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LAROLA

By

HELEN L. WILLCOX



Missionary Education Movement of the
United States and Canada

156 Fifth Avenue

New York

□1917□

EDITOR'S NOTE

Most of the action of "Larola" is based upon fact. The relations between Larola and the Professor, and the suttee of the Professor's mother, as described in the play, are founded upon a true series of occurrences, the account of which may be found in *India: Its Life and Thought* by John P. Jones (page 259). The story of Lela and her part in the plot are fictitious.

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JUL 14 1917

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It is suggested that at least eight copies be secured to supply the participants.

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LAROLA

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

(*In the order of their appearance.*)

- ELINOR DAGGETT, wife of the missionary
WALTER DAGGETT, an American missionary in Palinow
NANAK, a servant in the Mission
MARNA, a Hindu Bible woman from Chaibassa; an old friend of Larola
LAROLA, a widow of Chaibassa
LELA, a young Brahman woman; wife of Chunder Mohan, who has become a Christian; a near neighbor of the missionaries
PROFESSOR BINDER SEN, of the General Assembly College, in Calcutta; a friend of the missionaries
A BRAHMAN WOMAN, a neighbor of the missionaries

Scene: *The living room of the mission bungalow at Palinow in Bengal, India. There are three doors; one at right back, leading to the outside door; one at left front, leading to Walter Daggett's study; and one at left back, leading to the inner parts of the house. There is a window at right. A table, on which are books and magazines, occupies the center of the room. Near it, at right front, is an easy chair. The furniture and ornaments should suggest India. There may be rich hangings on the walls, and an embroidered Indian cloth thrown over the table.*

Elinor Daggett sits in the easy chair, right front, reading. Presently she drops her book in her lap and gazes dreamily into the distance.

Walter Daggett enters, left front. He is dressed for the street and carries a sun hat.

WALTER

You—idle?—Sad? What is it, Elinor?

ELINOR

Oh, Walter, I am thinking of that wife of Chunder Mohan's! What a choice is hers! If loyal to her husband, she becomes as dead to all her family, all her caste; And if she yields to *their* entreaties—then Her husband must become as dead to her!

WALTER

Her problem is not hers alone; no Brahman Ever yet has come to Christ whose wife Had not to choose between her husband and— Her world.

ELINOR

But Lela is so young!

WALTER

I know.

She seems a child.

ELINOR

I wish that I could help!

WALTER

You love her, Elinor, and that is much.

ELINOR

(After a slight pause.)

You go to meet Professor Binder Sen?

WALTER

*(Nodding assent.)*It may be that he knows the youth; 'twas in
Calcutta Chunder Mohan found the truth.

ELINOR

Calcutta! True—I had forgotten that.
Oh, let us ask him! I should like to know
The husband worthy, 'ere I urge the wife.

NANAK

(Appearing at door, right back.)

The Bible woman from Chaibassa waits.

ELINOR

Bid her come in, Nanak.

(To Walter.)

Good-by, my dear.

WALTER

Good-by. We shall be here in half an hour.

*(Walter goes out, right back. Elinor rises and puts away her
book. Marna enters, right back, evidently excited. She
salaams hastily.)*

MARNA

Mem Sahib may recall—I told you of
A Brahman widow in Chaibassa who
Was very near decision for the Christ?

ELINOR

You mean—Larola? Has she—?

MARNA

She has come!

ELINOR

But what will happen, Marna? Is she safe?

MARNA

Her safety lies in flight, Mem Sahib. Watched,
And closely watched, for many a year, her fate,
If found in open avowal of her faith,
Would be severe.

ELINOR

(Eagerly.)

Will she come here, to us?

MARNA

Mem Sahib, she is not like others! She
Has read and thought and studied deeply.

ELINOR

But

Where is she, Marna?

MARNA

I may bring her in?

ELINOR

Yes, yes, if she is here! Risk no delay!

MARNA

(Starting to go and turning back.)

Professor Binder Sen—he comes to-day?

ELINOR

The Sahib has just gone to meet him now.
You know him, Marna?

MARNA

Many years ago—

(She breaks off suddenly and goes out, right back. Nanak enters quietly, but evidently suppressing some excitement. He looks out of the window, then turns to Elinor.)

NANAK

Mem Sahib, people come by scores, on foot,
And in their bullock carts, to see the rites
Performed at Chunder Mohan's funeral.

ELINOR

His funeral! Nanak! He is not dead?

NANAK

Not dead in body. Dead in soul—to all
Good Brahmans.

ELINOR

Ah! poor Lela! Then it is

Her fatal day of choice! And I can do
No more.*(Marna enters, followed by Larola, the widow of Chaibassa. Nanak slips out.)*

ELINOR

(Going to Larola and taking her hand.)

My sister, in the name of Christ

I welcome you. May he console your heart
For all that you forsake!

LAROLA

I thank Mem Sahib

Far more than I can say. But if to-day
You'd meet my heart in truest sympathy,
You must rejoice! Forsaking pain, despair,
Yearnings unutterable, and restless fears,
I come. These to forsake demands no pity.
It seemed to me the little birds along
The way sang pæans of victory, and all
For me! Nay, not alone for me! For Christ,
Because another soul is gathered in
His hand.

