Stella?"

"At every turn of my life you try to thwart me! Even when you have to sacrifice your own advantage to thwart me you cannot resist doing it!"

"I went to college against your wishes; I refused to marry the man you selected for me; I saved a poor labouring man from unjust imprisonment at your hands. For these things you will never forgive me?"

"You went just one step too far when you testified at that trial. I will never forgive you! You will live to rue it!"

"Oh, Stella, dear, don't be so tragic, so absurd!" Gertrude begged. "Realise the great blessing that

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crowns your life—the love of a man like David!—and make yourself worthy of it!”

“You think, I suppose, that I am not worthy of it?” Stella asked with a sneer.

“Not when you talk about holding a grudge against your sister so long as you breathe! While you cherish a spirit like that, my dear, you are unworthy the love of a monkey, let alone that of a man like David.”

“You make it just a little too patent, Gertrude,—your admiration of David! Don’t throw yourself at his head quite so vulgarly!”

Gertrude’s answer to this was to turn away sadly and go out to the car that waited at the door to take her to the station.

Two days after her return to Moncaster she received a letter from David telling her that she had not given him a chance to express his gratitude to her for helping him win his case for Pat Murphy.

“There is absolutely no cant about David!” she reflected as she read his letter. “He writes as though his chief desire had been, not so much to save Pat Murphy, as to win the case for his own aggrandisement. And really his winning it was of no advantage to him personally and his taking the case at all was a real harm to him professionally.”

“You saved me” [he wrote] “from being obliged to play my last card—a card I was loath to play. But rather than have allowed Pat to go to jail on the testimony of bribed witnesses, I would have found a means of making



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those witnesses admit that they were bribed. That, however, would have involved a criminal suit and of course I am very greatly relieved to have been spared the ordeal of such a contingency."

Gertrude paid one more week end visit home before her mother and Stella sailed and her grief at such a parting from her mother, who she felt was going to her possible death, was scarcely greater than that which she felt at taking leave of her home and seeing it pass for a year into the hands of strangers.

She avoided David during this visit and he did not seek her out. Just once she saw him, coming upon him unexpectedly one evening as he stood with Stella under the chandelier of the parlour, her two hands held in his, as he gazed down into her upturned face with a look of suffering in his eyes that made Gertrude turn quickly away.

"How he loves her! Oh, how can she stab such a love as that? Why is she so blind? Why can't she see where her true happiness lies?"

She wondered whether Stella were right in her belief that David was a man who would love once and remain forever constant to that love.

"But a love founded only upon physical charm and a great delusion! How can it endure? If David really knew Stella, could he love her as he does?"

Before sailing Stella made careful provision for Gertrude's summer vacation, engaging for her before-

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hand, and without consulting her, a room and bath at a hotel on the coast of Maine, though she knew that Gertrude detested summer resorts and never stopped at one a day if she could help it. She told Gertrude about it the day before they left.

"It will make you feel homesick to come here to New Munich, so I advise you to go straight from Moncaster to Maine; unless by June you have decided to accept that school superintendent that wants to marry you."

"I shall not go to Maine, Stella."

"But I have engaged your rooms and have made a payment on them for a month. Mother can't afford to lose all that money. When I plan so carefully for your comfort, in spite of your outrageous treatment of me, why are you so ungrateful and unappreciative?"

"But I am quite capable of planning for myself."

"No, you are not. I want your promise before I leave that you will go to Maine and not involve mother in the loss of the two hundred and fifty dollars I have paid for your board in advance."

"I can't promise that. I don't care to spend three months in idleness at a summer resort."

"What do you want to do with your vacation?"

"I might join you and mother?" Gertrude suggested.

"No," said Stella emphatically after a moment's hesitation, "I don't want you to do that."

"Very well, then I won't."

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“You will go to Maine?”

“Why do you care where I go, Stella?”

“I feel responsible for you.”

“To relieve your mind then, I promise to go for the one month that is paid for. No longer.”

Stella looked at her with an expression that seemed to say, “I’ll find a way to make you stay longer!” But she turned away without speaking, leaving Gertrude wondering.

The best laid scheme, however, is sometimes check-mated from an incalculable quarter. A month and a half after Stella and her mother had sailed Gertrude lost her position in the high school at Moncaster.

## CHAPTER XXI

**T**HE teacher of history and civil government in the Moncaster high school having fallen ill, Gertrude had been asked to take over his classes for a few weeks. When she had been teaching these classes for one month a committee of the school board brought some charges against her which she proved to their satisfaction to be very well founded. The charges were grave; she had told her class in ancient history that an examination of the great historic religions of the world showed Christianity to be in no way so different from them as to warrant the assumption of a unique origin; she had told her class in civil government that Protection protected the few and exploited the many and that until free trade was universal in the world, democracy could not be firmly established; she had advocated government ownership of all public utilities; she had shown that private ownership of them bred and fostered a moneyed aristocracy and autocracy; she had demonstrated that private ownership of munition plants led to pernicious war propaganda. There were several men on the school board whose interests would be jeopardised by the growth of such doctrines and they

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easily persuaded the other members that Miss Swartz's teachings were dangerous and incendiary. So, Gertrude, admitting the charges and adding to them a few more crimes of judgment during her interview with the Committee, was requested to present her resignation to the Board. She complied with this request very cheerfully.

"But suppose," she said to David when she had told him her story on her arrival in New Munich, "that I had been financially dependent on that position."

"The truth-teller always pays the bill, Gertrude!"

They were sitting in the private room of his law offices, Gertrude having gone to him straight from the station.

"You see, David, even our public schools are not democratic, but are ruled by the vested interests," she pointed out to him.

"The present educational system," said David, "has deliberately prostituted itself in the interest of keeping things as they are. Really democratic education should teach every one to be a revolutionist in his thought—that is, to challenge every phase of the government and prove whether it be sound. But the teacher who tries to get his pupils to think fundamentally or radically about anything at all is thrown out!"

"Do you know, David, I found the teachers of that high school appallingly ignorant of everything

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except the text-book bunk that they pass on to their classes."

"We think we're educated in America. We're ignorant of everything that matters. We only know how to make money. Politically and socially we are in the Dark Ages. We're not even intelligent enough to protest against our government's working corruptly hand in glove with Big Business. Well, Gertrude, what are you going to do now?"

"I shall have to put up at Mrs. Baumiller's boarding house, I suppose," she faltered, unable to keep back her tears at the sudden realisation of her homelessness.

"I'm afraid it's going to be very dreary for you!"

"I would try to get another school position, but of course my record at Moncaster will make that impossible."

"You are debarred from teaching because American schools won't permit real teaching. Though teaching is what you are best fitted for, you'll have to give it up."

"I shall begin to teach my night classes at the factory again," she said. "I can have a free hand there; and as the seventy-five dollars allowance from mother is all I have to live on now, I can't afford to go on employing a teacher for that work."

"You have never before had to pay your board out of that seventy-five dollars a month. Can you get along on so little?"

"Our family credit is good, David."

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"But," he said doubtfully, "if our travellers stay a whole year I think some better provision should be made for you; especially in case of accident to them."

Gertrude looked vague, as she always did when practical matters were discussed.

"I shall work with you at the factory if you will let me," he added. "I'd like to talk to the men once a week on social conditions."

"Between us we'll accomplish something with those eight hundred people, David."

"Until Stella stops us!" he said, smiling ruefully.

"It will give her a shock to hear that I am in New Munich!"

"To hear why you are here will certainly give her a shock! Poor Stella! How long, O Lord, how long, before she comes to herself!"

"Your great faith in her, David, ought to remove her mountains of prejudice."

"When did you hear from her last?" he asked hungrily; he was showing the effects, Gertrude thought, of the strain of his difficult courtship; he was pale, his face had grown gaunt and his eyes hollow.

"Stella is right," she decided. "He is the sort that will never give up. He will never, never get over loving her. She need not have taken all those precautions against my being here in New Munich with him!"

"It is a week since I had a letter," she answered

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his question. "She writes to you oftener, I suppose, doesn't she?"

"She is very good about writing; I get several letters in every steamer. Do you know I am surprised to learn how entirely satisfied and even delighted your mother has been so far with their travels. Far from becoming tired of it, Stella says she is developing quite a zest for travel. I'm selfish enough to be sorry. Isn't it piggish of me?"

Gertrude refrained from telling him that this was only an artistic fabrication of Stella's to cover her motive, whatever it was, in forcing her mother against her will to remain so far away from her home and kindred. Stella had not even attempted to impose such an impossible story upon her.

"I had a long letter from my brother, Harry, last week," she said. "He is having a struggle to get on! I wish he would come home. But, alas, there's no home to come to now!"

"Let him prove his mettle, Gertrude," Phelps gently urged. "I'm inclined to approve Stella's wisdom in advising your mother (as she told me she had done) not to coddle him and keep helping him along."

"Oh, but Harry is no weakling," Gertrude quickly defended her brother. "He is as indifferent to money as I am, but he is a strong, industrious fellow and he would not ask for help without good reason. Conditions are just too much for him, I'm afraid. He was not trained as you were, David, to put up



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the sort of struggle he is having. I would help him if I had anything."

Phelps was silent for a moment, considering the matter. "I suppose," he said presently, "you're a soft-hearted sister and are inclined to spoil your brother, while Stella, with just as warm a heart, has a bit more wisdom; is something of a disciplinarian. And a good thing for me that she has that sort of strength, for I haven't. I can be a devil when I hate, but I'm all in when I care for any one."

"But it seems to me," Gertrude smiled, "that you have been rather a stern disciplinarian with Stella in several instances!"

"Where it was a matter of life and death principle, yes. If Harry were my son or brother I'd be apt to make it a bit too easy for him, I'm afraid."

When she presently started out to find lodgings at Baumiller's boarding house, David went with her to see her settled. He himself lived at the only good hotel of the town. The boarding house, though crowded and uncomfortable, was the best the town afforded.

"Stella is condemning us both to homelessness!" he said wistfully, as they walked through the streets. "I've never had a home and I do long to begin! Let's write her that if she doesn't hurry back you and I will set up housekeeping together!"

"Let's cable it!" said Gertrude recklessly. "David," she added seriously, "the greatest proof I have that Stella loves you is her wee bit jealousy

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of your friendship for me—we *are* friends, aren't we? Or do I flatter myself? I've always been too insignificant," she hurried on without waiting for him to answer, "to be considered dangerous, you know. So Stella's tiny jealousy of your friendliness towards me is the measure of her love for you, David."

"I don't doubt her love," he gravely answered. "I've had proof enough of it. But I'm inclined to think Stella will come into her own spiritually only through some great shock or loss."

"Perhaps so," said Gertrude noncommittally.

That evening, sitting in her ugly and comfortless bedroom at Baumiller's boarding house, she wrote to her mother and sister an account of her dismissal by the Moncaster school board. She refrained from stating that she meant to use her free time in enlarging the scope of her night classes at the Swartz factory and that David was going to co-operate with her in that work.

The next day, among the letters forwarded to her from Moncaster, she found one from Stella informing her that after earnest consideration, her mother had decided to stop her monthly allowance.

"Of course if you used it for yourself she would not dream of doing this. But since you insist upon teaching school against her wishes and use the money she allows you to pay a teacher who simply gives the girls of the factory ideas above their work and sows discontent among them, mother feels that as this trip of ours is costing her

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so much more than she expected it to, she must really cut out that teaching at the factory, Gertrude.

“I am sorry to tell you that mother is not at all well, which is one reason why our expenses are rather heavier than we expected. She has had distressing attacks of neuralgia and I have just now a trained nurse for her. I have also been obliged to employ a lady’s maid to travel with us, as I find that no English woman of position, no matter how poor she may be, ever travels without her maid. An English woman may dress very shabbily, have very few gowns, spend hardly anything—but a maid she will have with her when she travels if she *is* anybody. To travel maidless simply stamps you as middle class. These things, as you will readily see, are unexpected expenses and mother does not see why she should deny herself such comforts in order to pay a teacher a salary for work she disapproves of absolutely, She tells me to say that if you spent your allowance on yourself she would not think of withdrawing it.

“As she doesn’t want to cut it off without warning, I enclose the usual check for this month, but don’t look for more; and make your plans accordingly. —

“You will notice that the check bears my signature, not mother’s. She has given me, for convenience all round, the power of attorney.”

The letter dropped from Gertrude’s shaking hand. Her face was white and shocked. Her worst fears were going to be realised—her mother was ill—she might die abroad!

She was sure that Stella would never have written this letter if she could have imagined its being

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received under the present circumstances, with David close at hand to be informed and consulted; David who was being told by every steamer how happy and contented her mother was in her journeyings!

