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RATHBEN NORRIS



Photo by Arnold Genthe

KATHLEEN NORRIS

THE WORKS OF
KATHLEEN NORRIS

MOTHER

THE TREASURE



VOLUME
I

GARDEN CITY NEW YORK
DOUBLEDAY PAGE & COMPANY
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Gift
Publisher
Feb 24 1921

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To
J. E. T. AND J. A. T.

As years ago we carried to your knees
The tales and treasures of eventful days,
Knowing no deed too humble for your praise,
Nor any gift too trivial to please,
So still we bring, with older smiles and tears,
What gifts we may, to claim the old, dear right;
Your faith, beyond the silence and the night,
Your love still close and watching through the years.

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with all good wishes,
Kathleen Norris.

THE WORKS OF
KATHLEEN NORRIS

MOTHER

MOTHER

CHAPTER I

WELL, we couldn't have much worse weather than this for the last week of school, could we?" Margaret Paget said in discouragement. She stood at one of the school windows, her hands thrust deep in her coat pockets for warmth, her eyes following the whirling course of the storm that howled outside. The day had commenced with snow, but now, at twelve o'clock, the rain was falling in sheets, and the barren schoolhouse yard and the playshed roof ran muddy streams of water.

Margaret had taught in this schoolroom for nearly four years now, ever since her seventeenth birthday, and she knew every feature of the big bare room by heart, and

every detail of the length of village street that the high, uncurtained windows commanded. She had stood at this window in all weathers: when locust and lilac made even ugly little Weston enchanting, and all the windows were open to floods of sweet spring air; when the dry heat of autumn burned over the world; when the common little houses and barns, and the bare trees, lay dazzling and transfigured under the first snowfall, and the wood crackled in the schoolroom stove; and when, as to-day, mid-winter rains swept drearily past the windows, and the children must have the lights lighted for their writing lesson. She was tired of it all, with an utter and hopeless weariness. Tired of the bells, and the whispering, and the shuffling feet, of the books that smelled of pencil-dust and ink and little dusty fingers; tired of the blackboards, cleaned in great irregular scallops by small and zealous arms; of the clear-ticking big clock; of little girls who sulked,

are, twenty-three or four," Mrs. Porter smiled.

"Yes, but he's not the kind that forgets!" Margaret's flush was a little resentful. "Oh, of course, you can laugh, Emily. I know that there are plenty of people who don't mind dragging along day after day, working and eating and sleeping—but I'm not that kind!" she went on moodily. "I used to hope that things would be different; it makes me sick to think how brave I was; but now here's Ju coming along and Ted growing up, and Bruce's girl throwing him over—it's all so *unfair*! I look at the Cutter girls, nearly fifty, and running the post-office for thirty years, and Mary Page in the Library, and the Norberrys painting pillows—and I could scream!"

"Things will take a turn for the better some day, Margaret," said the other woman, soothingly; "and as time goes on you'll find yourself getting more and more pleasure out of your work, as I do. Why, I've never

been so securely happy in my life as I am now. You'll feel differently some day."

"Maybe," Margaret assented unenthusiastically. There was a pause. Perhaps the girl was thinking that to teach school, live in a plain little cottage on the unfashionable Bridge Road, take two roomers, and cook and sew and plan for Tom and little Emily, as Mrs. Porter did, was not quite an ideal existence.

"You're an angel, anyway, Emily," said she, affectionately, a little shamefacedly. "Don't mind my growling. I don't do it very often. But I look about at other people, and then realize how my mother's slaved for twenty years and how my father's been tied down, and I've come to the conclusion that while there may have been a time when a woman could keep a house, tend a garden, sew and spin and raise twelve children, things are different now; life is more complicated. You owe your husband something, you owe yourself something. I

want to get on, to study and travel, to be a companion to my husband. I don't want to be a mere upper servant!"

"No, of course not," assented Mrs. Porter, vaguely, soothingly.

"Well, if we are going to stay here, I'll light the stove," Margaret said after a pause. "B-r-r-r! this room gets cold with the windows open! I wonder why Kelly doesn't bring us more wood?"

"I guess—I'll stay!" Mrs. Porter said uncertainly, following her to the big book closet off the schoolroom, where a little gas stove and a small china closet occupied one wide shelf. The water for the tea and bouillon was put over the flame in a tiny enamelled saucepan; they set forth on a fringed napkin crackers and sugar and spoons.

At this point a small girl of eleven with a brilliant, tawny head, and a wide and toothless smile, opened the door cautiously, and said, blinking rapidly with excitement—

“Mark, Mother theth pleath may thee come in?”

This was Rebecca, one of Margaret's five younger brothers and sisters, and a pupil of the school herself. Margaret smiled at the eager little face.

“Hello, darling! Is Mother here? Certainly she can! I believe”—she said, turning, suddenly radiant, to Mrs. Potter—“I'll just *bet you* she's brought us some lunch!”

“Thee brought uth our luncheth—eggth and thpith caketh and everything!” exulted Rebecca, vanishing, and a moment later Mrs. Paget appeared.

She was a tall woman, slender but large of build, and showing, under a shabby rain-coat and well pinned-up skirt, the gracious generous lines of shoulders and hips, the deep-bosomed erect figure that is rarely seen except in old daguerreotypes, or the ideal of some artist two generations ago. The storm to-day had blown an unusual

color into her thin cheeks, her bright, deep eyes were like Margaret's, but the hair that once had shown an equally golden lustre was dull and smooth now, and touched with gray. She came in smiling, and a little breathless.

“Mother, you didn't come out in all this rain just to bring us our lunches!” Margaret protested, kissing the cold, fresh face.

“Well, look at the lunch you silly girls were going to eat!” Mrs. Paget protested in turn, in a voice rich with amusement. “I love to walk in the rain, Mark; I used to love it when I was a girl. Tom and Sister are at our house, Mrs. Porter, playing with Duncan and Baby. I'll keep them until after school, then I'll send them over to walk home with you.”