ELINOR

Indeed, we all rejoice.

(Elinor leads Larola to a chair. She and Marna also sit down.)

And you

Escaped detection in your flight?

LAROLA

It was
The day of all days for our purpose, was
It not, my faithful Marna? Oh, Mem Sahib,
If you but knew the loyalty and love
With which she has surrounded, guided, and
Encouraged me through all these days of doubt
And struggle!

ELINOR

I have guessed somewhat.

LAROLA

The flight
So feared and dreaded was no flight at all!
We left an empty bungalow where nought
But lizards chirping to themselves about the walls
Disturbed the silence of the rooms. Some feast—
A family day—a birth—a wedding—how
Should I, a widow, know the truth? It did
Not matter what the cause; enough to know
The house would be left empty, I alone.
And Marna, always there when needed, came
Upon the very day I heard the plans.
For, though we have been friends by stealth since they
Discovered Marna's change of faith, she seems
To know more than myself of what they do.

MARNA

There are some homes that do not shut me out—
And people talk of what your family does.

LAROLA

To her I whispered, "Lo, the hour has struck."
And so, we also made our plans. While all
The rest were climbing into bullock carts
Before the gate, I waited anxiously
Within the house for Marna, who at last
Came breathlessly across the fields—

MARNA

I saw
The carts go by, from where I lay, behind
Some bushes near the road. I knew 'twas safe.

ELINOR

And then—you walked the distance?

LAROLA

No!—We hid
Ourselves in a farmer's load of hay. He drove
A horse, and so we made the journey in
Three days.

MARNA

And passed the others jolting on
The road!

LAROLA

Were they, too, bound for Palinow?

ELINOR

The only gathering of which I know
In Palinow to-day is sad enough—
The funeral of a man who is not dead!
(*Marna looks anxiously toward Larola and speaks hastily, as
if to ward off further explanation.*)

MARNA

Perhaps they went beyond, to Sasseram,
Or even to Benares. Cousins of
The family live there, do they not?

LAROLA
(*Vaguely.*)

I do not know—I think so—I have not
Been there.

ELINOR

It is some months, I think, that you
Have been considering this step?

LAROLA
(*With an effort.*)

Mem Sahib,
Many a year ago I longed to come.
I cannot tell you how it happened that
I knew the Christ. That time is too far off!
No, no—I mean it is too near! I dare
Not—*must* not tell! It would bring back the fire
That only since I gave myself to Christ
Has ceased to scorch my soul.

(*Lela runs in and throws herself at Elinor's feet.*)

MARNA

(*Rising hastily as Lela enters.*)

Oh! Lela!

(*Elinor rises and tries to lift the girl.*)

LELA

I

Am lost! A widow! I must shave my hair!
They say I must become a widow—shave
My head and dress in white—give up my jewels—
They come from miles around to see the rites!
They say my lord is dead! He is not dead!
(*Larola has risen slowly, seeming fascinated by Lela. Marna
is watching her with interest and anxiety.*)

ELINOR

No, Lela! He is living—waiting for
His faithful wife to join him—him, and Christ.

LELA

(*Rising hopelessly.*)

Mem Sahib, they perform the funeral rites
To-day. I ran away to say farewell
To you, for nevermore shall you behold
The Lela whom you loved. To-day my lord
Becomes as dead to me and all my caste.

LAROLA

(*Starting forward.*)

To all your caste, my daughter—that may be.
But not to you—never to you, my child!
Your husband—has become—a Christian?

LELA

Yes.

LAROLA

Come with him! Listen!

(She hesitates, looking intently at Lela.)

Yes—to save your soul,

I'll tear my heart from out its hiding-place!

As many years ago as you have lived—

(She hesitates again.)

The fate that threatens you then came to me.

The funeral rites performed, my head was shaved,

My jewels torn away—but oh! the gems

They tore from off my arms and neck

Were nothing to the treasure wrenched from out

My heart! My spirit died within me.

LELA

(Gazing into her eyes.)

You—

But now—you are *alive*.

LAROLA

Ah! Now—I live

In Christ. But then—how can I make you know

What you must suffer, if you do this thing?

I saw *his* mother on the funeral pyre

Of her dead lord give up her life with joy,

In hope that they should meet in some hereafter.

Many a time I've longed—yearned, sobbing, for

The flames about my body, so my soul

Might join my lord's.

ELINOR

But—

LAROLA

No, I know they will

Not let us do it now. And they are right!

And yet my wish was innocent enough.

The blackness of the pit came afterwards!

He married. Then I knew that in my charred

And shriveled soul there lingered life enough

To hate. I wished her dead, at first, but that

Soon grew to be too easy an escape.

He was a rare, a wondrous soul; I hoped

At first, she could not understand and would

Not love him. Then my soul descended deep

And deeper into hell. I wished that she

Might suffer what I suffered then throughout

Eternity. I wished that even while

She loved him, she might know my soul possessed

His soul forever.

ELINOR

(Marveling and speaking almost unconsciously.)