The financial matter involved troubled her little; of course when Stella learned that she had lost her position, she would continue to send her an allowance. It was her anxious distress for her mother and the sickness of her soul at her sister's selfishness and duplicity that made her suffer.

"What would David think of it all?" she wondered.

*Ought* she perhaps to destroy ruthlessly his illusion about Stella and not let him commit the wretched error of marrying her? Would it not be the truest kindness to him—even to Stella herself, since she would never be happy so mismated?

But no; these things must be left to work themselves out without outside interference. "Hands off!" must be her law.

## CHAPTER XXII

**G**ERTRUDE'S letter written from Baumiller's boarding house, announcing the loss of her position, brought a cablegram in response.

"Go to Maine and your allowance will be continued. Not otherwise. Mother humiliated at your present status."

Gertrude put on her hat and coat and went down town to her mother's factories to call upon Mr. Reingruber, the superintendent.

"You will have to give me a position in your office, Mr. Reingruber, as your secretary or something. Please don't ask any questions, but I must earn my living."

"Is it a joke, Miss Gertrude? Or is it," he demanded jocularly, standing with his legs far apart, his short arms clasped over his fat stomach, "another love-your-neighbour-better-than-yourself game?"

"You'll have to take my word for it; I do have to earn my living."

"Mother cut you off without a cent?—something like that?"

"Something like that. I need a salary of about a hundred dollars a month, Mr. Reingruber."

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"If you say so, certainly. Of course our employees always tell us just what salary they want—ha, ha, ha!"

"I shall earn it."

"No matter about that, seeing you're one of the firm, so to speak."

"Mr. Reingruber," she said with a sudden inspiration, "this arrangement is between ourselves. Please don't mention it in your reports to my sister."

"I don't make any reports to her. Her lawyer, Ranck, does that."

"Need he know I am working here?"

"New Munich ain't New York, Miss Gertrude!"

"Of course he is bound to find it out," she admitted.

"Find it out! There won't anything else be talked of among the Four Hundred of New Munich from the day you start in!"

"Then Stella is bound to learn of it!"

"And what's to pay if she does?" Reingruber asked curiously.

"My sister won't approve of it and will write or cable you to discharge me."

"Eh? And what then?"

"We shall cross that bridge when we come to it. I shall begin to work for you next Monday, Mr. Reingruber."

"Thanks, I'm sure."

"You're welcome."

As she walked back to the boarding house, taking

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a round-about way to avoid the pain of passing her own home now occupied by tenants, she wondered about all the homeless, dependent women who, unlike herself, could not walk into an office and hold up the superintendent of a big firm for a job. "What on earth do they do when they get out of work?"

She wondered also how she could explain her new occupation to David without betraying Stella. She felt an impersonal curiosity as to how Stella would explain her proceedings to David, in her letters to him.

"I don't really understand her purposes myself," she thought. "Is she trying to drive me into the arms of Alfred Ranck or Dr. Baer? Or does she merely want to get me away from David?"

She met David that night at a dinner at the home of "Mrs. Congressman Ocksreider," as the wife of the local politician was called; a social affair like most of those in New Munich, more gorgeous than elegant, more expensive than tasteful; liveried servants, a great deal of superfluous food and most costly apparel.

"So glad you are home, Gertrude," said one of the guests at the table. "I hope we shall see a lot of you now. We missed you so much this winter."

"Oh, but I don't belong to the leisure class any more; I've become one of the masses; I'm working for my living and," Gertrude added airily, "have little time for the Fine Arts!"

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“Working for your living? Taking in offices to scrub?” asked the young man at her left.

“Doesn’t look as if she’d get very far scrubbing!” said the Congressman, his eye on her bared arms which were far from brawny.

Gertrude suddenly saw opposite her, several seats away, the sombre face of Alfred Ranck. So she refrained from mentioning what her occupation was to be. And no one seemed to take her seriously enough to inquire further.

“This fad of ‘economic independence’ the women have taken up is like their bazaars and charity balls for raising money; it’s awfully expensive for their husbands and fathers,” said one of the men. “My daughter took up handicraft—making rugs, pottery, jewelry and such junk. The attic is full of it; and she, you know, has gone to Switzerland to recuperate.”

It was only a step from the discussion of woman in industry to the great problem of the day—the struggle between Capital and Labour. Needless to say that Capital, in a gathering like this, was rather better represented and defended (numerically, at least) than Labour.

Mr. Ocksreider, the Congressman, cited the benefits bestowed upon society by Rockefeller, Carnegie and their ilk—chiefly libraries and art galleries.

“But the labourer who creates the wealth of these men has no leisure for either literature or art. So



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he who should be the chief beneficiary, isn't," objected Gertrude.

"Don't we have free schools for all in this country, even for the most degraded foreign immigrant?" demanded Danny Leitzel, a corporation lawyer.

"They are free, yes, to those who can afford to attend them—who have enough food and clothing and leisure—which many of the labouring class do not have—though I hope they soon will have—but when they do, labour will be higher priced, labourers more scarce," said Gertrude, speaking rather breathlessly.

"Yes," the Congressman lamented, "the new compulsory education law is going to play the devil with labour! A very mischievous law! It's bound to cause much suffering among people too poor to keep their children in school up to the age of fourteen or sixteen!"

"As for your art galleries and libraries," said Mrs. Leitzel, "wouldn't it be better if such benefits to society were bestowed, not by private wealth, but by the State?"

"But the State doesn't do it, does it? And private wealth does do it. No one can estimate the enormous public benefit bestowed by our wealthy Americans—the hospitals, orphanages, Old Ladies' Homes, and so forth, which they have endowed!"

"If labour had its due," David carelessly threw in, "would we need free hospital wards, Old Ladies' Homes, orphanages, and that kind of thing?"

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“But look at the beautiful homes of American millionaires,” argued Mrs. Ocksreider; “the wonderful landscape gardening at Newport, for instance—why, it is an education to the masses to see such places—a joy and a privilege to the poor to be able to look at such beauty, which of course they’d never see if we had no millionaires.”

Gertrude and Phelps, sitting side by side, exchanged a swift understanding glance, their faces as solemn as the tomb.

“But don’t you think,” asked Mrs. Leitzel, “they’d prefer to see their own little lawns in front of their own pretty and sanitary little homes, to looking on at the grandeur of millionaires? If they were given a fair share of what they themselves create, there would not be any menacing colossal fortunes with which to keep alive such a cancer spot on our national life as that Newport colony.”

“Give them bath-rooms in their houses—and will they use them? I ask you!” demanded Mrs. Schaeffer. “They’d use them for coal bins!”

“The next generation would use them. Our own American great-grandmothers didn’t use bath-tubs, you know. The labourers have not had the chance or the leisure to acquire the habit of bath-rooms. A little leisure is a great educator and civiliser.” It was Mrs. Leitzel who spoke, and her husband, the corporation lawyer, frowned at her.

“I can’t imagine anything more monotonous and

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uninteresting than a social state in which every one would have the same!" cried Miss Deibert.

"It certainly would be less interesting to *our* comfortable class," said Mrs. Leitzel, the only one of the company besides David and Gertrude who was out of sympathy with the general attitude, "than the present varied arrangement of (on the one hand) country estates and town palaces, limousines and touring cars, house parties and dinner dances, in pleasant contrast to slums and charity organisations, orphan asylums and poor houses, free hospital wards and Homes for the Aged—would you like to end your days in one?"

"If I had no place else to go, I'd be very thankful for such a refuge and very grateful to the charity that gave it to me," declared Miss Deibert.

"You'd hate the charity and die of a broken heart—or of an exploded spleen!" declared Mrs. Leitzel.

"Do you think," asked the Congressman, "that it is just and right that a man should not reap his full reward when his industry and brains have accumulated vast wealth?"

"Which industry and brains never do, I've been taught," said Phelps. "Speculation does it. Exploitation of the masses does it. Industry and brains alone never acquire more than moderate wealth. The history of every great capitalist proves it. Edison is rich, but do we list him with our great capitalists? He is not primarily interested in money-making. No man of a high order of

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brains and character is; because to acquire great wealth one must not be interested in anything else."

"Gertrude, I do think that you and Mr. Phelps," said Danny Leitzel fretfully, "are doing a lot of harm, inciting the Swartz factory hands to unionise and that sort of thing! Haven't we enough unrest and discontent among labouring people?"

"I hope," exclaimed Miss Deibert, "we shall soon find something that will put and keep the labouring class in its place!"

"Gertrude, I know wealthy ladies in this town and in Philadelphia who lose the rent from property they own rather than eject a tenant in winter," said Mrs. Ocksreider earnestly, with what she considered perfect relevancy.

"So do I, Maud. Women who have for their own use at least three luxurious homes, two of which are always unoccupied."

"But these tenants who are permitted to 'do' their landladies out of rent are nearly always worthless, lazy people who won't work. You must admit that there is a vagabond class who want simply to prey upon those who work."

"I do admit it. Here we are!" said Gertrude, spreading wide her arms. "We are of that class—with a few exceptions. I mean we women, for of course our men do work. Vagabonds, idlers, parasites, are not confined to what we call the lower classes."

"But the idlers of the upper class are of some use

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in the world. They are nearly all charitable and philanthropic and do an immense amount of good."

"And charity," said Phelps, "is the life insurance of the rich. The existence of philanthropy in a community is a symptom of social disintegration. Philanthropy's constituents are not among the people, therefore it can never be democratic. Philanthropy does not cure the disease of poverty, it only salves it over."

"And what," asked Danny Leitzel with a sarcasm that verged on a sneer, for the millionaire corporation lawyer did not like Phelps, "may we ask, is in your estimation a cure for the disease?"

"Let me tell you an instance in my own experience that will show you very clearly what it is," returned Phelps, quite unruffled by the little great man's tone, and speaking in a quiet, restrained voice that suddenly brought a hush upon the company. Gertrude had often noticed how the sound of David's grave voice in any group arrested attention.

"This instance," he continued, "is true. I myself am dealing with it just at present. The eldest of three children of a motorman here in town did such good school work that her teacher urged her parents to let her go to the high school and fit herself to teach. To carry out this ambition, the whole family had to practise self-denial. She had to be kept decently clothed. It took a whole day's pay to buy her a pair of shoes—cheap ones—three dollars; a day's pay of fourteen hours. To get through the

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high school a year ahead of schedule, and thus relieve the family strain, the girl overworked, broke down and fell ill. Brain-fag, Dr. Beifel said. The doctor bill was simply a tragedy to this family—a family of five with an income of from two-fifty to three dollars a day. One day lost from pay, one hour lost, no pay. To help pay the doctor (for they are a proud and an honest family) the mother took in plain sewing which she did at night, her days being wholly taken up with cooking, nursing, cleaning. The only sleep she got was when she fell off her chair at the sewing machine and lay on the floor! I am giving you an absolutely literal account of a case I *know*—I go to the home of these people at least twice a week. This family, let me tell you, refuses to accept a cent of charity. The only help I can give is to send in dainties (which they will accept from me as from a friend). Now what's to save this family from utter wreck? Obviously, living wages for the father."

"Why doesn't he get a better paying job?" asked Leitzel reasonably.

"What branch of unskilled labour earns more than three dollars a day?"

"Unskilled labour is not worth more."

"We've got to have motormen. Must they and their families be condemned to this sort of suffering? How long do you suppose the growing and deepening sense of democracy is going to tolerate it? Isn't a man who does his best in any position for thirteen

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hours a day entitled to a living? And is it a living when the illness of any member of the family means tragedy? Think of the crippled lives of the two younger members of that family! They would even now be put to work if the compulsory education laws did not prevent."

"Which shows what a harmful law it is! Utterly unjust to the working people. That family needs the help of the two younger children!" said the Congressman.

"The two younger children are aged ten and twelve," Phelps' quiet voice replied. "Fancy your own children of that age helping to support the rest of your family!"

"Oh, but come now, Phelps, you know perfectly well that the children of that class are of a tougher fibre than our more carefully nurtured children and can endure a lot without suffering."

"But they can't endure everything—as witness the illness of the daughter just now, and the imminent breakdown of the mother. The poor do need sleep, you know."

"And as for 'that class,'" smiled Gertrude, "all of us here, except perhaps Mrs. Leitzel, are descended from people who worked one or two generations ago."

This speech fell upon a dead silence. No one relished it. It was not popular.

"But that shows," said the Congressman, "that this *is* the land of opportunity; the greatest democracy in the world!"