“Oh, you are an angel!” said the younger mother, gratefully. And “You *are* an angel, Mother!” Margaret echoed, as Mrs. Paget opened a shabby suitcase, and took from it a large jar of hot rich soup, a little

blue bowl of stuffed eggs, half a fragrant whole-wheat loaf in a white napkin, a little glass full of sweet butter, and some of the spice cakes to which Rebecca had already enthusiastically alluded.

"There!" said she, pleased with their delight, "now take your time, you've got three-quarters of an hour. Julie devilled the eggs, and the sweet-butter man happened to come just as I was starting."

"Delicious! You've saved our lives," Margaret said, busy with cups and spoons. "You'll stay, Mother?" she broke off suddenly, as Mrs. Paget closed the suitcase.

"I can't, dear! I must go back to the children," her mother said cheerfully. No coaxing proving of any avail, Margaret went with her to the top of the hall stairs.

"What's my girl worrying about?" Mrs. Paget asked, with a keen glance at Margaret's face.

"Oh, nothing!" Margaret used both hands to button the top button of her

mother's coat. "I was hungry and cold, and I didn't want to walk home in the rain!" she confessed, raising her eyes to the eyes so near her own.

"Well, go back to your lunch," Mrs. Paget urged, after a brief pause, not quite satisfied with the explanation. Margaret kissed her again, watched her descend the stairs, and leaning over the banister called down to her softly:

"Don't worry about *me*, Mother!"

"No—no—no!" her mother called back brightly. Indeed, Margaret reflected, going back to the much-cheered Emily, it was not in her nature to worry.

No, Mother never worried, or if she did, nobody ever knew it. Care, fatigue, responsibility, hard long years of busy days and broken nights had left their mark on her face; the old beauty that had been hers was chiselled to a mere pure outline now; but there was a contagious serenity in Mrs. Paget's smile, a clear steadiness in her calm

eyes, and her forehead, beneath an unfashionably plain sweep of hair, was untroubled and smooth.

The children's mother was a simple woman; so absorbed in the hourly problems attendant upon the housing and feeding of her husband and family that her own personal ambitions, if she had any, were quite lost sight of, and the actual outlines of her character were forgotten by every one, herself included. If her busy day marched successfully to nightfall; if darkness found her husband reading in his big chair, the younger children sprawled safe and asleep in the shabby nursery, the older ones contented with books or games, the clothes sprinkled, the bread set, the kitchen dark and clean; Mrs. Paget asked no more of life. She would sit, her overflowing workbasket beside her, looking from one absorbed face to another, thinking perhaps of Julie's new school dress, of Ted's impending siege with the dentist, or of the old bureau up attic

that might be mended for Bruce's room. "Thank God we have all warm beds," she would say, when they all went upstairs, yawning and chilly.

She had married, at twenty, the man she loved, and had found him better than her dreams in many ways, and perhaps disappointing in some few others, but "the best man in the world" for all that. That for more than twenty years he had been satisfied to stand for nine hours daily behind one dingy desk, and to carry home to her his unopened salary envelope twice a month, she found only admirable. Daddy was "steady," he was "so gentle with the children," he was "the easiest man in the world to cook for." "Bless his heart, no woman ever had less to worry over in her husband!" she would say, looking from her kitchen window to the garden where he trained the pea-vines, with the children's yellow heads bobbing about him. She never analyzed his character, much less

criticised him. Good and bad, he was taken for granted; she was much more lenient to him than to any of the children. She welcomed the fast-coming babies as gifts from God, marvelled over their tiny perfectness, dreamed over the soft relaxed little forms with a heart almost too full for prayer. She was, in a word, old-fashioned, hopelessly out of the modern current of thoughts and events. She secretly regarded her children as marvellous, even while she laughed down their youthful conceit and punished their naughtiness.

Thinking a little of all these things, as a girl with her own wifeness and motherhood all before her does think, Margaret went back to her hot luncheon. One o'clock found her at her desk, refreshed in spirit by her little outburst, and much fortified in body. The room was well aired, and a reinforced fire roared in the little stove. One of the children had brought her a spray

of pine, and the spicy fragrance of it reminded her that Christmas and the Christmas vacation were near; her mind was pleasantly busy with anticipation of the play that the Pagets always wrote and performed some time during the holidays, and with the New Year's costume dance at the Hall, and a dozen lesser festivities.

Suddenly, in the midst of a droning spelling lesson, there was a jarring interruption. From the world outside came a child's shrill screaming, which was instantly drowned in a chorus of frightened voices, and in the schoolroom below her own Margaret heard a thundering rush of feet, and answering screams. With a suffocating terror at her heart she ran to the window, followed by every child in the room.

The rain had stopped now, and the sky showed a pale, cold, yellow light low in the west. At the schoolhouse gate an immense limousine car had come to a stop. The driver, his face alone visible between a great

leather coat and visored leather cap, was talking unheard above the din. A tall woman, completely enveloped in sealskins, had evidently jumped from the limousine, and now held in her arms what made Margaret's heart turn sick and cold, the limp figure of a small girl.

About these central figures there surged the terrified crying small children of the just-dismissed primer class, and in the half moment that Margaret watched, Mrs. Porter, white and shaking, and another teacher, Ethel Elliot, an always excitable girl, who was now sobbing and chattering hysterically, ran out from the school, each followed by her own class of crowding and excited boys and girls.

With one horrified exclamation, Margaret ran downstairs, and out to the gate. Mrs. Porter caught at her arm as she passed her in the path.

“Oh, my God, Margaret! It's poor little Dorothy Scott!” she said. “They've killed her. The car went completely over her!”

“Oh, Margaret, don’t go near, oh, how can you!” screamed Miss Elliot. “Oh, and she’s all they have! Who’ll tell her mother!”

With astonishing ease, for the children gladly recognized authority, Margaret pushed through the group to the motor-car.

“Stop screaming—stop that shouting at once—keep still, every one of you!” she said angrily, shaking various shoulders as she went with such good effect that the voice of the woman in sealskins could be heard by the time Margaret reached her.

“I don’t think she’s badly hurt!” said this woman, nervously and eagerly. She was evidently badly shaken, and was very white. “Do quiet them, can’t you?” she said, with a sort of apprehensive impatience. “Can’t we take her somewhere, and get a doctor? Can’t we get out of this?”