You thought that?

LAROLA

Ah! yes,

I know, you think that is not Hindu. There

Are things in human hearts that burn beneath

All creeds the world around.

LELA

Your husband? Is

He dead?

LAROLA

He still is living—but of him
I cannot speak.

ELINOR

You had no child?

LAROLA

Yes, one—
Born after *he* had left us. But it died.
They said it was a girl; and I rejoiced
Then, and for years thereafter, that it had
Escaped the life of woman on this earth.
But now—ah, well!—to have a child, to love—
A daughter of my own, to teach, to lead
Into the life that's hid with Christ in God—
I have not dreamed a dream more wonderful.

ELINOR

(Softly.)

Nor I.

LELA

(Gazing at Larola.)

To have had you for a mother!

LAROLA

No.

My child, I was not worthy then to be
Entrusted with its little soul. At first,
I hoped that she—that other one—would have
No child! But afterwards—'twas strange!—I heard,
From time to time, news of that other home—
Marna has been there. When no children came,
I hated her the most of all for that!

LELA

Ah! Then you never knew true jealousy!

LAROLA

My child, true love is deeper, stronger than
The fiercest jealousy. It cannot be.
I think, that many souls, here even in
Our hot and passionate East, have suffered blasts
More withering in their heat of jealous hate
Than mine has bowed to, in those earlier years.
But love—what is it?—how to make you see!—
I tell you, the soul of the man is eternal joy!
It cannot be God gave that life to end
In one short cycle—three score years and ten!
God must have smiled when he had breathed that soul
From out his universal life, to dwell
In human form! To see that spirit live
Again—to know he had a son, who should
Be like him—this desire is to think
God's thought, and when it entered in, my heart
Grew large and quiet, and the jealous fire
Burned low and lower—but the change was slow.
And—there was loneliness.

ELINOR

(Both she and Lela have been hushed and awed.)

You never saw

Him afterwards?

LAROLA

Yes—once I saw him. But
 He did not know. 'Twas in a neighboring town—
 A moment only—chance had brought me there.
 Marna and I had gone on errands for
 My family. It happened he had come
 To teach the people in the market-place.
 I passed within ten feet of where he stood.
 I saw him smile. It was as it had been
 Long years before, like sunlight bursting forth
 At close of a dark day. Since then it brings
 A little comfort that I know the warm,
 Enfolding smile still beams on others, though
 I see it not.

LELA

(Brokenly.)

That would not comfort me!

LAROLA

Not now, my child.

(With great tenderness.)

And you will have no need.

I trust, of such sad comfort. You will find
 Your peace more easily.

A VOICE

(Calling, from off right.)

Oh, Lela! come!

LELA

(Frightened.)

My mother calls for me! I had almost
 Forgotten!

(To Larola.)

Oh! let me call you "mother" once,
 Before I go—

LAROLA

Before you go to say
 Farewell to *her*. Yes, now and afterwards,
 You may call me "mother," child. My little girl,
 If she had lived, would be about your age.

LELA

But there will be no afterwards! I dare
 Not break with her! I've feared her all my life.
 She filled my mind with terrors. They would leave
 Me never, if I dared to break caste! No!
 The farewell is to you—

(Turning to Elinor.)

And you, Mem Sahib!

THE VOICE

Lela! Lela!

LELA

(Starting up.)

I must go! Farewell!

*(She runs out. Elinor rises and starts forward, as if to follow
 her.)*

ELINOR

Lela!

LAROLA

(With a strange, calm certainty.)

Fear not! She will come back.

MARNA

(In a low, tense voice.)

She must!

ELINOR

(Wondering and doubtful.)

You think she will come back?

LAROLA

(Quietly.)

I know she will.

Else why should God have brought me here to-day?
 Mem Sahib, this that I have told has lain
 For years entombed within my heart. I did
 Not think I should have broken that reserve
 For any one. But when I saw this girl,
 So young, so tender, so in love with life—
 And with her lord—so near to ruin, through
 The fears they practise on the innocent,
 I knew at last that all my life might hold
 Of joy or sorrow, passion or regret,
 Longing or hope—all, all belonged to Christ!
 I could not give *myself* and keep *this* back,
 Since what I am, I am because of this.
 I thought to crowd the past into the years
 Gone by; to make myself a new, free life
 Which should be Christ's indeed. It is not thus
 God builds a human soul. We do not live
 In fragments. And the death of hopes may be
 The burial of the grain, which precludes life.

MARNA

(Who has been restlessly moving toward the door and looking out of the window.)

Mem Sahib, shall I go to find some news
 Of what is passing at the other house?

ELINOR

Oh, Marna, do!—It may be they will let
 You in. If you can speak with Lela, say
 We will protect her—keep her here until
 Her husband can be sent for.

MARNA

Yes, Mem Sahib.

She has more reason than she knows to come.

(She goes out hastily.)

ELINOR

(Moving quickly after her.)

You say—?

(Seeing that Marna is gone, pausing.)

I wonder what she meant by that.

(She passes behind Larola to the window, at right, and stands looking out while she speaks the next words.)