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“The greatest plutocracy,” said Phelps. “Nowhere does money govern politics as in the United States. And grant that this is the ‘land of opportunity’—would you affirm that there is no room for improvement here in America in the matter of equal opportunity?”

“Then you think, I suppose, that the cowardly weapon of strikes is justifiable, do you?” asked Leitzel with a sneer.

“I deprecate the use of force from any source, whether from above or below. The force exercised by Capital to keep Labour down has hindered the progress of the race. And not one single concession has Labour ever got from Capital except by meeting force with force. Every advance that Labour has made has been through the might of its Unions. Having realised its strength and being just as greedy for the spoils as Capital is (why not?) Labour won’t stop now until it has made the Capitalist’s position so untenable and unprofitable that government ownership of all public utilities and great industries will be forced upon us.”

“Heaven forbid!” exclaimed Leitzel.

They had reached coffee and cigarettes by this time, the women remaining in the dining-room and some of them smoking, a recent innovation in New Munich society that was considered either very “smart” or very “fast,” according to one’s point of view.

The rather heavy table talk became lighter now,



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and more general, and under cover of the universal chatter, Phelps and Gertrude were able to have what they had grown to value—a little private talk together.

“If it were not for you,” he began at once, “you and Mrs. Leitzel, do you suppose I’d ever grace a New Munich festive board? Isn’t Mrs. Leitzel the loveliest—”

“Don’t! I love her—don’t make me hate her!”

“But you are never jealous of Stella.”

Gertrude repressed the retort which rose to her lips. “Because Stella is unworthy and Mrs. Leitzel is eminently worthy of your adoration.”

“That’s all in the family,” was her reply. “What is your latest news from Stella, David?”

“She is enjoying herself much more than she has any right to do, so far away from me, though she does say she would enjoy it all even more if I were with her—as I flatter myself she certainly would.”

“She writes me,” said Gertrude, a shadow crossing the brightness of her face, a note of pain in her voice, “that mother is ill. Oh, David, I’m afraid it is all too much for mother!”

“My dear,” he soothed her, “trust to Stella’s good judgment. She will of course do the very best possible thing for your mother. It can’t be serious—she says nothing of it in a letter I had yesterday.”

“I know how homesick poor mother must be! And Stella does not even hint at coming back!”

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“Surely,” returned Phelps, “she would come at once if she saw that it was best for your mother, Gertrude. I have such great faith in Stella’s practical common sense. And of course in the rightness of her heart. She really took this trip, as you know, for your mother’s sake, sacrificing herself and me. For she did not want to leave me—she does care, you know. The habit of thinking of herself last and of her mother and you and her brother first, has become so fixed with Stella that I’m afraid sometimes she is inclined to see things out of proportion.”

Gertrude looked up into the kindly face of the man at her side and marvelled at the simplicity, the gullibility, the blindness of one who was himself so honest and so strong.

“A man in love certainly can be stupid!” she reflected.

“By the way, Gertrude, what did you mean by telling these people that you were working for your living? You haven’t secured another teaching position, have you?”

She explained to him what she meant to do.

“It will answer, I suppose, to fill the gap until you have discovered your true niche,” he reluctantly admitted, “though I don’t exactly see the necessity. Your factory classes tax you enough, I think. If you have time at your disposal, there are always things one can be learning. I don’t want to see you drudging.”

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The kindly solicitude of his tone and of his eyes as they rested upon her, the strong, protecting affection in which his presence seemed to envelop her, gripped her heart with an overwhelming sense of her homelessness, her loneliness. It seemed to her for the moment that David was the only person in the world who cared about what became of her. Even Dr. Baer didn't want her when he found her to be a person of so little tact and discretion as to get herself thrown out of her position. She knew that in the eyes of that highly reputable educator she might as well not be respectable.

But she swallowed the great lump that rose in her throat and she kept her eyes on her plate until she had forced back the tears that threatened to disgrace her publicly. Even David would not understand why just ordinary human kindness should seem to her so godlike as to move her to tears.

"The busier I am the faster the time will go until they come home," she answered after a moment.

"We must keep each other from getting too lonely, Gertrude."

"Yes," she answered faintly.

"Do you notice," he asked, "that you and I have so much to talk about always, so many interests in common, that we are never bored with each other? We are never driven to make talk?"

"On the contrary we never seem to get it all said, do we?" she responded.

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"I've had so few close ties in my life, Gertrude, you can't begin to know what it is to me, the sense of real comradeship that I have with you!—nor what a comfort you are to me with Stella across the sea! I don't know how I could bear that without you. I think I'd have pulled up stakes and followed her if you hadn't been fired out of Moncaster! Perhaps even you can't hold me here if Stella keeps to her reckless idea of staying a year! My hope is of course that your mother will get so tired of it that they will have to come home."

Gertrude did not of course expound to him that if Stella wanted to stay, her mother's feelings would not be considered.

"David," she suddenly asked him, "if I should lose my position in Mr. Reingruber's office, will you give me a place in yours?"

"Why didn't you come to me first?"

"I didn't think of it, or I might have. You have that much to be thankful for."

"I'm afraid there's no chance for me—you can't lose your present place unless you want to lose it."

"Can't I? Wait until Stella finds out about it."

"Of course she'd disapprove," he agreed. "She didn't want you to teach either. But you did teach all the same. How can she, three thousand miles away, hinder you?"

"She may think it her duty to tell Mr. Reingruber to discharge me."

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“Your mother—would she do that?—Reingruber being in her employ, not Stella’s.”

“Mother is guided entirely by Stella’s judgment.”

“All right. Your job is ready for you in my office as soon as Stella orders you fired,” he smiled.

## CHAPTER XXIII

**I**T seemed that Gertrude could not keep out of hot water. One day she picked up the morning paper at her breakfast table and read in glaring headlines,

### SOCIETY LADY A RADICAL. MISS GERTRUDE SWARTZ ON THE PLATFORM

It was the report of a speech she had made on Friday evening to her factory classes. She did not know how it had got into the newspaper.

Her first sensation was a shock at seeing herself so advertised. She read the article with mingled sensations of shuddering and laughter.

New Munich newspapers knew not "women," only "ladies," the highly ambitious editorials being adorned with such expressions as "the ladies of ancient times," "lady suffragists," "all the famous ladies of history."

A garbled report of Miss Swartz's speech followed the lurid headlines:

Miss Swartz spoke quite frankly to the working girls of the Swartz factory, at a meeting held there last night. "I have wondered sometimes," she said, "how you have

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tolerated what must have seemed to many of you as my patronage of you—I who was living in ease on the earnings of your work, coming to you who labour all day long, and offering graciously to ‘uplift’ you a bit once a week here in this place where you work to support me and my family! I have wondered why you did not rise up and deride me! But now I want to say to you that I have never come to you in the spirit of patronage, but in humility, almost in shame; ashamed that through your labour I and my family were enabled to have more easy and luxury than our share; than any human creatures should have; ashamed that you who produce this wealth have none of the comforts it can give, but are only able, with all your hard work, to keep soul and body together. But the time has come when I can stand here before you all and tell you that I no longer do live on your earnings; not a penny of the wealth produced here comes to me now. I (like you) work all day long—and I do not spend a dollar that I have not earned. This fact ought to make my relation to you more tolerable than it has been in the past,”—and so forth, and so forth.

“It does make me sound an ass, doesn’t it?” she appealed to David for comfort that afternoon as they walked together in the country. It was Saturday and she had a half holiday.

“Send it to Stella!” he advised.

“Do you realise the possibly fatal effect it would have upon her?”

“If its effect would only be to drive her home to keep you in order!”

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They were turning at this moment into the street on the edge of the town that led straight to the Swartz home.

"Not that way, David," Gertrude objected, laying her hand on his arm and stopping short. "Let us go down Third Street."

"If you don't mind, Gertrude, I have to stop a minute at your home. The people who have rented it are clients of mine."

She yielded and in a few minutes they were going up the path to the house. To her astonishment David took a key from his pocket and unlocked the front door.

"Do all your clients give you a door key to their houses?" she asked.

"Come in!" He drew her forward into the hall.

There was a silence like that of an unoccupied house pervading the lower floor.

"David! What's the matter?"

"Welcome home, Gertrude."

"Oh! Don't—what do you mean?"

"The tenants have moved out. They have taken a house farther in town, more convenient to Mr. Kieffer's office. You can move in this very day."

Gertrude looked dazed. "This is why you asked me to come out to walk with you this afternoon, David?"

"Yes, my dear."

"But, David, the house will have to be re-rented. Stella counted on the rent. She will be hampered."



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“‘Hampered’? Have you no idea of your mother’s income? This house rent, a mere hundred dollars a month, is nothing to your mother.”

“Isn’t it?” asked Gertrude, looking unintelligent.

“Anyway, the Kieffers are my clients and I’ve paid over to Ranck for your mother one half their year’s rent for this place.”

“How extravagant of the Kieffers to refuse to live in a house they pay rent for!”

“Rather!”

“But I think, David, that Mr. Ranck will insist upon re-renting it.”

“Forbid it!”

“I forbid it!” Gertrude laughed.

“Write to your mother and get her permission.”

“She will do as Stella advises.”

“Stella will not wish you to be at Baumiller’s boarding house.”

“She wants me to go to Maine.”

“Now? In March?”

“Yes.”

“What do you prefer to do?”

“To stay here, of course, in this house!”

“Then stay. No one is going to put you out.”

Gertrude was not so sure, but she did not say so, her delight at being able to come home, even for a short time, was too great to admit of any demurring. A suspicion crossed her mind that David had deliberately arranged this thing. But on second thoughts

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that was hardly possible, for the tenants had signed a lease for a year and he could hardly have evicted them and then have exacted or accepted a half year's rent.

"You will have to have a maid of course," he suggested, "and I suppose you will want to close off part of the house, won't you?"

"Yes, but I can't afford a maid."

"'Afford'? Look here! Are you a tight wad?"

"One can't keep house with a maid on one hundred dollars a month."

"But that is not all you have."

"Ye—yes, David. I have only what I earn."

"But need you go so far as that?" he asked doubtfully; "to refuse to accept an allowance from your mother? The trouble is, you see, that so long as the present economic system exists, none of us can wholly escape it. It is social reconstruction, not individual martyrdom, we want."

"But, David, it isn't that I—I don't want to be sailing under false colours—" she hesitated, not seeing how she was to explain her limited funds without betraying Stella's part in it, which she did not wish to do.

"I don't think you ought to stay here without a maid, Gertrude; it would not be safe."

"Oh, well, perhaps I can save the wages of a maid in some other directions. I will engage one."

"Until you have one, I'd rather you stayed at the boarding house."

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His protective proprietorship in her was very comforting.

"I've never kept house and I don't know a thing about it," she told him on their way back to the boarding house. "I'm glad of a chance to learn and I shall advertise for a maid at once; for, David that few minutes in the house makes me so homesick! I'm just naturally a home-lover."

"And a home-maker. You radiate homey-ness, Gertrude, do you know it?"

"Oh, do I? You couldn't pay me a higher compliment."

"I know I couldn't."

In the next few weeks Gertrude went through the common experience of the modern housekeeper in engaging and discharging a succession of incompetents. Untrained, untidy and unreliable, they yet exacted the highest wages for a minimum of work and demanded "privileges" that would have made our grandmother's hair stand up. The "privileges" did not shock Gertrude; she realised that while unusual and inconvenient to the employer, they were perfectly reasonable.

"Yous folks says we git a good home, livin' out," one bold-faced girl pertly told her. "Some home! No factory girl livin' in a cheap boardin' house has to entertain her comp'ny in the kitchen, does she? And a factory girl in a boardin' house has anyhow folks around her that *talks* to her and don't think she's jist dirt! I don't mean big places like Ocks-

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reider's where they keep a whole lot of hired help and do have a settin' room fur 'em and a bath-room—though even them positions ain't no cinch! But places like this here'n and like most in New Munich, where one, or at most two, is all the help that's kep'—well, b'lee me, it's some home—nit! A home, is it, when if you cracked a joke with any one in that pleasant home, or got a little jolly once in a month or so, instead of workin' all day without openin' your head till you was spoke to—you'd be tol' you didn't know your 'place.' Your 'place' in your happy home is *dirt*, that's what it is! B'lee *me!*"

"This is very interesting," Gertrude answered, glad to hear how it looked from the other side. "But we employ you to do our work, not to be our companions and friends. You might as well expect your factory employer to chat and play with you and—"

"Well, and don't he jist! Jollies you every time he sees you! Well, I guess!"

"Oh!" said Gertrude helplessly.

"Sure! B'lee *me!*"

One applicant intimated that she demanded of her employer a severe standard of both morals and manners.