Margaret took the child in her own arms, Little Dorothy roared afresh, but to Margaret’s unspeakable relief she twisted about and locked her arms tightly about the loved

teacher's neck. The other woman watched them anxiously.

"That blood on her frock's just nose-bleed," she said; "but I think the car went over her! I assure you we were running very slowly. How it happened——! But I don't think she was struck."

"Nosebleed!" Margaret echoed, with a great breath. "No," she said quietly, over the agitated little head; "I don't think she's much hurt. We'll take her in. Now, look here, children," she added loudly to the assembled pupils of the Weston Grammar School, whom mere curiosity had somewhat quieted, "I want every one of you children to go back to your schoolrooms; do you understand? Dorothy's had a bad scare, but she's got no bones broken, and we're going to have a doctor see that she's all right. I want you to see how quiet you can be. Mrs. Porter, may my class go into your room a little while?"

"Certainly," said Mrs. Porter, eager to

coöperate, and much relieved to have her share of the episode take this form. "Form lines, children," she added calmly.

"Ted," said Margaret to her own small brother, who was one of Mrs. Porter's pupils, and who had edged closer to her than any boy unprivileged by relationship dared, "will you go down the street, and ask old Doctor Potts to come here? And then go tell Dorothy's mother that Dorothy has had a little bump, and that Miss Paget says she's all right, but that she'd like her mother to come for her."

"Sure I will, Mark!" Theodore responded enthusiastically, departing on a run.

"Mama!" sobbed the little sufferer at this point, hearing a familiar word.

"Yes, darling, you want Mama, don't you?" Margaret said soothingly, as she started with her burden up the schoolhouse steps. "What were you doing, Dorothy," she went on pleasantly, "to get under that big car?"

"I dropped my ball!" wailed the small girl, her tears beginning afresh, "and it rolled and rolled. And I didn't see the automobile, and I *didn't* see it! And I fell down and b-b-bumped my nose!"

"Well, I should think you did!" Margaret said, laughing. "Mother won't know you at all with such a muddy face and such a muddy apron!"

Dorothy laughed shakily at this, and several other little girls, passing in orderly file, laughed heartily. Margaret crossed the lines of children to the room where they played and ate their lunches on wet days. She shut herself in with the child and the fur-clad lady.

"Now you're all right!" said Margaret, gayly. And Dorothy was presently comfortable in a big chair, wrapped in a rug from the motor-car, with her face washed, and her head dropped languidly back against her chair, as became an interesting invalid. The Irish janitor was facetious

as he replenished the fire, and made her laugh again. Margaret gave her a numerical chart to play with, and saw with satisfaction that the little head was bent interestedly over it.

Quiet fell upon the school; the muffled sound of lessons recited in concert presently reached them. Theodore returned, reporting that the doctor would come as soon as he could and that Dorothy's mother was away at a card-party, but that Dorothy's "girl" would come for her as soon as the bread was out of the oven. There was nothing to do but wait.

"It seems a miracle," said the strange lady, in a low tone, when she and Margaret were alone again with the child. "But I don't believe she was scratched!"

"I don't think so," Margaret agreed. "Mother says no child who can cry is very badly hurt."

"They made such a horrible noise," said the other, sighing wearily. She passed a

white hand, with one or two blazing great stones upon it, across her forehead. Margaret had leisure now to notice that by all signs this was a very great lady indeed. The quality of her furs, the glimpse of her gown that the loosened coat showed, her rings, and most of all the tones of her voice, the authority of her manner, the well-groomed hair and skin and hands, all marked the thoroughbred.

“Do you know that you managed that situation very cleverly just now?” said the lady, with a keen glance that made Margaret color. “One has such a dread of the crowd, just public sentiment, you know. Some officious bystander calls the police, they crowd against your driver, perhaps a brick gets thrown. We had an experience in England once——” She paused, then interrupted herself. “But I don’t know your name?” she said brightly.

Margaret supplied it, was led to talk a little of her own people.

“Seven of you, eh? Seven’s too many,” said the visitor, with the assurance that Margaret was to learn characterized her. “I’ve two myself, two girls,” she went on. “I wanted a boy, but they’re nice girls. And you’ve six brothers and sisters? Are they all as handsome as you and this Teddy of yours? And why do you like teaching?”

“Why do I like it?” Margaret said, enjoying these confidences and the unusual experience of sitting idle in mid-afternoon. “I don’t, I hate it.”

“I see. But then why don’t you come down to New York, and do something else?” the other woman asked.

“I’m needed at home, and I don’t know any one there,” Margaret said simply.

“I see,” the lady said again thoughtfully. There was a pause. Then the same speaker said reminiscently, “I taught school once for three months when I was a girl, to show my father I could support myself.”

“I’ve taught for four years,” Margaret said.

“Well, if you ever want to try something else—there are such lots of fascinating things a girl can do now—be sure you come and see me about it,” the stranger said. “I am Mrs. Carr-Boldt, of New York.”

Margaret’s amazed eyes flashed to Mrs. Carr-Boldt’s face; her cheeks crimsoned.

“Mrs. Carr-Boldt!” she echoed blankly.

“Why not?” smiled the lady, not at all displeased.

“Why,” stammered Margaret, laughing and rosy, “why, nothing—only I never dreamed who you were!” she finished, a little confused.

And indeed it never afterward seemed to her anything short of a miracle that brought the New York society woman—famed on two continents and from ocean to ocean for her jewels, her entertainments, her gowns, her establishments—into a Weston school-room, and into Margaret Paget’s life.

“I was on my way to New York now,” said Mrs. Carr-Boldt.

“I don’t see why you should be delayed,” Margaret said, glad to be able to speak normally, with such a fast-beating and pleasantly excited heart. “I’m sure Dorothy’s all right.”

“Oh, I’d rather wait. I like my company,” said the other. And Margaret decided in that instant that there never was a more deservedly admired and copied and quoted woman.

Presently their chat was interrupted by the tramp of the departing school children; the other teachers peeped in, were reassured, and went their ways. Then came the doctor, to pronounce the entirely cheerful Dorothy unhurt, and to bestow upon her some hoarhound drops. Mrs. Carr-Boldt settled at once with the doctor, and when Margaret saw the size of the bill that was pressed into his hand, she realized that she had done her old friend a good turn.