Oh—could we but delay the rites until
 Professor Binder Sen arrives! He has
 Such power with the people.

(Still looking from the window, Elinor does not perceive the effect of her words upon Larola, who rises with a start and shrinks, terror-stricken, away from Elinor, gazing at her in wide-eyed silence. Nanak appears at door, right back.)

ELINOR

Oh! Nanak!

What is it? Have you news?

(As Elinor steps back to speak with Nanak, she of course does not turn toward Larola, and Nanak is too much excited to notice her evident fright. While Elinor and Nanak are speaking, Larola looks furtively about for a means of escape and finally tries the door of Walter's study, right front. When she finds that it will open, she turns back to listen, leaning heavily on the door, as if about to fall.)

NANAK

They say the girl

Resists! The servants heard her scream. She dare
Not long delay! 'Twill soon be over, Think!
Her caste, her vixen of a mother, priest,
And all the town! One girl against the lot!

ELINOR

No! Not one girl, for Christ is at her side,
And all his love for India fights for her!
Is it not so—?

(She turns to appeal to Larola, and seeing her almost fainting at the study door, starts forward in amazement and alarm.)

What—what is wrong? You're ill!

LAROLA

(Turning from the door and trying to stand straight, but swaying a little and speaking with great difficulty.)

No! I must go! But not the road! Is there
A hidden path, behind the compound?

ELINOR

(In utter bewilderment.)

But—

(Marna enters hastily, right back, and Nanak slips out.)

Oh, Marna! What is this? Your friend is ill!

MARNA

(Looking at Larola.)

She knows! You told her?

ELINOR

Told her—what?

MARNA

That he

Was coming?

ELINOR

Who—Professor Binder Sen?

MARNA

(Starting forward, as if to stop Elinor from speaking.)

Oh, hush!

(As Elinor turns in wonder from Marna to Larola, the latter gains command of herself and says, in a low, intense voice, but with a touch of dignity, and even pride.)

LAROLA

He is—my husband.

ELINOR

He—the man?

Marna! You knew of this?

MARNA

(Falling on her knees before Larola.)

Forgive me! I

Thought only of your happiness.

LAROLA

(Just touching Marna's bowed head with her hand.)

My friend,

You meant no harm. But happiness lies not
That way. Will you go hence with me?

MARNA

(Rising and turning to Elinor.)

Mem Sahib—

Tell her! She does not know— She has not heard
Of him in years—forbade my speaking—and
I dared not tell.

ELINOR

You mean she does not know—

*(She looks inquiringly at Marna, then draws a quick breath,
goes to Larola, and speaks very slowly and tenderly.)*My dear—he has no longer any wife—
But you.

LAROLA

No wife! She has not—?

ELINOR

She is dead.

*(Larola draws a deep breath, then bows her face on Elinor's
shoulder. Elinor puts her arms about her, and they stand
so for a moment, Marna watching anxiously.)*

LAROLA

*(Drawing away from Elinor and speaking with entire self-
possession.)*

Come, Marna! We must go at once. Which door—?

MARNA

(Turning wildly to Elinor.)

Mem Sahib! Will you let it end this way?

ELINOR

Larola! Stay!

LAROLA

No!—since, to him, the past—

May be the past, indeed. I'll keep my dreams!
(Voices are heard, off right.)

MARNA

It is too late! They're here!

LAROLA

(Wildly.)

Mem Sahib! Hide,

Oh, hide me!

ELINOR

*(Pointing to the door, left back.)*Marna, take her there! You know
The way—my little sewing-room.

LAROLA

(Who has moved quickly to the door at the first words, calling to Marna.)

Oh, come!

(Larola goes out, followed closely by Marna. Elinor stands undecided for a moment, turning from one door to the other. Just as the voices are heard clearly at the door, at right back, she hurries out, left back. Walter and Professor Binder Sen enter, right back, followed by Nanak, to whom Walter hands a bag, cloak, and other articles.)

WALTER

Nanak, take these—and find your mistress, please.
Tell her our guest is come.

(Nanak bows and goes out, left back, leaving the door ajar. Walter turns to the Professor, who seems absorbed in thought, but always courteous.)

She will be glad,

Indeed, Professor, once again to see
You here. We have not ceased to talk of your
Last visit.

PROFESSOR

(Smiling.)

No? Nor I to think of it!

WALTER

(Indicating the easiest chair.)

This chair, Professor, suits you, I recall.

(The Professor, with a smile and nod of thanks, sits in the chair indicated, while Walter draws a lighter one nearer and sits down. He goes on speaking more seriously, as though reverting to a conversation already begun.)

And so you know the man—this Chunder Mohan!

PROFESSOR

(Speaking with an evident reserve.)

I know him well—he was my pupil once.

WALTER

(Looking hard at the Professor for a moment, as if trying to penetrate his reserve.)

You are assured—of his sincerity?

PROFESSOR

(After a perceptible pause, drawing a long breath and beginning to speak with an effort.)

None question that! His character is high—
Above reproach. Indeed, of all the boys
I've taught and loved, perhaps I loved him most.

WALTER

How glad my wife will be!