"Why did you leave your last place at Mrs. Davidson's?" Gertrude had asked; and the reply was uncompromising: "Och, well, you see, I heard she wasn't all she ought to be, so I wouldn't live with her no more. So I left. To be sure I'm

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poor and have to work, but when you've sayed that, you've sayed all. And I won't live with a lady that ain't all she ought to be."

"If she didn't worry about your morals, I don't see why you need have bothered over hers," suggested Gertrude experimentally, noting the girl's painted cheeks and dissipated eyes. Mrs. Davidson, she knew, was a woman of undiluted puritanism.

"Well, her and I had words," the applicant shifted her ground. "She's awful quick! Yes, we had words. Anyhow, she talked so much hot air about dooty, she gave me a pain! And say Missus, she used so much slang. And indeed I didn't like livin' with a lady that talked so slangy; fur if there's one thing that gets my goat it's this here slang. No sir! No slang fur mine!"

It seemed manifest to Gertrude that the domestic servant was not only passing, but had already passed. But what was to take her place was certainly as yet unrevealed. She hoped it did not mean the passing also of home.

Her experience as an employer of domestic labour made her almost lose faith in the Cause she espoused—the brotherhood of man—until David reminded her that there was not a human failing she could discover in the submerged class of society that could not be duplicated in her own or any other class.

"Aren't there any untidy, unreliable people on Fifth Avenue or in Newport or on Long Island? I have a friend who is a widower with two small

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children and of all the varieties of domestic help he has tried since his wife's death, he tells me the very worst have been the 'reduced gentlewomen.' "

"I see no solution except to re-enslave the negro, David!" she declared. "One applicant came to me yesterday with an enthusiastic letter of recommendation saying she knew how to lay out the dead beautifully and to butcher a pig or an ox. 'But can you cook?' I asked, and she looked insulted. 'The last place I lived at, the woman did her own cookin',' she told me. This morning I negotiated with a Pole who wants to serve me barefooted—but though I sympathise, being fond of the practice myself, I suppose I shall have to 'pass her up.' "

The right maid was found at last, however, and Gertrude was soon thereafter settled cosily at home.

Her Aunt Meely approved of her return to her own home. To have her niece living at a boarding house had given her, she said, "a shamed face."

"If you hadn't of come back here," she told Gertrude one day when she dropped in to see her, "I was a-goin' to coax you to come out and stay at Miller's Fruit Farm that Mister just inherited off of his deceased sister. You could have stayed there anyhow till we sold it a'ready. Mister's put it up fur sale. Did you see the nice piece he put in the paper about it?"

"I missed that," Gertrude admitted. "Uncle Jacob's newspaper advertisements are always worth reading!"

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Mrs. Yinger, looking gratified at her niece's appreciative compliment, took from her bag a folded newspaper, found the place and handed it to Gertrude, who read it with relish.

### ATTENTION!

**FOR SALE**—The Miller Fruit Farm at Virginsville, eight miles north of New Munich. 35 Acres—3000 Trees. Mrs. Miller when on a visit to her Cousin at New Munich, Pa., Pneumonia caused her death, and Mr. Miller was on the way to the Hospital—is the cause for the opportunity to purchase this Fruit Farm, that will, in a few years, produce a fortune—with Mrs. Miller's death went a knowledge of botany—that had I much gold I would have given it in exchange for that which gold cannot buy. Much of this superior knowledge and experience is in this Fruit Farm, and Mr. Miller's study, experience, attention and the work he gave to this Farm has gone a great way in placing it **ONE OF THE BEST** fruit farms on earth. There are a great many people who know the quality of these two (Mr. and Mrs. Miller) and have used and tasted the fruit of this orchard, who will, and are ready, to recommend this orchard. A fortune for one who will buy it. See this property. Also is a grand place to live. Address Jacob S. Yinger, Virginsville, Pa.

“You could have lived there till we anyhow sold it oncet. But I'm glad you're here,” said her aunt when Gertrude had handed the treasured advertisement back to her and she had carefully folded and tucked it away in a safe corner of her bag.

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"I am too, Aunt Amelia; but thank you."

When Gertrude had been at home about two weeks, she made a discovery. Mrs. Kieffer, the tenant who had vacated the house, came to see her to inquire about a coat she had forgotten to take from the garret, and in the course of Gertrude's conversation with her, a rather extraordinary fact developed.

"Are you better now, Miss Swartz?" Mrs. Kieffer solicitously inquired as they sat chatting in the library.

"Better? I've not been ill, Mrs. Kieffer."

"Ill with homesickness? Mr. Phelps put it to us that if you could not get back into your own home, he couldn't answer for the consequences. And of course, Miss Swartz, we didn't want to be responsible for your health! He made us such a liberal offer too!"

"Liberal offer?"

"Don't you know? He offered us the house we're in now (it belongs to him) for half its regular rent for a whole year if we'd oblige him and move out so that you could come home."

"But—but—didn't you pay a half year's rent to buy your freedom from your lease?"

"Why, Miss Swartz, how could you expect or ask that, when we went out to oblige you?" exclaimed Mrs. Kieffer, a flash of indignation in her eyes.

"But I'm not asking or expecting anything, my dear Mrs. Kieffer! I have nothing whatever to do with the business affairs of the family. I was



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simply told—but I must have misunderstood. It was most kind of you to oblige me.”

Mrs. Kieffer looked at her queerly, and shortly afterwards went away with her coat, leaving Gertrude to reflect upon the thrilling fact that David must have, in his concern for her, bribed the Kieffers to leave this house and must have paid out of his own pocket that half year’s rent in order to satisfy Ranck’s claims on behalf of her mother!

Her most pleasant contemplation of this thoughtful kindness for her was harshly interrupted by the arrival of a letter from Stella in the late afternoon mail.

The letter was Stella’s response to the news that the Kieffers had vacated and that Gertrude was now living at home.

## CHAPTER XXIV

**S**TELLA'S letter was a strong protest against her sister's "behaviour." Was it not enough that she had disgraced the family by getting herself ignominiously dismissed from the Moncaster high school; but that she must add to their wrongs at her hands by depriving her mother of the rent of the house, so much needed at this time of unusual expense? It looked very much indeed as though the Kieffers had been asked to vacate. For her part, Stella did not believe they had left of their own accord. Why was Gertrude so bent upon worrying her mother with one thing after another? No wonder her poor mother was ill! Well, her mother simply could not afford to do without the rent of the home, so Mr. Ranck had been instructed to find another tenant at once; and as soon as he had succeeded Gertrude would be obliged to go to Maine. If no other tenant turned up, Mr. Ranck himself with his parents and sister would rent the place.

It was while Gertrude was deciding that until she was actually evicted she would not speak to David of the contents of Stella's recent letters to her, and not then, if she could help it, that David himself came in upon her.

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He had an open letter in his hand and the moment she looked at him she knew something dreadful had happened. The look in his eyes of suffering, of desolation, brought a quick cry of alarm and sympathy from her.

"I have had a letter from Stella," he immediately announced as they sat down together, his voice choked.

"Of course," thought Gertrude, "only the woman he loves could make him look like this!"

"What on earth is it, David?"

"She hasn't written to you?"

"Nothing to account for the way you look!"

"She has written to break off our engagement and to announce her engagement to a titled Englishman—Sir Cecil Royle!"

Gertrude stared at him speechless. She winced from the spectacle of his suffering, his eyes bloodshot with misery, his hands clasped together with a grip that made the knuckles show white.

"If she had acted with intentional and conscious treachery to me," he presently went on heavily, "if she had shocked my ideal of her; if she had done something to kill my love! But her letter in which she tells me this thing is so square, so straightforward and honest—it almost makes me love her more!"

"How in the world does she so justify herself?"

"That's just it—she doesn't try to justify herself. If she did she would disgust me. She tells me with

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her characteristic frankness, her utter inability to be false, that I am the only man she ever did love!"

"I believe that, if it is any comfort to you," said Gertrude.

"She would not tell me so if it were not true," he affirmed wretchedly. "But she also frankly tells me that her ambition is greater than her love for any one could ever be; that to have a social position in England appeals to her far more than living in New Munich, Pennsylvania, as the wife of a social reformer whose views and actions she not only does not sympathise with but detests. She never pretended she did not detest them, you know."

"No."

"She never tried to deceive me in the least. She is the very soul of honour—"

"Oh!"

"Well?"

"To throw you over at a moment's notice, when she is betrothed to you and loves you—and to take up with another man whom she doesn't love—for the sake of that 'Sir'! It is unspeakable, David! She is crazy!"

"Of course she is. But I'm very much afraid I can't make her see that she is!"

"David, it would be a dreadful disappointment to me not to have you for a brother-in-law—but how can you think you would be happy or make Stella happy when you and she are so out of sympathy about all your ideals of life?"

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“She is so strong and fine and honest, Gertrude! I am sure that in time I could make her see things less conventionally.”

“‘Strong and fine and honest?’” Gertrude repeated slowly. “Of course I know that is how you think of Stella.”

“Of course you know.”

Gertrude asked herself whether the moment had not now come when the greatest kindness to this dear friend would be to tell him the truth about Stella. He had intimated that if only Stella had shattered his ideal of her, he would not suffer. Ought she, then, to shatter it for him? But could she convince him of the truth? Wasn't he too hopelessly deluded?

“All I would succeed in doing,” she thought, “would be to dash his ideal of *me*—and that would not help him!”

She felt in that moment quite ready to sacrifice herself if in so doing she could banish from his eyes the bitter pain that made her own heart feel like lead in her bosom.

“Oh, if he loved *me* like that!” was the longing of her heart.

“Gertrude!” he said miserably, “I don't know what to do! If she had said she did not love me, I should certainly not trouble her again. But as she does care for me—well, I must try to save her from making this mistake!—a mistake that will bring her only regret and unhappiness! Who ever

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got anything else than misery from yielding to a lower desire?"

Gertrude, looking upon him compassionately, wondered what would be the effect upon him if she should say to him, "But Stella has none but 'lower desires.' The only decent thing I've ever known of her has been her love for you—and even that genuine love she must trample upon and desecrate! And perhaps even that love is not a high and worthy passion; for the real you—that which makes you what you are and sets you just a little apart from the average mere money-making male—she does not admire or like. What she probably does love in you is only your physical magnetism and the atmosphere of power you bear about you!"

But what she did say was, "When Stella has decided to do a thing, David, we, her family, have learned the futility of trying to dissuade her from it. I say this only to spare you. I would give half my life to be able to comfort you!"

"I know that she is very decided, very strong. But I think she misunderstands herself. And I must make her realise that she does care very much more for a life with the man she loves than for the hollow satisfaction to be got out of a title!"

Gertrude slowly shook her head.

"You think," he asked dully, "that I shall not be able to convince her?"

"She will marry Sir What's-his-name," pro-

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nounced Gertrude sadly. "Think of mother and Aunt Amelia being related to a Sir Cecil Something!"

She said it so tragically that David was almost moved to a feeble smile.

"If," thought Gertrude, "I could make him feel the thing as the vulgar absurdity that it is, he would stop feeling it a tragedy."

"I should have expected Stella to use more discretion in picking out her nobleman, David (if a mere 'Sir' is a nobleman; don't you have to be a lord to be nobility?) I should have thought she would select a German or an Italian, who would not have realised that mother's English was Pennsylvania Dutch. Shouldn't you?"

"Gertrude! How can you?"

"Joke about it? I don't feel funny, I assure you, David, though of course it is awfully funny, as you yourself will realise one of these days. I suppose the next steamer will bring me a letter about it all. Does she tell you any of her plans? Surely," Gertrude suddenly asked in a startled tone, "she is not planning to keep mother in England? I know how mother is pining to be here with her flower-garden and her old friends! She won't be able to endure staying away much longer!"

"Stella is coming home as soon as your mother is well enough to travel."

Gertrude caught her breath.

"To prepare at once for her marriage," he added drearily.

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“David! She is not bringing that relic of Mediævalism with her, is she?”

“The Knight?”

“Of course the k-night! Do brace up and enjoy with me the effect upon Aunt Amelia and mother of being related to a knight!—to be so closely associated with Feudalism! Oh, I know you are suffering, David, and that I seem heartless to you, but if you only knew how little cause you have for feeling badly!”

“What can you mean?”

“Do use your common sense, my dear, and realise that a woman capable of preferring a thing dangling to a title rather than *you*, is a woman incapable of truly loving you, of even knowing you!—of ever learning to share with you the passionate ideals which are the whole of your life!”

He gazed at her with astonishment and with a dawning light of knowledge in his eyes. But before he could speak, they were interrupted. There was a knock at the library door, it opened and the maid entered with a cablegram.