“Use it up on your poor people,” said Mrs. Carr-Boldt, to his protestations; and

when he had gone, and Dorothy's "girl" appeared, she tipped that worthy and amazed Teuton, and after promising Dorothy a big doll from a New York shop, sent the child and maid home in the motor-car.

"I hope this hasn't upset your plans," Margaret said, as they stood waiting in the doorway. It was nearly five o'clock, the school was empty and silent.

"No, not exactly. I had hoped to get home for dinner. But I think I'll get Woolcock to take me back to Dayton; I've some very dear friends there who'll give me a cup of tea. Then I'll come back this way and get home, by ten, I should think, for a late supper." Then, as the limousine appeared, Mrs. Carr-Boldt took both Margaret's hands in hers, and said, "And now good-bye, my dear girl. I've got your address, and I'm going to send you something pretty to remember me by. You saved me from I don't know what annoyance and publicity. And don't forget that when you come to New York

I'm going to help you meet the people you want to, and give you a start if I can. You're far too clever and good-looking to waste your life down here. Good-bye!"

"Good-bye!" Margaret said, her cheeks brilliant, her head awhirl.

She stood unmindful of the chilly evening air, watching the great motor-car wheel and slip into the gloom. The rain was over; a dying wind moaned mysteriously through the dusk. Margaret went slowly upstairs, pinned on her hat, buttoned her long coat snugly about her. She locked the school-room door, and, turning the corner, plunged her hands into her pockets, and faced the wind bravely. Deepening darkness and coldness were about her, but she felt surrounded by the warmth and brightness of her dreams. She saw the brilliant streets of a big city, the carriages and motor-cars coming and going, the idle, lovely women in their sumptuous gowns and hats. These

things were real, near—almost attainable—to-night.

“Mrs. Carr-Boldt!” Margaret said, “the darling! I wonder if I’ll ever see her again!”

CHAPTER II

LIFE in the shabby, commonplace house that sheltered the Paget family sometimes really did seem to proceed, as Margaret had suggested, in a long chain of violent shocks, narrow escapes, and closely averted catastrophes. No sooner was Duncan's rash pronounced not to be scarlet fever than Robert swallowed a penny, or Beck set fire to the dining-room wastebasket, or Dad foresaw the immediate failure of the Weston Home Savings Bank, and the inevitable loss of his position there. Sometimes there was a paternal explosion because Bruce liked to murmur vaguely of "dandy chances in Manila," or because Julie, pretty, excitable, and sixteen, had an occasional dose of stage fever, and would stammer desperately between convulsive

sobs that she wasn't half as much afraid of "the terrible temptations of the life" as she was afraid of dying a poky old maid in Weston. In short, the home was crowded, the Pagets were poor, and every one of the seven possessed a spirited and distinct entity. All the mother's effort could not keep them always contented. Growing ambitions made the Weston horizon seem narrow and mean, and the young eyes that could not see beyond to-morrow were often wet with rebellious tears.

Through it all they loved each other; sometimes whole weeks went by in utter harmony; the children contented over "Parches" on the hearthrug in the winter evenings, Julie singing in the morning sunlight, as she filled the vases from the shabby marguerite bushes on the lawn. But there were other times when to the dreamy studious Margaret the home circle seemed all discord, all ugly dinginess and thread-bareness; the struggle for ease and beauty

and refinement seemed hopeless and overwhelming. In these times she would find herself staring thoughtfully at her mother's face, bent over the mending basket, or her eyes would leave the chessboard that held her father's attention so closely, and move from his bald spot, with its encircling crown of fluffy gray, to his rosy face, with its kind, intent blue eyes and the little lines about his mouth that his moustache didn't hide—with a half-formed question in her heart. What hadn't they done, these dearest people, to be always struggling, always tired, always "behind the game?" Why should they be eternally harassed by plumber's bills, and dentists' bills, and shoes that would wear out, and school-books that must be bought? Why weren't they holding their place in Weston society, the place to which they were entitled by right of the Quincy grandfather, and the uncles who were judges?

. And in answer Margaret came despond-

ently to the decision, "If you have children, you never have anything else!" How could Mother keep up with her friends, when for some fifteen years she had been far too busy to put on a dainty gown in the afternoon, and serve a hospitable cup of tea on the east porch? Mother was buttering bread for supper, then; opening little beds and laying out little nightgowns, starting Ted off for the milk, washing small hands and faces, soothing bumps and binding cuts, admonishing, praising, directing. Mother was only too glad to sink wearily into her rocker after dinner, and, after a few spirited visits to the rampant nursery upstairs, express the hope that nobody would come in to-night. Gradually the friends dropped away, and the social life of Weston flowed smoothly on without the Pagets.

But when Margaret began to grow up, she grasped the situation with all the keenness of a restless and ambitious nature. Weston, detested Weston, it must appar-

ently be. Very well, she would make the best of Weston. Margaret called on her mother's old friends; she was tireless in charming little attentions. Her own first dances had not been successful; she and Bruce were not good dancers, Margaret had not been satisfied with her gowns, they both felt out of place. When Julie's dancing days came along, Margaret saw to it that everything was made much easier. She planned social evenings at home, and exhausted herself preparing for them, that Julie might know the "right people." To her mother all people were alike, if they were kind and not vulgar; Margaret felt very differently. It was a matter of the greatest satisfaction to her when Julie blossomed into a fluffy-haired butterfly, tremendously in demand, in spite of much-cleaned slippers and often-pressed frocks. Margaret arranged Christmas theatricals, May picnics, Fourth of July gatherings. She never failed Bruce when this dearest

brother wanted her company; she was, as Mrs. Paget told her over and over, "the sweetest daughter any woman ever had." But deep in her heart she knew moods of bitter distaste and restlessness. The struggle did not seem worth the making; the odds against her seemed too great.