(Looking anxiously toward door, left back.)

I wonder what

Is keeping her so long away.

(He starts to rise, but at a slight gesture from the Professor, he glances at his face and sinks back into his chair, wonderingly.)

PROFESSOR

My friend,
I must be frank with you! Your tale has stirred
The deeps of life which lie so far removed
In the long past, that most of those who know
Me now have never guessed them. But to-day,
Somehow, a strange sense comes to me that this
Far distant past is here again. The fate
Of Chunder Mohan brings it close.

WALTER

(With great respect and affection.)

I would

Not willingly have caused you pain!

(The Professor turns to Walter with a smile of tender friendship, puts out his hand and clasps Walter's for a moment, then continues, still with evident effort.)

PROFESSOR

You may

Have wondered at my bitterness toward caste—
That iron cage which closes by degrees
Upon its victims, bound in self-deceit!
Here is the reason. Many years ago,
Before I gave myself to Christ, a wife
Was mine—heart's comrade of the earliest years
Of manhood—such a comrade as your own
Sweet lady is to you! 'Twas not alone
I took those first bold steps toward truth and freedom;
She was with me then. We read and talked
Together; saw the vision of the Christ,
And what his love would do for India.
So far we went together—on the last,
Hard day, I stood alone! She loved me—oh,
I am sure of that! She honored Christ. But on
The eve of victory, she turned away.
The iron gates of caste had clanged between.
(He rises and moves about restlessly under the strong excitement of the memory.)

I knew that I should be forsaken by
My caste, my family, my friends my world—
But *that!*—I had not dreamed of that. I thought
We were irrevocably one! My wife
Became a widow—joined the others in
The funeral rites—for me, who lived and loved
Her!

(He stands silent with bowed head for a moment, and Walter goes to him and takes his hands.)

WALTER

Oh, my friend! I had not known—or guessed—

PROFESSOR

Nor have I ever told so much before
To human friend.

(After a moment's pause, he turns away and sits again.)

I thought, at length I could,
Perhaps, forget. I found a Christian wife.

(Turning appealingly to Walter.)

You saw our home—did it not seem to you
A happy one?

WALTER

My wife and I have more
Than once recalled the peace, the harmony,
And gentle courtesy which made your house
A haven of relief and rest.

PROFESSOR

(With a deep sigh.)

I'm glad

It should be so remembered. But—my friend—
Yes, I will make a full confession now!
I found, as time went on, although I tried
To give my heart's full homage to my wife—
My faithful wife!—my soul grew nearer still,
And nearer to—that other one. 'Twas pride
That made me think I could forget. But love
Roots deeper in the heart than pride. Do you—
Ah, yes, I am a Christian!— But at times
I wonder if you westerners have dreamed
Of woman's love like that of Hindu wives!

(He is walking up and down the room and now turns suddenly upon Walter, who is seated again, drawing close to him silently, and seeming to hold him by his gaze, until he is almost bending over him. He speaks in a low, tense voice.)

When I was six years old, my father died.
I saw my mother walk seven times around
The funeral pyre—then they put the torch
Into this hand—so small it scarce could lift
The weight—and when my mother laid her down
Beside the body of her lord—I gave
The fire that released her soul—to be

With his forever.

(Walter has risen slowly, his eyes riveted on the Professor's with a sort of terrified fascination.)

Yes—you shrink—turn pale

With horror. Do you know, in all my life
I have not seen a look of triumph so
Complete, joy so exultant, as I saw
When last I looked upon my mother's face.

WALTER

(As if breaking from a spell.)

But—that—is—ended—now!

PROFESSOR

(Bowing his head.)

Hers was the last

Suttee permitted under British rule—
And they were right to end it! But I know
That first, true wife of mine would so have gone
To death for me. And love which follows man
To death must live beyond it.

(Elinor enters quietly, left back, pauses a moment, and so hears the Professor's last words, unnoticed by him or Walter.)

I know not

If yet that comrade of my spirit lives.
But hope grows stronger through my lengthening years
That in the life to come we shall not fail
To find each other—no, nor she to find

The Christ—and there, before his throne, we'll join
In worship and in service, as we dreamed.

*(There is a moment's hush; then Elinor comes swiftly down
to the Professor and takes his hand in both of hers, speak-
ing very tenderly, with tears in her voice.)*

ELINOR

Professor—friend—you will not need to wait
For that. She is alive!

PROFESSOR

(With a great start.)

My wife?—you know?

ELINOR

And more than that—she is a Christian.

PROFESSOR

Ah!

ELINOR

Your faith in her is justified—and in
Her love.

PROFESSOR

She loves me still?

ELINOR

*(Standing with bowed head for an instant, then seeming to
speak to herself more than to the Professor, with humility.)*

Her love—for you—

Is wonderful!

*(She looks up suddenly at Walter in a half-timid, half-appealing
way, and goes to him. The Professor is silent for a
moment, then turns to Elinor with great simplicity.)*

PROFESSOR

Where is my wife?

ELINOR

She is

Within the house. She knows that you are here,
But dares not come to you. She did not know
Until to-day that you—were left alone.