“From Stella!” Gertrude breathlessly exclaimed as she opened it.

She read it aloud.

“Mother has had a paralytic stroke. Little hope of recovery. Bringing her home on the *Essex*, April seventh.”

The paper fell from her hand; every drop of colour



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left her face. David with a quick movement of compassion, turned to her. And then it was that suddenly the restraint of months gave way and in the agony of her grief Gertrude arraigned her sister, her passionate accusations carrying to David a conviction that they might never have borne had they been made calmly. Gasping and sobbing as she talked, her words incoherent and tumbling over each other, her whole body trembling as she walked feverishly back and forth across the floor, David gazed at her in amazement and consternation, hardly knowing in this overwrought woman the gentle and rather languid Gertrude of his acquaintance.

“She has ruined mother! She has killed her! All for her own selfish purposes! She dragged her from home—forcing her to go when poor mother begged and pleaded to stay at home—when I pleaded to have her stay where I knew she was happier and better off! Oh! I cannot forgive Stella this! She has taken mother from me and I love my mother, David! Stella never loved any living creature but herself! Not even you better than herself and her paltry ambitions! It is those accursed ambitions of hers that have wrecked all our lives—mother’s and Harry’s and mine, too, if she had succeeded in her efforts to drive me to marry Alfred Ranck! She drove Harry from home on the pretext of ill health—he is not ill—and she is ruining him because she will not let mother part with a dollar to any one except

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her, when she can help it. She got mother out of our reach, got her to cut off Harry's and my allowance, to sign over to her the power of attorney—and now she is spending Mother's entire income for herself as she pleases and has got herself betrothed to a foreign title—with the result that mother is being brought home a wreck, to die! Why did Stella let herself become engaged to you? Because she was not sure she would land a title and next to her ambitions, she does love you. But never for a moment did she mean to keep faith with you if she found she could do better. Now, you know! Stella is not what you have supposed her to be! She is selfish, she is cruel, she is treacherous! I have always known it and I have always tried not to believe it. But now she has killed mother—and I can no longer pretend! I can no longer—”

David, as white as death, a stunned look of consternation in his face as he heard her, sprang forward to catch her as she fell unconscious.

## CHAPTER XXV

**T**HE weary days of waiting for the arrival of the *Essex* seemed to Gertrude the blackest she had ever known, for the terrible dread hung over her that her mother might die on the way home and be buried at sea.

Yet through all this dark time of suspense she was never long unconscious of David's unfailing thoughtfulness and helpfulness. In the presence of her grief his own trouble seemed to be brushed aside as though it were not. Even when one morning he showed her a new letter from Stella, in which she requested him not to ask her, when she got home, to change her mind, because it would be useless, since she had considered well before writing to him—even in showing this letter to Gertrude his purpose seemed to be unselfish.

“So, please, David,” Stella's letter repeated, “don't harass me and yourself, too, by opening up this painful subject when we meet, as it would only distress us both to no purpose.”

“Stella could have spared herself the labour of making this request of me,” he commented when

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Gertrude silently returned the letter to him: "I shall not trouble her."

His tone was grave rather than bitter, as though to reassure Gertrude of his recovered sanity, and she hoped earnestly for his own sake that he was cured.

Among the hardest things she had to bear during this waiting time were the visits of her Aunt Amelia and the sharp running commentary of that gentle dame on the affliction that had overtaken her mother.

"Well, I guess Stella's satisfied now with what she's did a'ready to her mom yet!" she would say, rocking monotonously in a big chair in Gertrude's bedroom during a long hour's call. "I always knowed, ever since Stella was a little girl a'ready, that some day that little feist would jist break her mom's heart!—the way she was always schemin' to git 'round her mom and pop to git her own way! Nothin' stopped her! It made nothin' to her how many lies she had to tell! And your pop he used to think it was cute! Yes, you mind if he didn't! I guess it never bothered him much neither, tellin' a lie to git ahead of another one! They do say it gives some big liars in business! You kin read in the papers that it does. But, Gertie, whilst I always did think it awful probable that that there Stella Swartz would some day break Weesy's heart fur her, I must say I never did think it would be by draggin' her out to a dangerous place like Europe

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yet—that I didn't! I'm awful surprised it turned out this here way!—fur I did anyhow look to see Weesy meet her doom in the United States! Well," she would end with a long sigh, shaking her head mournfully, "I warned Weesy not to leave Stella take her to a country where they don't even speak English—so's you can't even make your wants knowed!—and where your life and liberty ain't safe on the streets!—if, indeed, they're got streets in sich a place! More likely not. But, Gertie, you know yourself how your mom never could go agin Stella. And now look what's happened her! Yi, yi, yi!"

Several times after the arrival of the cable, Gertrude told David how much she wished that Harry were at home.

"It would almost restore mother to health to see him when she gets here, she is so devoted to him!"

It was an unspeakable comfort to her, then, when, the day before the ship came in, Harry, to her amazement, walked in upon her while she was over-seeing the last arrangements at her mother's house for the reception of the travellers.

"Mr. Phelps wired me the price of a ticket home," he explained when he had warmly greeted his favourite sister.

"Oh, Harry, and this very afternoon, for the pure joy of pretending you were coming, I got your room ready for you!"

"That's like you! You're the same old Gert,

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aren't you?" he cried, giving her another rough hug.

He and Gertrude had always been good comrades. He was a commonplace youth enough, except that he had always been rather more upright in principle and cleaner morally than the average young man of his station.

Gertrude was shocked at the change she saw in him—his shabbiness and other signs of the hard struggle he had been having.

"And all that energy spent to avert starvation might, with so much better results, have been spent in doing the sort of work that Harry can do best," she thought with fresh resentment against Stella.

It was when on the next morning Gertrude was going over the house to finish up the little remaining work of preparation which Harry's unexpected arrival had interrupted, that she came upon something which startled and troubled her.

She was dusting the compartments of a large desk which, ever since she could remember, had stood in her mother's bedroom, when upon opening a small drawer, she came upon a package of letters that were yellow with age. She glanced at them idly and was about to throw them into a waste basket, when she decided first to examine them to make sure that they were of no importance. They were all addressed to her father, she found, as she shuffled them; the envelopes of some of them were

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postmarked "Dakota" and were dated twenty-eight or thirty years back.

All at once a folded paper not in an envelope turned up in the pack, and as she opened and glanced at it, a name caught her eye—*J. M. Quickman*. It instantly struck her as familiar. Somewhere she had seen or heard that name before. She read the few crudely written lines which the sheet contained

"Farleysville, Dakota.

"Received five hundred dollars for the care for two years of the three years old boy left with me October twenty-first, 1882."

Gertrude, gazing at the words in amazement, found herself trembling, her teeth chattering, the paper shaking in her hands.

"Quickman! I remember! David said the name had always had 'a grim humour' for him!"

It all came back to her with a rush. David was three years old when the Quickmans of Dakota took him. Five hundred dollars was the sum left with them for his care—"and I find this in my father's desk!"

Memories rushed upon her thick and fast—David's statements that he had come East to look up his inheritance; that it was not "mere chance" that had led him to settle in New Munich; that the death-bed confession of an old man had revealed to him that he was neither penniless nor illegitimate.

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“What was father’s connection with all this?” she wondered with fast beating heart. “Was it something wrong and dishonourable? A death-bed *confession*, David said.”

She thought of all the years of her father’s life during which his family had suffered with him in witnessing helplessly his more and more frequent spells of deep melancholy, of dreadful nervous depression.

“Well,” she concluded, with a long breath, folding the paper and tucking it away in the bosom of her blouse, “I shall some day show this to David.”

In the rush of events during the next few days, however, the mysterious paper was, for the time being almost forgotten—to be recalled only when its mystery had been explained through an unexpected and astounding stress of circumstances.

Indeed, not only was this significant paper temporarily lost sight of, but even the deep sense of injury at the hands of her sister which Gertrude felt, dropped into oblivion, or at least passed above and beyond the smallness of resentment, before the anguish she suffered when two days after they carried her unconscious mother into her home, she died without even for a moment having recognised any of them.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was a few days after the funeral that the three



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heirs of the Swartz estate assembled, at Stella's instigation, in the library of their old home to hear the reading of their mother's will.

Gertrude, the first to enter the library for the occasion, sat down beside a window and gazed listlessly out upon the cold, dreary rain of the April afternoon, while she waited for the others to join her.

She had been alone but a few minutes when Stella, strolling languidly into the room, sat down in an armchair before the open fire.

She looked well and strong and handsomer than ever. But there was an expression of discontent on her face that was new to it.

"She is really fretting about David," thought Gertrude. "She does care for him, in her way—whatever that way is. I don't understand it."

Stella had seemed, even to Gertrude and Harry who knew her, strangely cold about their mother's death.

"Where's Harry?" Stella inquired. "Do you know, Gertrude?"

"No."

"I hope he won't keep us waiting. It would be like him, wouldn't it?"

Gertrude did not reply. She had avoided Stella ever since her return and had as yet had no talk at all with her. This was the first time they had been alone together and Gertrude would even now have gotten up and left her but that she was obliged to stay. She had reached a point where she shrank

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from and almost feared a moment alone with her sister.

"Mr. Ranck will be here in a minute. You know how prompt he is always," said Stella.

Still Gertrude offered no response.

"Poor mother did worry so over your unfortunate Moncaster experience, Gertrude! I can't help feeling it helped to bring on her stroke!"

Gertrude's hands lying loosely in her lap closed upon each other with a grip.

"I am so glad, now, that I denied myself marriage and devoted myself to mother! She felt so deeply the sacrifices I was making for her that you and Harry will understand when her will is read, Gertrude, why she did as she did."

No answer from Gertrude. Stella, glancing up from the fire to look at her, saw an expression in her usually gentle countenance that startled her.

"Gertrude!" she exclaimed, "you have acted most strangely ever since I came home! You are letting poor mother's death affect you too much! You should get better control of yourself. It is not as though mother had been young. She had lived her life. The parting with her was inevitable sooner or later. One has to take these things philosophically. You and Harry both act as though you were the only people in the world who had ever lost a mother!"

Her voice broke in a choking sob. Gertrude did not reply. She could not.

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For some moments they sat in silence. Both Harry and Mr. Ranck seemed to be late in arriving.

Presently Stella again spoke, her tone fretful. "David is taking it very foolishly—my breaking off our engagement! I don't know why he should let it upset him so completely!"

And now at last Gertrude roused herself to answer. "Oh, I don't think you need worry about David. What makes you think he takes it so hard?"

Stella stared at her incredulously. "Well!" she exclaimed, "why should he not take it hard?"

"But why should he?"

Stella shrugged her shoulders. "You are awfully changed, Gertrude! You have been horribly disagreeable to me ever since I came home!"

Gertrude was silent.

"What reason have you," Stella demanded, "for supposing that David doesn't care?"

"I was just wondering what reason he had given you for supposing that he cared so very much?"

"The fact that he has not trusted himself to come near me since I came home—a whole week! We have not once spoken together alone! He has avoided me!"

"No, he has not avoided you. He has simply not sought you."

Again Stella shrugged her shoulders. "If it pleases you to think so! But I know he has avoided me. I wish he would be sensible and consent to be

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just friends with me. I see no reason why he should not."

"He probably sees no reason why he should."

"Indeed? That is your amiable and sisterly opinion of it, is it? Well, why?"

"David is a man of too much fineness to be able to give friendship where he has lost respect."

"'Lost respect'! Nonsense! That is your absurd idea, not his. And I am not interested, Gertrude, in your idea of my conduct. Have you and David talked me over? Discussed all my failings?—you helping David to see them as he would not be likely to if left to himself?"

Gertrude looked at her sister with an expression on her face that made her seem an utter stranger to Stella.

"When the news came to me, Stella," she answered breathlessly, "that you were bringing mother home a paralytic, I said everything in my power to make David know you as I have known you all my life!"

"Yes?" said Stella, lifting her eyebrows, while every drop of colour left her face. "And just how have you known me all my life?"

"As untruthful, treacherous, selfish, scheming, cruel—"

The door opened and Harry walked into the room, followed by Alfred Ranck.

## CHAPTER XXVI

**T**HOUGH both Harry and Gertrude thought it probable that Stella had managed to secure for herself a lion's share of the estate, neither of them was mercenary enough to waste any anxiety over the likelihood. So when Mr. Ranck read in cold and even tones that Mrs. Swartz bequeathed to her beloved daughter, Gertrude, and to her beloved son, Harry, each, the sum of twenty-five hundred dollars and to her beloved daughter, Stella, in token of her years of service, the entire residue of her estate, Harry and Gertrude not only failed to recognise in Ranck an accomplice in Stella's machinations, but did not even grasp the purport of what they heard.