Still dreaming in the winter dark, she went through the home gate, and up the porch steps of a roomy, cheap house that had been built in the era of scalloped and pointed shingles, of colored glass embellishments around the window-panes, of perforated scroll work and wooden railings in Grecian designs. A mass of wet overshoes lay on the porch, and two or three of the weather-stained porch rockers swayed under the weight of spread wet raincoats. Two opened umbrellas wheeled in the current of air that came around the house; the porch ran water. While Margaret was adding her own rainy-day equipment to the

others, a golden-brown setter, one ecstatic wriggle from nose to tail, flashed into view, and came fawning to her feet.

“Hello, Bran!” Margaret said, propping herself against the house with one hand, while she pulled at a tight overshoe. “Hello, old fellow! Well, did they lock him out?”

She let herself and a freezing gust of air into the dark hall, groping to the hat-rack for matches. While she was lighting the gas, a very pretty girl of sixteen, with crimson cheeks and tumbled soft dark hair, came to the dining-room door. This was her sister Julie, Margaret’s roommate and warmest admirer, and for the last year or two her inseparable companion. Julie had her finger in a book, but now she closed it, and said affectionately between her yawns: “Come in here, darling! You must be dead.”

“Don’t let Bran in,” cried some one from upstairs.

“He *is* in, Mother!” Margaret called

back, and Rebecca and the three small boys—Theodore, the four-year-old baby, Robert, and Duncan, a grave little lad of seven—all rushed out of the dining-room together, shouting, as they fell on the delighted dog:

“Aw, leave him in! Aw, leave the poor little feller in! *Come* on, Bran, come on, old feller! Leave him in, Mark, can’t we?”

Kissing and hugging the dog, and stumbling over each other and over him, they went back to the dining-room, which was warm and stuffy. A coal fire was burning low in the grate, the window-panes were beaded, and the little boys had marked their initials in the steam. They had also pushed the fringed table-cover almost off, and scattered the contents of a box of “Lotto” over the scarred walnut top. The room was shabby, ugly, comfortable. Julie and Margaret had established a tea-table in the bay window, had embroidered a cover for the wide couch, had burned the big wooden

bowl that was supposedly always full of nuts or grapes or red apples. But these touches were lost in the mass of less pleasing detail. The "body Brussels" carpet was worn, the wall paper depressing, the woodwork was painted dark brown, with an imitation burl smeared in by the painter's thumb. The chairs were of several different woods and patterns, the old black walnut sideboard clumsy and battered. About the fire stood some comfortable worn chairs. Margaret dropped wearily into one of these, and the dark-eyed Julie hung over her with little affectionate attentions. The children returned to their game.

"Well, what a time you had with little Dolly Scott!" said Julie, sympathetically. "Ted's been getting it all mixed up! Tell us about it. Poor old Mark, you're all in, aren't you? Mark, would you like a cup of tea?"

"Love it!" Margaret said, a little surprised, for this luxury was not common.

“And toast—we’ll toast it!” said Theodore, enthusiastically.

“No, no—no tea!” said Mrs. Paget, coming in at this point with some sewing in her hands. “Don’t spoil your dinner, now, Mark dear; tea doesn’t do you any good. And I think Blanche is saving the cream for an apple tapioca. Theodore, Mother wants you to go right downstairs for some coal, dear. And, Julie, you’d better start your table; it’s close to six. Put up the game, Rebecca!”

There was general protest. Duncan, it seemed, needed only “two more” to win. Little Robert, who was benevolently allowed by the other children to play the game exactly as he pleased, screamed delightedly that he needed only *one* more, and showed a card upon which even the blank spaces were lavishly covered with glass. He was generously conceded the victory, and kissed by Rebecca and Julie as he made his way to his mother’s lap.

“Why, this can’t be Robert Paget!” said Mrs. Paget, putting aside her sewing to gather him in her arms. “Not this great, big boy!”

“Yes, I *am!*” the little fellow asserted joyously, dodging her kisses.

“Good to get home!” Margaret said luxuriously.

“You must sleep late in the morning,” her mother commanded affectionately.

“Yes, because you have to be fresh for the party Monday!” exulted Julie. She had flung a white cloth over the long table, and was putting the ringed napkins down with rapid bangs. “And New Year’s Eve’s the dance!” she went on buoyantly. “I just love Christmas, anyway!”

“Rebecca, ask Blanche if she needs me,” that was Mother.

“You’d go perfectly crazy about her, Ju, she’s the most fascinating, and the most *unaffected* woman!” Margaret was full of the day’s real event.

“And Mother theth that Ted and Dunc and I can have our friendth in on the day after Chrithmath to thee the Chrithmath tree!” That was Rebecca, who added, “Blanche theth no, Mother, unleth you want to make thom cream gravy for the chopth!”

“And, Mark, Eleanor asked if Bruce and you and I weren’t going as Pierrot and Pierettes; she’s simply *crazy* to find out!” This was Julie again; and then Margaret, coaxingly, “Do make cream gravy for Bruce, Mother. Give Baby to me!” and little Robert’s elated “I know *three* things Becky’s going to get for Christmas, Mark!”

“Well, I think I will, there’s milk,” Mrs. Paget conceded, rising. “Put Bran out, Teddy; or put him in the laundry if you want to, while we have dinner.” Margaret presently followed her mother into the kitchen, stopping in a crowded passageway to tie an apron over her school gown.

“Bruce come in yet?” she said in a low voice.

Her mother flashed her a sympathetic look.

“I don’t believe he’s coming, Mark.”

“*Isn’t!* Oh, Mother! Oh, Mother, does he feel so badly about Betty?”

“I suppose so!” Mrs. Paget went on with her bread cutting.

“But, Mother, surely he didn’t expect to *marry* Betty Forsythe?”

“I don’t know why not, Mark. She’s a sweet little thing.”

“But, Mother——” Margaret was a little at a loss. “We don’t seem old enough to really be getting married!” she said, a little lamely.

“Bruce came in about half-past five, and said he was going over to Richie’s,” Mrs. Paget said, with a sigh.

“In all this rain—that long walk!” Margaret ejaculated, as she filled a long wicker basket with sliced bread.

“I think an evening of work with Richie

will do him a world of good," said his mother. There was a pause. "There's Dad. I'll go in," she said, suddenly ending it, as the front door slammed.