PROFESSOR

(To Walter.)

I have revealed to you my inmost heart!
Need she have any fear to come to me?

WALTER

(Brokenly, to Elinor.)

Tell her—my dear—to come!

ELINOR

(Glancing about the room.)

Your study, dear, would be the best. Let him
Go in and wait there. I will bring her soon!

*(She starts to leave the room quickly, but pauses as she passes
the Professor, looks searchingly into his face for a moment,
then takes his hand impulsively and bows her head over it
for an instant, as if in homage. She goes out.)*

WALTER

(Indicating the study door, at left front.)

Will you go in, Professor?

(Starting to move toward the door, the Professor pauses suddenly, and at his exclamation, Walter, who is just passing him to open the door, turns back)

PROFESSOR

Wait! My friend,

I had not thought— I am no longer young!
 It may be she will think to find—the man
 I was!

WALTER

If it be so, she will but learn,
 True manhood grows more beautiful with years.
(He turns to the door, opens it, and waits for the Professor to pass in. The Professor seems lost in thought for a moment, then perceives that Walter is waiting for him and passes slowly to the threshold, where he turns back once more and speaks hesitatingly and with an almost boyish diffidence.)

PROFESSOR

Would you—not better—tell her—I am old?

WALTER

(Smiling at the Professor.)

And have her put no faith in any word
 Of mine forever? No! I wish your wife
 To be my friend, Professor.

PROFESSOR

(Smiling fondly, murmurs.)

Foolish boy!

(He goes into the study. Walter closes the door, then turns away and listens for a moment, with his eyes on the door, left back. Then he walks restlessly across to the window, at right, and stands looking out absently for a moment. Suddenly he starts forward and gazes intently. Nanak enters, right back, and Walter speaks to him in low, quick tones without turning away from the window.)

WALTER

Nanak! There is a gathering next door?

NANAK

(Who is fairly bursting with news.)

Yes, Sahib—Chunder Mohan's funeral!

WALTER

(With a start.)

You mean—his caste disowns him?

NANAK

That they do!

And like enough his wife will be disowned
 As well—so things look now!

WALTER

Why, what has passed?

Tell all you know, Nanak, and quickly!

NANAK

Sahib,

I know but little, only Lela came
 While you were gone, and this strange widow from
 Chaibassa—Marna brought her—so prevailed upon
 The girl that now she will not let them shave
 Her head—they tried to force her, and we heard
 Her screams!—she vows that she is Chunder's wife
 Now and forever—begs to be let go!

WALTER

(Striding up and down in helpless rage.)

And they are holding her? Is there no law?

(Stops suddenly.)

The widow from Chaibassa—?

(Looking toward the study door.)

That must be—

NANAK

I know not, Sahib, who she is, but this I know—
 That Marna has some secret. Such an air
 Of mystery! She whispered in my ear
 In passing, just outside, before you came—
 "Nanak! We must delay the rites—and save
 The girl—for her!" I know not what she meant.

WALTER

(Absently.)

Nor I. But—what to do? I cannot break
 The spell of this reunion—now!

(Suddenly going to the window again.)

Nanak!

It may be you can gain me entrance there!
 I'll do what can be done to stay their hands,
 Until Professor Binder Sen—is free.

*(Elinor's voice is heard at left back, and Walter, with a glance
 in that direction and toward the study door, motions to
 Nanak to follow him, and goes out, right back, Nanak fol-
 lowing. Elinor enters, leading Larola and talking gently
 to her. Marna follows.)*

ELINOR

Larola—dear! If you had seen his face!
 And heard his tones! I've told—or tried to tell
 You what he said. His voice—and eyes—you must
 Know better than my words can tell.

LAROLA

(Drawing a sharp breath and speaking in a hushed voice.)

But that

Was long ago! Amid his loneliness,
 His dreams reach back to earlier years; he thinks
 Of me—as young—and beautiful. Ah, well!
 You wonder, but—he thought me beautiful.

ELINOR

(Gazing at her.)

I wonder—yes! I wonder—could it be
 You were more beautiful in youth than now!

'Tis not mere dreams to which his heart turns back.
It is the spirit of you that he loves—
And he will wake to find you beautiful
Beyond his dreams!

(Larola is silent, wondering, and Elinor goes to the study door, puts her hand on the knob, and turns back to Larola. Marna meanwhile crosses to the window and eagerly looks out. Elinor holds out her hand pleadingly to Larola, and when Larola looks toward her, she speaks softly.)

ELINOR

Larola—come!

(Larola goes slowly toward her, takes her hand, and looks into her face, as if to gain courage; then Elinor opens the door part way, and Larola drops her hand, and after one more instant of hesitation, goes into the study. Elinor closes the door quickly but quietly and goes to Marna.)

ELINOR

(Her voice is thrilled with awe and tenderness.)

They are

Together, Marna! And you knew!

(Remembering suddenly.)

You knew—

That he was coming here to-day!

MARNA

(Though she speaks in a lowered tone, she seems to be under an increased tension.)