It was not until Ranck, with no more change of countenance than a wooden image would have shown, was slowly folding the will and returning it to its envelope; and Stella, in her armchair before the fire, was almost equally rigid and expressionless; that the words that had been read seemed to penetrate to Harry's understanding.

"Twenty-five thousand dollars apiece to Gertrude and me? But father's estate was estimated at eight hundred thousand!"

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“Twenty-five *hundred* dollars apiece to you and your sister, Mr. Swartz,” the attorney corrected in a toneless voice.

With a start Gertrude sat upright in her chair. Harry stared at Ranck uncomprehendingly.

“Twenty-five hundred dollars?” he repeated. “Did you say twenty-five hundred dollars?”

“Twenty-five hundred dollars,” repeated Ranck.

“Two thousand five hundred dollars?”—Harry still tried to take it in— “You say my mother left Gertrude and me each two thousand five hundred dollars?”

“Two thousand five hundred dollars.”

For an instant the room was deathly still. Stella, in her armchair, did not stir. Gertrude’s face had turned white. Harry stared in bewilderment.

Suddenly he sprang up with a laugh. “But you are not an ass, Ranck! You can’t imagine that Gertrude and I are such nuts as to let that will *stand*? Why didn’t you tell Stella and my mother that it was impossible, when they got you to draw it up?”

“I should have done so, if it had been ‘impossible.’”

“Look here! Gertie and I may be easy marks (far too easy, I see now!) but we’re not letting ourselves be done out of our own to this extent! Well, rather not!”

“If you contest the will, you get even less than if you let it stand.”

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Harry, who had begun to stride about the room excitedly, stopped short. "Explain yourself, will you?"

"The residue of the estate, which goes to Miss Stella, is less than the five thousand dollars which you and Miss Gertrude jointly receive. Your mother's estate, divided equally among you, would give you each about two thousand dollars."

"My mother's estate worth six thousand dollars! Is that what you are telling me?"

"Exactly what I'm telling you."

Harry controlled a choking lump in his throat, and after an instant asked quietly: "What has become of the eight hundred thousand dollars my father left?"

Mr. Ranck was prepared for his answer. "Your mother, feeling that your character was not sufficiently formed, or of a strength, to be entrusted with great wealth, and that Miss Gertrude would surely misappropriate anything left to her decided that the best thing she could do for the protection of her two younger children was to make over the bulk of her property, *before her death*, to her daughter, Stella, being convinced that the wise judgment and strong, steady character of her eldest child would insure the property from waste, and that Miss Stella would know how to use it in the wisest possible way for her brother and sister."

Again, for a throbbing moment, the room was deathly still. Then Harry, still speaking with a

## FANATIC OR CHRISTIAN

quiet self-control, asked, "My mother, before her death, made over to Stella all of her estate except six thousand dollars?"

"Just so."

Harry stood for a moment, thinking. Then he turned and looked at Gertrude. She rose and came to his side. He took her hand in his.

"Gertrude and I will of course contest this—we shall bring suit. We shall plead the perpetration of a plot; that mother, in feeble health, was fraudulently influenced to commit this insufferable injustice. I'll get Danny Leitzel on the case and promise him half the estate if he wins! He never loses a case!"

"We'll have David Phelps, Harry," spoke in Gertrude. "He is just as apt to win and he will win honestly."

"You are talking very foolishly, both of you," said Ranck with cool precision. "The property was legally made over to your sister and is beyond your reach absolutely. Abide by your mother's wishes, and your sister will do well and generously by you, according to her discretion. Get involved in a lawsuit, and you will squander all that your father accumulated."

"We would both know exactly what to expect of Stella's 'discretion' in parting with money!" returned Harry. "We refuse to accept from her gifts of what is our own. We'll have what is our own, if we have to squander half the estate in getting it!"

"I trust, Miss Gertrude," said Ranck, quite



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unmoved, "that you do not share your brother's ill-considered view of your beloved mother's last will and testament and that you will not unite with him in desecrating her revered memory?"

Gertrude looked at Ranck and smiled. Her reply was not what he was looking for. "How nicely you serve up your words on a napkin, Alfred!—if you will pardon my drawing attention to it."

"This is hardly a subject for levity, I should say?" he returned with a slight lift of his eyebrows.

"It will be before we are through with it!" retorted Harry. "I shall see to it that—"

He stopped short. A tall, broad-shouldered figure had suddenly appeared in the doorway.

"Aha, here's our lawyer now!" exclaimed Harry.

"Come in, Mr. Phelps! We'll put it to him right now and see what he has to say for our case, Gertrude!"

Phelps—his glance moving swiftly from Gertrude and Harry standing together, to Stella before the fire, and then to the cold, unmoved face of Mr. Ranck—walked into the room and stood in their midst.

## CHAPTER XXVII

**I**T was strange, Gertrude thought, how trouble seemed to fall away from her at the approach of David. Even while her blood throbbed at his presence, there was at the same time a deep inward peace in the sense of security she felt in his strength and in his goodness. Some subtle emanance from him to her seemed always to envelop her when she was near him.

“Tell Mr. Phelps, Ranck,” commanded Harry: “or rather, you, Stella—you tell Mr. Phelps just what Ranck has been handing out to us—and let us hear what an honest lawyer has to say about such a deal as you and Ranck are trying to put up on Gertie and me! Go ahead, Stella!”

“I am perfectly ready to explain it all to Mr. Phelps, in spite of the fact that he has nothing whatever to do with it.”

Stella very white, rose and came over to the group of three in the centre of the room—Ranck standing, like a wooden image, a few feet away.

“David!” she appealed in the rich warm voice that had never failed to thrill him with a sense of her feminine charm.

“I am listening, Stella.”

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“Because my mother lacked confidence, and justly so, in her son’s discretion in the management of money, and because she realised, from a long and unhappy experience, his inability to ‘make good’; and because she was averse to turning over one-third of my father’s hard-earned fortune to Gertrude to be used in demoralising the poor—because of these considerations, mother, before her death, made over to me the bulk of her estate, to be used by me for myself, Harry and Gertrude as I deemed for their best good. She left to them, outright, twenty-five hundred dollars each.”

“Exactly,” remarked Mr. Ranck.

David did not speak. For a moment they were all silent.

“I suppose,” Stella presently continued, “it is perfectly natural that Harry and Gertrude should be unable to do justice to mother’s motives; to see that she acted only for their best good; for their protection. Naturally they do not themselves realise their own weaknesses—Gertrude, how impracticable her social theories are; and Harry, his want of stamina in failing to earn a living, even with no one dependent on him. David, help me to make them be fair to dear mother!—not to desecrate her memory by these threats of prosecution—of vengeance! It is disgraceful, horrible! And all for the sake of money! Oh, it is disgusting!”

Her eyes, raised to his with an expression of mingled distress and indignation, were bewilderingly

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convincing. Even Harry and Gertrude, themselves too guileless to doubt readily another's sincerity, were almost persuaded of Stella's belief in herself.

"You recognise, of course," David said, looking gravely and sadly down into her upturned face, "the light in which you are placed by this whole transaction?"

"I? Oh, I am not thinking of myself, David!" she said pleadingly. "If only they don't wrong poor mother! I can bear their unjust and unworthy suspicions of me in the face of my lifelong self-sacrifice for their sakes!—but when they rave against *her*—"

Her voice broke and she quickly put her black-edged handkerchief to her eyes. "I cannot bear it!"

She sobbed heart-brokenly into her handkerchief. David turned puzzled, questioning eyes to Gertrude. But she was not looking at him. Her glance and Harry's had met upon Stella's sobbing—and an involuntary, irrepressible laugh broke from them both, so perfectly natural and spontaneous that David's first instinctive wincing at their seemingly untimely amusement was turned to wonder; and the haziness and confusion of thought and feeling in which he had contemplated Stella ever since the day of Gertrude's outbreak about her, was increased tenfold.

At the sound of that laughter, Stella's sobs ceased, and she dried her eyes.

"You see!" she pointed out to David with a little

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hopeless gesture. "They are incapable of any fineness of feeling!"

"'Fineness of feeling'?" he repeated dubiously.

"They mock at me because I weep over their unfilial attitude towards dear mother!"

"Then—since they have called upon me to help adjust this matter between them and you—why not adjust it, Stella, by making over to them their thirds of the estate and washing your hands of all further responsibility for them? Or at least arrange that they shall have the income of their thirds."

"To be wasted by Harry; to be misapplied by Gertie!"

"If you keep the principal, you need not concern yourself about what they do with the interest."

"Then I should be neglecting a sacred trust committed to me by my dying mother!"

"Do you feel convinced that your mother would have preferred a family rupture and possibly a lawsuit over this matter, rather than that Gertrude and Harry should have their thirds?"

"I can only do what my mother commissioned me to do. And I trust to your wise counsel, David, to influence Gertrude and Harry against the wickedness of a lawsuit."

"My counsel to them would be to fight for their own."

"But why, David?" cried Stella in pained surprise. "Do you doubt my integrity in this matter?"

"Entirely, Stella."

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Their eyes met for an instant; then Stella's fell, her face growing crimson.

"I thought better of you, David," she said softly. "I did not think that you would stoop to petty retaliation!"

"Nor do you think it now."

"What else can I possibly think—your urging these two impracticable young people to outrage their mother's memory; to try to set aside her wishes; her conscientious arrangements for their best good?"

"We are to believe, are we, that your mother was entirely uninfluenced in making these arrangements?—that entirely of her own accord she made them?"

"I don't deny that she consulted me and that I advised her—conscientiously advised her—to do what I knew would hurt *me*; for I could not hope that Harry and Gertrude would be fair to me; they never have been; never have appreciated my efforts, through all their lives, to help and serve them!"

"If it came to a lawsuit, Stella, you would have to be able to prove that your mother was uninfluenced in making over to you her estate, to the exclusion of her other children. Eh, Ranck?" he curtly demanded of the motionless figure standing apart from the group.

"I can testify that Mrs. Swartz was entirely uninfluenced."

"Oh, you can? When the transfer of the estate took place in Europe at the office of an American consul?"

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“Just so—I managing the affair at this end and corresponding with Mrs. Swartz.”

“With Mrs. Swartz’s daughter, you mean? Mrs. Swartz herself never wrote letters. Least of all, business letters. You would have to produce the correspondence in court.”

“Can’t you see,” cried Stella, appealing to Gertrude and Harry, “how dreadful it would be to drag such a thing as this into court?”

“Then settle with us, if you would not like the court room!” responded Harry. “You don’t imagine that Gertrude and I would hesitate out of regard for you—when you have contrived to do us out of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars apiece!”

“I will not go against mother’s wishes,” repeated Stella firmly. “And if you and Gertie choose to do so, Mr. Ranck will know how to defend mother against her undutiful children!”

“Mr. Phelps,” said Harry, “will you take the case for Gertrude and me?”

“It will not be necessary to go to law,” was David’s unexpected reply. He paused a moment and they waited for him to explain. “Stella will settle without a lawsuit.”

“You cannot make me!” said Stella.

“He cannot possibly make you,” affirmed Mr. Ranck.

“There will be no lawsuit. Gertrude and Harry will share equally with you, Stella, what there is to share.”

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The crimson died out of Stella's face, leaving it again white; for none knew better than she that David was not given to idle words.

"Well?" she demanded, her tone curt to conceal her fear. "What have you up your sleeve?"

"Your mother could not deed the estate to you because it was not hers. Your father could not will it to her because it was not his. The so-called Swartz estate belongs to me."

While the others stared at him as at a demented creature, Gertrude's heart beat suffocatingly with the quick realisation that David was about to reveal to them the secret of her father's mysterious past and of his own connection with it.

"It is an unpleasant fact I have to make known to you," he continued. "I would have kept it to myself forever, if it were not necessary to tell it now in order to right this wrong which you, Stella, would do against your brother and sister. But since I must now tell it to you—"

He paused and looked at Ranck. "It is better that we should be alone. Will you excuse us, Mr. Ranck?"

But Stella interposed. "As Mr. Ranck is my lawyer, there is no reason why he should not hear anything you may have to say, David. And as I seem to be in the midst of enemies—"

She paused, her lips quivering, her eyes in sad reproach on David's face.

"I prefer a witness present, David," she said.



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“As you please, Stella. It is only fair to warn you, however, that you will not wish any one outside your own family to hear what I have to say.”

“Mr. Ranck remains,” pronounced Stella.