Margaret went in, too, to kiss her father, a tired-looking, gray-haired man close to fifty, who had taken her chair by the fire. Mrs. Paget was anxious to be assured that his shoulders and shoes were not damp.

"But your hands are icy, Daddy," said she, as she sat down behind a smoking tureen at the head of the table. "Come, have your nice hot soup, dear. Pass that to Dad, Becky, and light the other gas. What sort of a day?"

"A hard day," said Mr. Paget, heavily. "Here, one of you girls put Baby into his chair. Let go, Bob—I'm too tired to-night for monkey-shines!" He sat down stiffly. "Where's Bruce? Can't that boy remember what time we have dinner?"

"Bruce is going to have supper with Richie Williams, Dad," said Mrs. Paget,

serenely. "They'll get out their blue prints afterward and have a good evening's work. Fill the glasses before you sit down, Ju. Come, Ted—put that back on the mantel. Come, Becky! Tell Daddy about what happened to-day, Mark——"

They all drew up their chairs. Robert, recently graduated from a high chair, was propped upon "The Officers of the Civil War" and "The Household Book of Verse." Julie tied on his bib, and kissed the back of his fat little neck before she slipped into her own seat. The mother sat between Ted and Duncan, for reasons that immediately became obvious. Margaret sat by her father, and attended to his needs, telling him all about the day, and laying her pretty slim hand over his as it rested beside his plate. The chops and cream gravy, as well as a mountain of baked potatoes, and various vegetables, were under discussion, when every one stopped short in surprise at hearing the doorbell ring.

“Who——?” said Margaret, turning puzzled brows to her mother, and “I’m sure I——” her mother answered, shaking her head. Ted was heard to mutter uneasily that, gee, maybe it was old Pembroke, mad because the fellers had soaked his old skate with snowballs; Julie dimpled and said, “Maybe it’s flowers!” Robert shouted “Bakeryman!” more because he had recently acquired the word than because of any conviction on the subject. In the end Julie went to the door, with the four children in her wake. When she came back, she looked bewildered, and the children a little alarmed.

“It’s—it’s Mrs. Carr-Boldt, Mother,” said Julie.

“Well, don’t leave her standing there in the cold, dear!” Mrs. Paget said, rising quickly, to go into the hall. Margaret, her heart thumping with an unanalyzed premonition of something pleasant, and nervous, too, for the hospitality of the Pagets,

followed her. So they were all presently crowded into the hall, Mrs. Paget all hospitality, Margaret full of a fear she would have denied that her mother would not be equal to the occasion, the children curious, Julie a little embarrassed.

The visitor, fur-clad, rain-spattered—for it was raining again—and beaming, stretched a hand to Mrs. Paget.

“You’re Mrs. Paget, of course—this is an awful hour to interrupt you,” she said in her big, easy way, “and there’s my Miss Paget—how do you do? But you see I must get up to town to-night—in this door? I can see perfectly, thank you—and I did want a little talk with you first. Now, what a shame!”—for the gas, lighted by Theodore at this point, revealed Duncan’s bib, and the napkins some of the others were still carrying. “I’ve interrupted your dinner! Won’t you let me wait here until——”

“Perhaps—if you haven’t had your sup-

per—you will have some with us,” said Mrs. Paget, a little uncertainly. Margaret inwardly shuddered, but Mrs. Carr-Boldt was gracious.

“Mrs. Paget, that’s charming of you,” she said. “But I had tea at Dayton, and mustn’t lose another moment. I shan’t dine until I get home. I’m the busiest woman in the world, you know. Now, it won’t take me two minutes——”

She was seated now, her hands still deep in her muff, for the parlor was freezing cold. Mrs. Paget, with a rather bewildered look, sat down, too.

“You can run back to your dinners,” said she to the children. “Take them, Julie. Mark, dear, will you help the pudding?” They all filed dutifully out of the room, and Margaret, excited and curious, continued a meal that might have been of sawdust and sand for all she knew. The strain did not last long; in about ten minutes Mrs. Paget looked into the room, with a rather worried

expression, and said, a little breathlessly: "Daddy, can you come here a moment?—You're all right, dear," she added, as Mr. Paget indicated with an embarrassed gesture his well-worn house-coat. They went out together. The young people sat almost without speaking, listening to the indistinguishable murmur from the adjoining room, and smiling mysteriously at each other. Then Margaret was called, and went as far as the dining-room door, and came back to put her napkin uncertainly down at her place, hesitated, arranged her gown carefully, and finally went out again. They heard her voice with the others in the parlor . . . questioning . . . laughing . . .

Presently the low murmur broke into audible farewells; chairs were pushed back, feet scraped in the hall.

"Good-night, then!" said Mrs. Carr-Boldt's clear tones, "and so sorry to have—— Good-night, Mr. Paget!—Oh, thank you—but

I'm well wrapped. Thank you! Good-night, dear! I'll see you again soon—I'll write."

And then came the honking of the motor-car, and a great swish where it grazed a wet bush near the house. Somebody lowered the gas in the hall, and Mrs. Paget's voice said regretfully, "I wish we had had a fire in the parlor—just one of the times!—but there's no help for it." They all came in, Margaret flushed, starry-eyed; her father and mother a little serious. The three blinked at the brighter light, and fell upon the cooling chops as if eating were the important business of the moment.

"We waited the pudding," said Julie. "What *is* it?"

"Why——" Mrs. Paget began, hesitatingly. Mr. Paget briskly took the matter out of her hands.

"This lady," he said, with an air of making any further talk unnecessary, "needs a secretary, and she has offered your sister Margaret the position. That's the whole

affair in a nutshell. I'm not at all sure that your mother and I think it a wise offer for Margaret to accept, and I want to say here and now that I don't want any child of mine to speak of this matter, or make it a matter of general gossip in the neighborhood. Mother, I'd like very much to have Blanche make me a fresh cup of tea."

"Wants Margaret!" gasped Julie, unaffected—so astonishing was the news—by her father's unusual sternness. "Oh, Mother! Oh, Mark! Oh, you lucky thing! When is she coming down here?"

"She isn't coming down here—she wants Mark to go to her—that's it," said her mother.