I heard

It from a Bible woman in Calcutta.
Often she wrote to give me news of him—
For her sake—though I dared not speak! I, too,
Have had my dreams!

ELINOR

(Wondering.)

You dreamed of—*this?*

(Glancing toward the study door.)

MARNA

Of this—

And more! Mem Sahib, I believe, for most
Of us, the hope of heaven is far more
Than we deserve! But some brave souls—and *she*
Is one!—have lived *through* earth to heaven! Oh!
If you had watched her growing calm and strong,
Serene and pure, loving amidst the ones
Who did her wrong—you'd know that happiness
Will never spoil her now!

ELINOR

You love her!

MARNA

Ah!

(Looking out of the window again, with sudden fierceness.)

They did her wrong! More than she knows—or I
Can prove, as yet.

(She suddenly starts forward, in strong excitement.)

Oh! Lela has escaped!

(Elinor looks from the window. She is down stage from Marna.)

ELINOR

She's coming here! Oh, Marna! Quick! The door!
(They both start to open the door, but Nanak throws it open and rushes in.)

NANAK

Mem Sahib! Lela is outside! She comes—

LELA

(Running in and throwing herself into Elinor's arms.)
 I come to you, Mem Sahib! Save me! She
 Will try to drag me back—back to their chains!

ELINOR

(Drawing Lela down stage.)

No! You are free!

(Walter comes in quickly, and Nanak closes the door as soon as he is inside, and stands with his back against it. Marna follows Elinor and Lela down, at right. Walter comes down left.)

LELA

(Trying to steady herself, drawing a great breath.)

I have chosen Christ—and him—

My husband!

(There is a sudden attempt to enter the door that Nanak is holding, and then a great pounding on it, and a fierce, shrill cry from without, Nanak meanwhile holding the door with all his might.)

BRAHMAN WOMAN'S VOICE

Open! Let me in!

WALTER

Nanak!

We must bar no one out! Let her come in!

(Nanak, after an instant's hesitation, lets go the door with a shrug of disgust. Lela at the same instant falls on her knees, clinging to Elinor. The Brahman Woman enters and crosses to within a little distance from Walter, after assuring herself by a glance that Lela is there. She speaks with shrill contempt.)

BRAHMAN WOMAN

You think you would have need of bars to keep
 A Brahman woman—from your house accursed?
 No power could have dragged me to pollute
 Myself by entering, unless that child

(Pointing fiercely to Lela, who shrinks closer to Elinor. She addresses her next words to the latter, moving toward her.)

Had been entrapped and led astray by your
 Deceitful wiles!

(She stands threateningly over Lela, who is between her and Elinor, still clinging desperately to the latter.)

Now, girl, I've tracked you down

To your low, outcast haunt—you'll come with me!

(She starts to lay forcible hands on Lela, who screams and jumps to her feet, as Elinor draws her away. Walter steps forward quickly.)

WALTER

Woman! It is our duty to protect
This girl, who, in this room, a moment since,
Declared herself a Christian.

BRAHMAN WOMAN

(With a scream of rage.)

Ah!

WALTER

*(Speaking with an energy and determination that crows the
woman's bravado.)*

Unless

Before the law you prove your right, we shall
Not suffer that a Christian man and wife
Be parted 'gainst their will! What is your claim?

BRAHMAN WOMAN

*(Evidently seeing that her case is lost, but raging at defeat,
bitterly.)*

My claim? My claim is that I've wasted half
A life-time over that ungrateful wretch!

*(Pointing at Lela, who has taken heart at Walter's words, but
shrinks back at the woman's bitter scorn.)*

I might have known the taint of Christian blood
Could not be purified!

*(Walter and Elinor lean forward with breathless interest.
Nanak, in the background, takes a step forward. Marna,
who has all this time been watching the scene with intense
absorption, puts her hand to her breast with a great gasp
of relief. No one notices her, however. Lela moves a
little forward, away from Elinor's protecting arm, becoming
fearless in her amazement.)*

LELA

(Slowly and wonderingly.)

Of—Christian—blood?

BRAHMAN WOMAN

(More and more bitterly.)

Since that has proved the stronger in the end—
Stronger than all the care and pains I've spent
To make a Brahman of you—save you from
Your fate—you'd better know the truth. No child
Of mine are you!

LELA

(Dazed.)

You're not my mother, then?

BRAHMAN WOMAN

Ha! You are glad? And so am I! Glad
To be free from fear of that disgrace I knew
You'd bring upon us in the end!

LELA

But how—?

BRAHMAN WOMAN

(Rapidly.)

How was it that I stooped to call you mine?
 I'll tell you! *She*—your mother—had been led
 Astray, as you have been. Her husband left
 His caste—his family—to follow these
 False teachers from the west!

(Indicating Walter with a contemptuous gesture.)

LELA

(Moving farther forward in eager wonder.)

My father—was—

A Christian?

BRAHMAN WOMAN

(Thrown into fresh rage by the awed gladness in Lela's voice and face.)

On the day when he disowned
 His faith, he *died*—to all good Brahmins! Yes,
 And to your mother, too, for she was true—
 True, outwardly, at least, to faith and caste.
 When you were born, she was a widow.