“Very well. Understand, then, that I am your father’s step-son and that I was defrauded by him of my inheritance from my mother, his first wife.”

At the consternation on the faces before him, he had to summon all his resolution to proceed.

“My mother was a widow at the time she married your father and I was two years old. An uncle of mine, my father’s brother, had died before my mother’s marriage to your father and had left to me a vast tract of ranch land, my mother being its sole trustee. A year after her marriage to your father, she died in a premature confinement. Your father at once put me with a poor ranch labourer’s family, leaving with them five hundred dollars to pay them for keeping me until he should return to get me. He never did return and he left them no name or address. Cruelty and drudgery were the portion of my childhood. Your father then contrived to sell the ranch land, of which my mother had been sole trustee, used the money therefrom in building up, here in New Munich, the Swartz factory, and married your mother. On his death-bed, he summoned an obscure lawyer, here in New Munich, and secretly made a will, giving to me the whole Swartz estate except fifty thousand dollars

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which he kept back for his family—explaining why he did so. This will the young lawyer, bound to secrecy, was asked to withhold unless I came to claim my own. Your father then wrote to me at the address of the people with whom, thirty years before, he had left me. He sent papers and letters identifying me, a written obligation to pay me seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars, a copy of his secret will, a statement as to his entire transaction in defrauding me, and a request that I come East, make myself known to the young lawyer who held the secret will and claim my property. If I never turned up, your father's earlier will, leaving everything to your mother, was to stand—unless his children chose to break it. Now, as I had gone away at the age of sixteen, from the family with whom I had been left, it was not until two months after your father's death that his letter and documents found me.

“When I came here to investigate things, I—well, you all know what happened to me—I promptly fell in love with Stella. So I decided to settle here and probably never tell you this story and never claim my own. No doubt, if your mother had made a just division of the estate, you never would have learned what I have told you to-day. But to stand aside and see such injustice—to see what is really mine passed over to an Englishman who hopes to enrich himself through marriage—well, no use going into that! I shall now do what

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I came to New Munich to do—take over my property and divide it equally among us four.”

He paused, and for a moment no one broke the silence. Then Stella, turning her white face to Mr. Ranck, spoke huskily: “He can’t do this, can he? Even supposing his story is true, he can’t take my whole fortune from me! Surely he can’t?” she passionately demanded.

“Stella!” cried Harry, his face crimson, “don’t make us blush to own you as we must to own our father!—to think that you’d suggest *continuing* to so deeply injure Mr. Phelps after all the wrong he has already suffered at father’s hands!—and this in the face of such an unusually generous proposition as he holds out to us all! Mr. Phelps!” Harry turned to him. “I speak for Gertrude as well as for myself in refusing, though with the deepest appreciation of your generosity, to take another dollar of the money that is all yours.”

“Alfred!” cried Stella, “tell me that this thing cannot be done!—that I have some rights, even if my father did do wrong!”

“It all depends upon the sort of proofs Mr. Phelps can show, Stella. I am afraid, knowing Mr. Phelps to be a man who usually understands what he is talking about, that he probably has a perfectly clear case against the estate. It looks a bit that way.”

The hopeless finality of this from Alfred Ranck left Stella stricken and horrified. She felt her self-control leaving her and she realised that too much

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was at stake for her to risk remaining another moment in David's presence. She must get away alone, get herself in hand, think out what she must do under this utterly confounding turn of affairs, to avert the ruin of all which, with such infinite pains and patience, she had accomplished.

She turned abruptly to leave the room. And as David stepped forward to open the door for her, she lifted beautiful eyes swimming in tears to his grave face, then sobbed heart-brokenly into her handkerchief as she passed him by.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was a new experience to Stella Swartz to find herself more afflicted by some one's bad opinion of her than by the foiling, in any least degree, of her ambition. Alone in her room, prone on her bed in an abandonment of trouble, she realised that her paramount grief was not for the prospective loss of the fortune she had so schemed to possess—bitter as that was; but for the look of disillusionment in the eyes of the one and only man she had ever found irresistibly fascinating; his ideal of her shattered; his belief in and respect for her turned to contempt and aversion; his adoration to an indifference more deadly than hatred.

Of a truth her world was crumbling about her head: for if David carried out his threat of claiming the estate as his own and giving her only one-

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fourth of it, she could not, without making herself penniless, give to her foreign lover more than a small part of the sum he had cold-bloodedly named as his share of her marriage dowry; and she was far too worldly-wise to dream of jeopardising her own independence by making herself poor to enrich a husband.

“What shall I do about it?” she frantically asked herself.

Her *fiancé* was even now on the ocean *en route* for New York and would be with her in a few days. How could she bear the humiliation of having him reject her? She would not bear it. Some way must be found to avert it.

“I’ll wire to the steamer! I’ll tell him not to come here; that I’ve changed my mind and will not marry him! He will be the humiliated one, not I! He will not have a chance to throw me over first!”

A great relief and joy swept over her at the thought that by this step she could have back the lover for whom she yearned. She realised that until this moment she had not known how much she longed for him, nor how great had been her sacrifice to her ambition. Her blood throbbed, her nerves quivered, at the prospect of going to him and telling him she had been mistaken, that she loved him too well ever to marry any one else; that no sooner had she returned to him than she had known how impossible it was to her to give him up; that she

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had cabled at once to her English *fiancé* and told him she would not and could not marry him.

She could see in fancy David's studied indifference melt to his old passionate love for her and the grave melancholy of his eyes turn to exultant joy as he heard her confession; for she did not for a moment believe that his apparent indifference was anything more than a cloak for his wounded pride.

"After all," she thought, "could money and a great position give me half the real happiness I shall find with him?"

And then like an inspiration it came to her that she could make her returning to him depend on a certain condition—a condition which would restore to her all which for a dreadful hour she had thought lost; a condition which she was sure he would unhesitatingly accept.

Her face flushed and her eyes sparkled with renewed hope and eagerness as she reflected upon this new plan for her own aggrandisement. Without a moment's loss of time she rose, bathed her eyes, smoothed her hair, and went down stairs to the telephone to send her telegram to the incoming vessel which was bearing her confident and mercenary suitor to America. Then, going back to her room, she sat down before her writing desk and wrote a note to David asking him to call to see her that night.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

**I**N response to Stella's summons, Phelps presented himself at the Swartz home again that same evening at eight o'clock.

Stella, dressed beautifully in a soft, clinging black gown of crêpe de chine, cut low at her very white throat, was, he felt with something of his old thrill at her charm, "very stunning." Her manner, too, was disarming of his doubts as to her reason for summoning him—so pensive was her countenance, so dignified and quiet her bearing and tone, as she led him from the parlour to the more cozy library.

"I was confused this afternoon, David," she began in a tone of reserve and not at all as though pleading an excuse for herself, when they were seated before a crackling wood fire. "I did not realise all that you were telling me. When I thought about it and really grasped it,—the story of how you were defrauded by my unhappy father,—I wish to tell you, David, that I entirely agree with Harry and Gertrude—you must not give us a dollar of the estate."

David politely controlled his shock of surprise at this very unexpected speech.

"What's up now?" he wondered. "Have I been misjudging her?"

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“No,” he replied, shaking his head. “I don’t want all that money. I intend to persuade you all to let me divide it equally among us four.”

“David—please! It would scorch me to touch a dollar of it! I couldn’t bear it! And Gertrude and Harry feel just the same way. Our pride and self-respect, no less than our honour, will not suffer us to accept any further sacrifice from you after all the terrible wrong my father did to you! So, please put from you all idea of a division—for it would humiliate and shame us!”

Phelps was genuinely puzzled. The look of anxiety and distress in her eyes seemed very genuine. And yet—here she had been ready, a few hours ago, to take the whole fortune away from her brother and sister!—and now these unsurmountable scruples against accepting an arrangement to which the most perfectly upright person might reasonably agree.

“But, Stella, I feel that it is only right and fair that your father’s blameless children should not be the victims of his wrongdoing.”

“But when we all feel we can’t accept your offer, David, why should you force it on us?”

“Look at it this way—your father’s business acumen made my capital yield far more than it would have done in less skillful hands. His children are entitled, then, to the results of his skill.”

But Stella shook her head. “I appreciate your goodness, David—dear! But I cannot accept what you offer. And neither can Harry and Gertrude. Now,



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David, they are both, as you know, weak of resolution. Your sophistry about our right to part of the estate might possibly convince them—because, you see, they'd want to be convinced. So, I beg you, don't tempt them—don't persuade them to do violence to their own highest ideals—as they certainly would do if they accepted this money.”

“Their case is different from yours, Stella. You are about to marry a man who, presumably, can support you.”

“David,” she said earnestly, “this morning I wired the ship on which Sir Cecil Royle arrives in New York next Wednesday, telling Sir Cecil that he must not come here.”

For a time the silence between them was portentous. Stella's pensive, earnest face did not betray the fast beating of her heart. She was staking her all on this venture—and if it failed! But it must not fail! She had given up her Englishman; she had refused David's gift of an independent fortune; she had, she believed, persuaded him not to persist in offering one half of his estate to Gertrude and Harry. And now if he did not rise to her bait and ask her to renew their engagement; if he did not promise her that he would keep the entire Swartz estate and not give half of it away—she would be undone!

If he kept the estate, she, as his wife, would be pretty much where she had been before he had stepped in to smash all her prospects; for an Ameri-

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can wife, unlike an English one, practically, if not legally, owns and controls her husband's money. But if David did not fall in with her scheme? And if, in addition, taking her at her word, he did not insist upon thrusting upon her one fourth of the estate, but did give Gertrude and Harry each one fourth—how would her ambitions be wrecked! Never in her life had she felt herself in so tight a place! Breathlessly she waited for his response to the news she had just given him.

David, on his part, had no least suspicion of her deep scheming. He had too recently idealised this woman to be able to see in her, all at once, a Lucretia Borgia. He did half surmise that he was expected to rise nobly to the situation she had just presented to him—the breaking off of her engagement to the Englishman—

“It's getting to be a habit with you, Stella—breaking your marriage engagements!”

“A bad and dishonourable habit, you think, of course! But in the case of Sir Cecil, I had no compunctions.”

“Of course not.”

A moment's silence. Then Stella—“But in your case, dear David—” she raised her eyes and looked at him pleadingly. “I never said I had ceased to love you!”

“If you had,” he answered gravely, “I would not have suffered as I did—in the shattering of my ideal of you.”

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“We grow and learn by our mistakes, David! I have always been ambitious. I see now that I was ambitious for the wrong things.”

“Yes.”

“I am learning that true happiness does not come with money and place and the other worldly things that I so valued. And it is true happiness that I want! The happiness that I would so blindly have thrown away for those other paltry things!”

“And what is it that has taught you all this about ‘true happiness’?”

“David! The moment my eyes rested on you again when I came home, I knew where my happiness lay!”

“But—when did you cable to Sir What’s-his-name that you would not marry him? Not until after you had learned that you did not have his price?”

“Oh, David! How can you be so vulgar—so hard to me?”

“I gather that it is your idea now (Sir Cecil being out of the running) that you and I renew our engagement?”

“Can you forgive me, David, for making you, as you say, suffer for my blindness?”

“I have nothing to forgive, Stella.”

She looked at him doubtfully, not knowing how to interpret this ambiguous reply.

“As to your scruples about accepting one fourth of the factory estate—do I understand that your idea is for you and me to keep it all—and not—er—

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humiliate Harry and Gertrude by forcing any of it upon them?"

"My idea is for you to keep it all, David."

"As my wife, you would have no scruple against using it?"

"Only as your wife," she reassured him, "could I consent ever to take a penny of it."

"I see."

"On this point, David, Harry and Gertrude and I are in entire agreement."

"The difference being that Harry and Gertrude are not expecting to marry me."

"No," said Stella, smiling wanly.

"What would you say, Stella, if I told you that you are entirely mistaken about Harry and Gertrude; that I have persuaded them to accept one fourth of the estate?"

"It would not be right, David!" she said sharply, unable to keep from her tone a note of keen anxiety. "You ought not to pamper the natural weakness of both of them! Don't do it! It would not be for their best good! Surely you must see that it would not. Indeed, I could never consent to it!"

"You would not consent?"

"No, David!"

"Isn't your jurisdiction limited to your own case?"

"As the 'partner of your joys and sorrows,' David," she smiled, "would I not have some rights over your fortune?"

"But we are not married yet, are we? I expect

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to settle with Harry and Gertrude before that happy event."