"Mark—in New York!" shrilled Theodore. Julie got up to rush around the table and kiss her sister; the younger children laughed and shouted.

"There is no occasion for all this," said Mr. Paget, but mildly, for the fresh tea had arrived. "Just quiet them down, will you,

Mother? I see nothing very extraordinary in the matter. This Mrs.—Mrs. Carr-Boldt—is it?—needs a secretary and companion; and she offers the position to Mark.”

“But—but she never even *saw* Mark until to-day!” marvelled Julie.

“I hardly see how that affects it, my dear!” her father observed unenthusiastically.

“Why, I think it makes it simply extraordinary!” exulted the generous little sister. “Oh, Mark, isn’t this just the sort of thing you would have *wished* to happen! Secretary work—just what you love to do! And you, with your beautiful handwriting, you’ll just be *invaluable* to her! And your German—and I’ll bet you’ll just have them all *adoring* you——!”

“Oh, Ju, if I only can do it!” burst from Margaret, with a little childish gasp. She was sitting back from the table, twisted about so that she sat sideways, her hands clasped about the top bar of her chair-back.

Her tawny soft hair was loosened about her face, her dark eyes aflame. "Lenox, she said," Margaret went on dazedly; "and Europe, and travelling everywhere! And a hundred dollars a month, and nothing to spend it on, so I can still help out here! Why, it—I can't believe it!"—she looked from one smiling interested face to another, and suddenly her radiance underwent a quick eclipse. Her lip trembled, and she tried to laugh as she pushed her chair back, and ran to the arms her mother opened. "Oh, Mother!" sobbed Margaret, clinging there, "do you want me to go—shall I go? I've always been so happy here, and I feel so ashamed of being discontented—and I don't deserve a thing like this to happen to me!"

"Why, God bless her heart!" said Mrs. Paget, tenderly; "of course you'll go!"

"Oh, you silly! I'll never speak to you again if you don't!" laughed Julie, through sympathetic tears.

Theodore and Duncan immediately burst

into a radiant reminiscence of their one brief visit to New York; Rebecca was heard to murmur that she would “vithet Mark thome day”; and the baby, tugging at his mother’s elbow, asked sympathetically if Mark was naughty, and was caught between his sister’s and his mother’s arms and kissed by them both. Mr. Paget, picking his paper from the floor beside his chair, took an armchair by the fire, stirred the coals noisily, and while cleaning his glasses, observed rather huskily that the little girl always knew she could come back again if anything went wrong.

“But suppose *I* don’t suit?” suggested Margaret, sitting back on her heels, refreshed by tears, and with her arms laid across her mother’s lap.

“Oh, you’ll *suit*,” said Julie, confidently; and Mrs. Paget smoothed the girl’s hair back and said affectionately, “I don’t think she’ll find many girls like you for the asking, Mark!”

“Reading English with the two little girls,” said Margaret, dreamily, “and answering notes and invitations. And keeping books——”

“You can do that anyway,” said her father, over his paper.

“And dinner lists, you know, Mother—doesn’t it sound like an English story!” Margaret stopped in the middle of an ecstatic wriggle. “Mother, will you *pray* I succeed?” she said solemnly.

“Just be your own dear simple self, Mark,” her mother advised. “January!” she added, with a great sigh. “It’s the first break, isn’t it, Dad? Think of trying to get along without our Mark!”

“January!” Julie was instantly alert. “Why, but you’ll need all *sorts* of clothes!”

“Oh, she says there’s a sewing woman always in the house,” Margaret said, almost embarrassed by the still-unfolding advantages of the proposition. “I can have her do whatever’s left over.” Her father lowered his paper to give her a shrewd glance.

“I suppose somebody knows something about this Mrs. Carr-Boldt, Mother?” asked he. “She’s all right, I suppose?”

“Oh, Dad, her name’s *always* in the papers,” Julie burst out; and the mother smiled as she said, “We’ll be pretty sure of everything before we let our Mark go!” Later, when the children had been dismissed and he himself was going, rather stiffly, toward the stairs, Mr. Paget again voiced a mild doubt.

“There was a perfectly good reason for her hurry, I suppose? Old secretary deserted—got married——? She had good reason for wanting Mark in all this hurry?”

Mrs. Paget and her daughters had settled about the fire for an hour’s delicious discussion, but she interrupted it to say soothingly, “It was her cousin, Dad, who’s going to be married, and she’s been trying to get hold of just the right person—she says she’s fearfully behindhand——”

“Well, you know best,” said Mr. Paget, departing a little discontentedly.

Left to the dying fire, the others talked, yawned, made a pretence of breaking up, talked and yawned again. The room grew chilly. Bruce—oldest of the children—dark, undemonstrative, weary—presently came in, and was given the news, and marvelled in his turn. Bruce and Margaret had talked of their ambitions a hundred times: of the day when he might enter college and when she might find the leisure and beauty in life for which her soul hungered. Now, as he sat with his arm about her, and her head on his shoulder, he said with generous satisfaction over and over:

“It was *coming* to you, Mark; you’ve earned it!”

At midnight, loitering upstairs, cold and yawning, Margaret kissed her mother and brother quietly, with whispered brief good-nights. But Julie, lying warm and snug in bed half an hour later, had a last word:

“You know, Mark, I think I’m as happy as you are—no, I’m not generous at all! It’s just that it makes me feel that things do come your way finally, if you wait long enough, and that we aren’t the only family in town that never has anything decent happen to it! . . . I’ll miss you awfully, Mark, darling! . . . Mark, do you suppose Mother’d let me take this bed out, and just have a big couch in here? It would make the room seem *so* much bigger. And then I could have the girls come up here, don’t you know—when they came over. . . . Think of you—you—going abroad! I’d simply die! I can’t wait to tell Betty! . . . I hope to goodness Mother won’t put Beck in here! . . . We’ve had this room a long time together, haven’t we? Ever since Grandma died. Do you remember her canary, that Teddy hit with a plate? . . . I’m going to miss you terribly, Mark. But we’ll write. . . .”