(Elinor suddenly looks toward Marna, and seeing the intense joy and satisfaction in her face, stretches out her arms impulsively toward Lela, but draws back as the woman goes on speaking, and waits, breathing hard, and poised as if for a quick movement forward.)

But

Her family—hers and mine, I almost shame
 To say—for we are cousins—

LELA

(With a quick, low cry.)

"Are"? Oh, then,

My mother is *alive*?

BRAHMAN WOMAN

(Impatiently, as if wishing she could withdraw her words.)

Alive or dead,

I know not! But they feared she had been led
 So far by her apostate husband that
 It was not safe to trust your bringing up
 To her. She would have filled your infant soul
 With poison! As for me—the only child
 I ever had was born and died upon
 The day when *she* gave birth to you.

(Her voice becomes less harsh.)

They brought

You here—some three days' journey—told
 Her you were dead. She never doubted—was
 Too ill for days to care for anything.

MARNA

(Suddenly losing control of herself, in a loud voice.)

She never doubted? No! There is not guile
 Enough in that pure soul to dream of such
 Black devil's work!

(Starting toward study door.)

Larola!

(The Brahman Woman gives a great start and shrinks back, gazing at the study door as if expecting to see a ghost. Lela is too dazed to move. There is a breathless hush for a moment, all gazing toward the study door. The door is opened from within, and Professor Binder Sen and his wife appear. At sight of them, the Brahman Woman falls back, gasping for breath. Lela unconsciously brings her hands together as in an attitude of prayer and gazes with a reverential awe at Larola. No one speaks. The Professor and his wife come into the room and stand waiting, at left front.)

BRAHMAN WOMAN
(Struggling for breath)

'Tis a plot!

(Turning to Elinor.)

You brought them here—to take my child from me!

(To Walter.)

Oh, pity! Sahib! She is *mine*! Since her
Third day, I've nursed her, clothed her, cared for her—
And loved her! Surely mine is greater right
Than *hers*—

(Pointing toward Larola.)

Who only gave her life!

LAROLA

(Moving a step forward, gazing at Lela with an absorbed wonder and inability to believe the truth entirely. She speaks low and wonderingly.)

My child?

My daughter?

(Lela starts to move quickly to Larola, but the Brahman Woman steps forward and intervenes.)

BRAHMAN WOMAN

Wait!

(Grasping Lela's arm, she turns to Walter.)

Sahib—you talk of law—

Is *this* your law? To let a child forsake
A mother who has loved her all her life
For one who never looked upon her face
Until this moment? Say!

LAROLA

(Seeming hardly to hear the woman's voice.)
My baby? You?

PROFESSOR

(Softly.)

I never knew—

WALTER

(Answering the woman.)

It is for her to choose.

Lela must choose herself which one shall be
Her mother now.

(The woman takes a firmer grip of Lela's arm.)

And she must be left free

To make her choice alone!

(The woman unwillingly releases her hold and draws back a little, awed, in spite of herself, by Walter's tone of authority. Lela, after a barely perceptible pause, goes to Larola with not even a backward look. She moves slowly, but as if in reverence, not in doubt. Larola takes a step forward to meet her and folds her in her arms. Lela's head rests on her bosom, and Larola bows her own over it. There is silence for a moment. The Professor stands with bowed head; Walter, also. Elinor, Marna, and Nanak are all watching the Brahman Woman, who follows Lela's movements tensely until she is in Larola's arms, then turns away in evident despair and moves uncertainly toward the door, right back. Nanak quietly goes to the door and holds it open. The woman turns just as she reaches the door, holds her arms out blindly for an instant toward Lela, then, drawing her chudder over her face with a gesture of despair, she goes out. Nanak goes out after her, closing the door softly. Elinor breathes a sigh of relief, and Walter looks up, sees that the woman is gone, and crosses to Elinor's side. Lela lifts her head and looks into Larola's face.)

LELA

(Softly.)

You, then, are twice

My mother!

LAROLA

(Taking Lela's face between her hands and marveling over her.)
You!

LELA

You are the mother of
My soul! This very hour, but for you,
I had been lost. You saved me! As I give
Myself to Christ, I dedicate to you
The years to come.

LAROLA

(Turning to the Professor, happily.)

And to your father, child!

(The Professor has moved behind them until, when Larola speaks, he is a little to the right of Lela, as she turns to him, and a little up stage, so that the three are partly facing Elinor and Walter. Lela turns to the Professor and puts out her hand slowly, looking wonderingly into his face. He takes her hand in both of his and draws closer to her. Lela's other arm is around Larola. Larola looks from one to the other.)

LAROLA

We three—together!

PROFESSOR

We shall join, on earth,
In worship, and in service, as we dreamed.

WALTER

(Stepping forward with hand outstretched to the Professor, joyfully and solemnly triumphant.)

So, once again, Christ breaks the bonds of caste!

(The Professor takes his hand, but without dropping Lela's.)

ELINOR

(Starting to join the group, but pausing, looking straight out, and speaking as if she had seen a sudden vision.)

So shall all India be free—at last!

THE END.

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