"No, David!" she exclaimed, leaning forward in her chair and speaking with a repressed eagerness, her eyes flashing, her face crimson, "it is not to be thought of! Parting with four hundred thousand dollars to two perfectly irresponsible people like Gertrude and Harry! Where is your conscience, David dear?"

"Not yet in your keeping, Stella!"

"But I should feel the responsibility of countenancing such an act on your part, David, if we *are* ever to be married. And I cannot agree to it. If you do it, it will be absolutely against my sense of right and justice."

David was silent.

"Isn't that enough, for you, David?"

"You mean that if I go ahead and do it,—you'll again break off our engagement?"

"I mean that I would greatly doubt your love."

"Too much to trust yourself to me?"

"That is what I mean, David," she ventured.

"Ah, that is what I was waiting to hear from you. For seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars you'll marry me, but not for half that amount."

"It is a principle, not money, I am contending for."

"Is it? Well, Stella, not to prolong this discussion—I may as well tell you that I am going to marry Gertrude—if I can win her."

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Stella stared at him uncomprehendingly. "What?" she managed to inquire.

"You heard me."

"You are going to marry Gertrude!"

"If she'll have me."

"But—but you are betrothed to me, David!"

"That is interesting—but a bit inaccurate—eh?"

"Why—why, David, you are trifling with me!"

He smiled. "And you, Stella, juggling with your Englishman and me like pawns on a chess board!"

Stella's blazing gaze fell from his for an instant. But she rallied and in a voice freighted with sarcasm, asked, "Since when have you known you were in love with Gertrude?"

"Since the hour I discovered I was not in love with you. You want to know when that was? The morning your cable came announcing that you were bringing your mother home a helpless invalid—and Gertrude fainted in my arms—after first pouring out to me her anguish in a wild frenzy that showed you, Stella, stripped to the soul! When Gertrude fell into my arms, I knew what, during all those months of your absence, and of my close and sympathetic association with Gertrude, had happened to me!"

He paused, Stella stared at him stonily. After a moment he went on—speaking very deliberately and, as he felt, relentlessly.

"I know now, that my mental image of you, during those months away from you, had been

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gradually, almost imperceptibly, undergoing a change; that removed from the immediate effect of the charm you had for me, I was perceiving your actions stripped of all false halo and somewhat in their true import and that what I saw was slowly but surely,—” he paused, but added resolutely,—“disgusting me! And yet, when your letter came, casting me off, I suffered—for my new impressions of you were, up to that time, subconscious—I neither recognised nor understood them.”

“You understood them only when Gertrude showed me ‘stripped to the soul’?”

“Exactly.”

“I have Gertrude to thank, then, for robbing me of you—that she might win you for her lover! My sister false to me!”

“Tut, tut, Stella! Gertrude and I have never exchanged a word of love. We’ve not yet had a chance—I have so recently been engaged to you. But—”

“You speak of the long months of my absence and of your ‘close and sympathetic’ association with Gertrude!”

“And those months taught me that Gertrude is my true mate. I hope I shall be able to persuade Gertrude of that fact.”

Stella rose, looking very white. David also rose and picked up his hat from the library table.

“Since I find you so unworthy, David, of the fortune my father earned for you and which he so

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honourably (though I think most quixotically) returned to you,—since his reward for doing so is your jilting one of his daughters and inducing the other to behave in a dishonourable way to her sister—in view of these things I have no scruples whatever in consenting to a division of the estate.”

“I thought you would not have.”

“And I wish you would settle the whole miserable business as soon as possible so that I may go away and never see any of you again!”

“It may take me longer to persuade Harry and Gertrude than it has to persuade you, Stella, to accept the division.”

For answer Stella walked out of the room and left him alone.

“Game to the bitter end!” he reflected as he left the house. “One is moved to admire her splendid nerve! It’s Napoleonic! And her sophistry! It’s genius, nothing more nor less!”

But he was not without a sense of sadness that such talent, with the added gift of personal charm, should be so miserably misdirected.

Meantime, Stella alone in her room, was staring down into the abyss of failure into which her success in the schemes of her life had plunged her.

“Everything I planned I accomplished. And I am alone and have nothing. And Gertrude who never lifted a finger to get anything for herself, except a bit of college education, is having everything I worked for poured right into her lap!”



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She shudderingly covered her face with her hands as though to shut out the vision of her beaten and miserable self. Later that night, David and Gertrude alone together, looked, with their hands clasped, into their future.

“What a life we’ll have together, Gertrude! Our faces set against all that makes for our own comfort and security, we would suffer horribly, no doubt, if we each worked alone; suffer from all the ills that fall to the man or woman who does not prescribe to prevailing opinion—ostracism, poverty, loneliness, a loveless life. But having each other, we can never be lonely or really unhappy, Gertrude. And as for the rest, we may count the whole world well lost for the work to which we have set our hands.”

“And for the freedom to which we have dedicated our lives!” she added. “I’m not naturally brave, David; but with you at my side I shall be fearless to live out any truth I ever learn, no matter how unpopular it may be!”

“We may leave a more just and decent world for our children, dearest!”

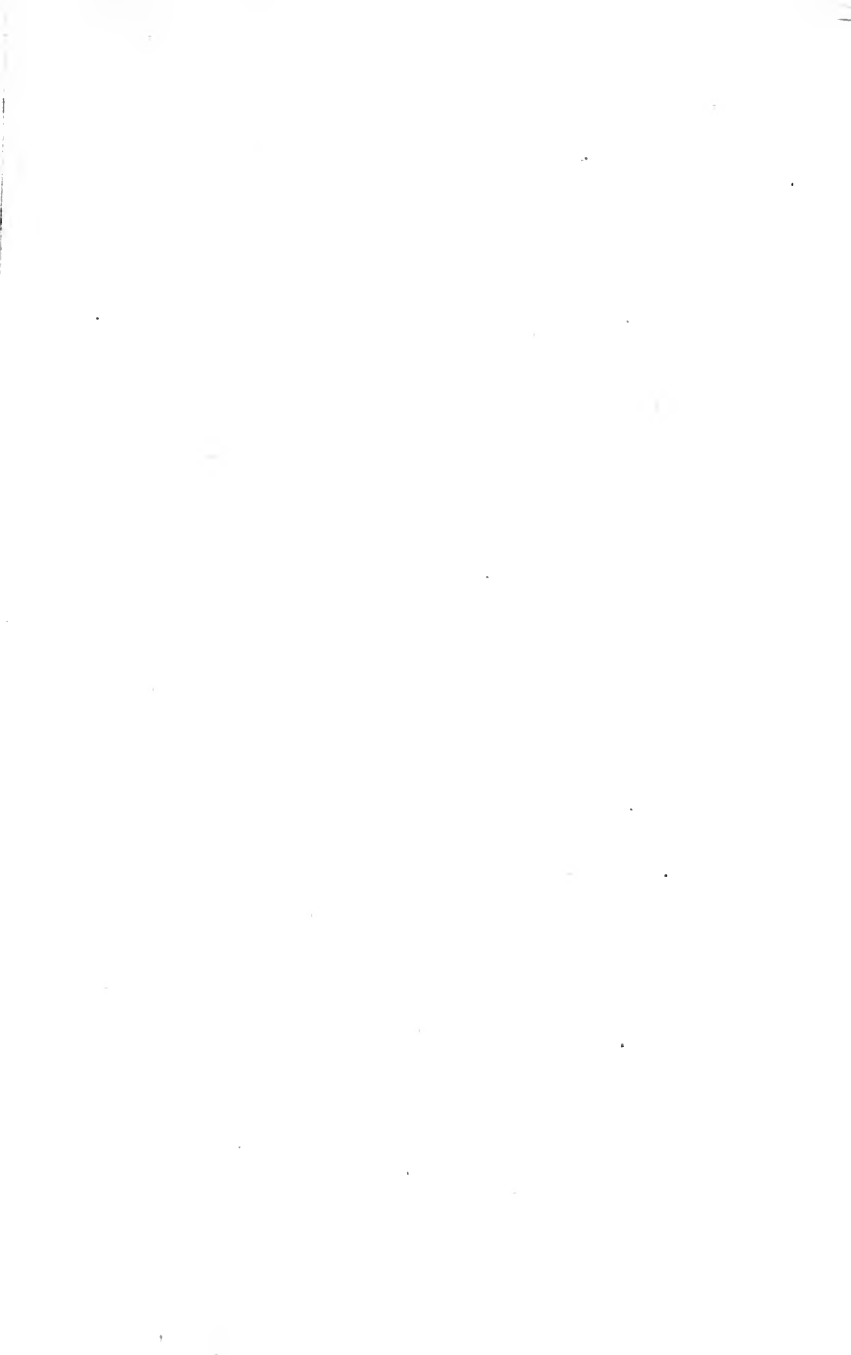
“And if we don’t, David, your children will, I know, be equipped well to go on with the fight you have waged!”

“And you will equip them,” he added, folding her to his heart, “with all that a woman’s love can give!”

THE END



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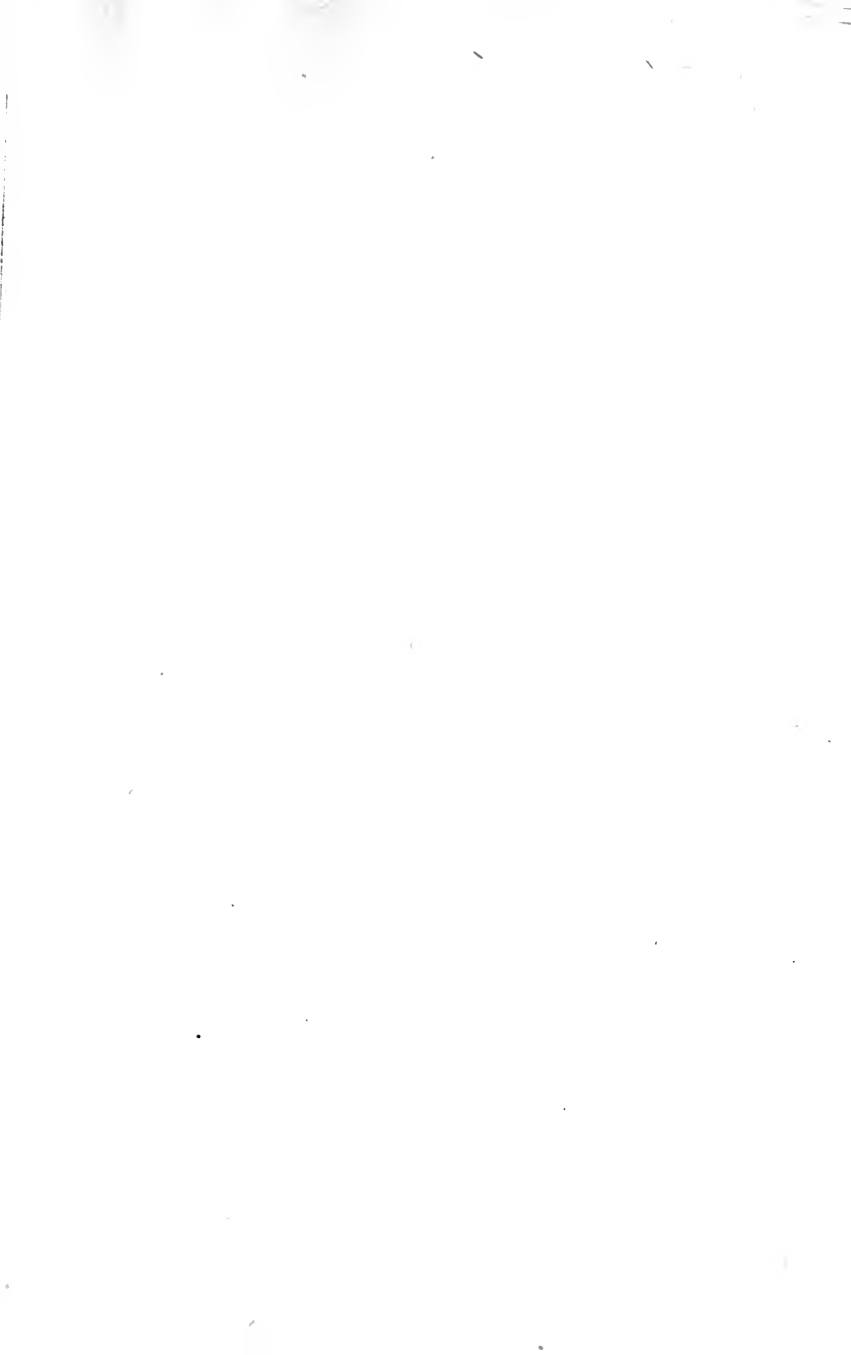












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