CHAPTER III

IN THE days that followed, the miracle came to be accepted by all Weston, which was much excited for a day or two over this honor done a favorite daughter, and by all the Pagets—except Margaret. Margaret went through the hours in her old, quiet manner, a little more tender and gentle perhaps than she had been; but her heart never beat normally, and she lay awake late at night, and early in the morning, thinking, thinking, thinking. She tried to realize that it was in her honor that a farewell tea was planned at the club, it was for her that her fellow-teachers were planning a good-bye luncheon; it was really she—Margaret Paget—whose voice said at the telephone a dozen times a day, “On the fourteenth.—Oh, do I? I

don't *feel* calm! Can't you try to come in—I do want to see you before I go!" She dutifully repeated Bruce's careful directions; she was to give her check to an expressman, and her suitcase to a red-cap; the expressman would probably charge fifty cents, the red-cap was to have no more than fifteen. And she was to tell the latter to put her into a taxicab.

"I'll remember," Margaret assured him gratefully, but with a sense of unreality pressing almost painfully upon her. One of a million ordinary school teachers, in a million little towns—and this marvel had befallen her!

The night of the Pagets' Christmas play came, a night full of laughter and triumph; and marked for Margaret by the little parting gifts that were slipped into her hands, and by the warm good wishes that were murmured, not always steadily, by this old friend and that. When the time came to distribute plates and paper napkins, and

great saucers of ice cream and sliced cake, Margaret was toasted in cold sweet lemonade; and drawing close together to "harmonize" more perfectly, the circle about her touched their glasses while they sang, "For she's a jolly good fellow." Later, when the little supper was almost over, Ethel Elliot, leaning over to lay her hand on Margaret's, began in her rich contralto:

"When other lips and other hearts . . ."

and as they all went seriously through the two verses, they stood up, one by one, and linked arms; the little circle, affectionate and admiring, that had bounded Margaret's friendships until now.

Then Christmas came, with a dark, freezing walk to the pine-spiced and candle-lighted early service in the little church, and a quicker walk home, chilled and happy and hungry, to a riotous Christmas breakfast and a littered breakfast table. The new year came, with a dance and revel, and the

Pagets took one of their long tramps through the snowy afternoon, and came back hungry for a big dinner. Then there was dress-making—Mrs. Schmidt in command, Mrs. Paget tireless at the machine, Julie all eager interest. Margaret, patiently standing to be fitted, conscious of the icy, wet touch of Mrs. Schmidt's red fingers on her bare arms, dreamily acquiescent as to buttons or hooks, was totally absent in spirit.

A trunk came, Mr. Paget very anxious that the keys should not be "fooled with" by the children. Margaret's mother packed this trunk scientifically. "No, now the shoes, Mark—now that heavy skirt," she would say. "Run get mother some more tissue paper, Beck. You'll have to leave the big cape, dear, and you can send for it if you need it. Now the blue dress, Ju. I think that dyed so prettily, just the thing for mornings. And here's your prayer book in the tray, dear; if you go Saturday you'll want it the first thing in the morn-

ing. See, I'll put a fresh handkerchief in it——”

Margaret, relaxed and idle, in a rocker, with Duncan in her lap busily working at her locket, would say over and over:

“You're all such angels—I'll never forget it!” and wish that, knowing how sincerely she meant it, she could *feel* it a little more. Conversation languished in these days; mother and daughters feeling that time was too precious to waste speech of little things, and that their hearts were too full to touch upon the great change impending.

A night came when the Pagets went early upstairs, saying that, after all, it was not like people marrying and going to Russia; it was not like a real parting; it wasn't as if Mark couldn't come home again in four hours if anything went wrong at either end of the line. Margaret's heart was beating high and quick now; she tried to show some of the love and sorrow she knew she should have felt, she knew that she *did* feel under

the hurry of her blood that made speech impossible. She went to her mother's door, slender and girlish in her white nightgown, to kiss her good-night again. Mrs. Paget's big arms went about her daughter. Margaret laid her head childishly on her mother's shoulder. Nothing of significance was said. Margaret whispered, "Mother, I love you!" Her mother said, "You were such a little thing, Mark, when I kissed you one day, without hugging you, and you said, 'Please don't love me just with your face, Mother, love me with your heart!'" Then she added, "Did you and Julie get that extra blanket down to-day, dear?—it's going to be very cold." Margaret nodded. "Good-night, little girl——" "Good-night, Mother——"

That was the real farewell, for the next morning was all confusion. They dressed hurriedly, by chilly gas-light; clocks were compared, Rebecca's back buttoned; Duncan's overcoat jerked on; coffee drunk scalding hot as they stood about the kitchen

table; bread barely tasted. They walked to the railway station on wet sidewalks, under a broken sky, Bruce, with Margaret's suitcase, in the lead. Weston was asleep in the gray morning, after the storm. Far and near belated cocks were crowing.

A score of old friends met Margaret at the train; there were gifts, promises, good wishes. There came a moment when it was generally felt that the Pagets should be left alone, now—the far whistle of the train beyond the bridge—the beginning of good-byes—a sudden filling of the mother's eyes that was belied by her smile.—“Good-bye, sweetest—don't knock my hat off, baby dear! Beck, darling—Oh, Ju, *do!* don't just *say* it—start me a letter to-night! ALL write to me! Good-bye, Dad, darling—all right, Bruce, I'll get right in!—good-bye! Good-bye!”

Then for the Pagets there was a walk back to the empty disorder of the house: Julie very talkative, at her father's side; Bruce walking far behind the others with his

mother—and the day's familiar routine to be somehow gone through without Margaret.

But for Margaret, settling herself comfortably in the grateful warmth of the train, and watching the uncertain early sunshine brighten unfamiliar fields and farmhouses, every brilliant possibility in life seemed to be waiting. She tried to read, to think, to pray, to stare steadily out of the window; she could do nothing for more than a moment at a time. Her thoughts went backward and forward like a weaving shuttle: "How good they've all been to me! How grateful I am! Now if only, *only*, I can make good!"

"Look out for the servants!" Julie, from the depth of her sixteen-years-old wisdom had warned her sister. "The governess will hate you because she'll be afraid you'll cut her out, and Mrs. Carr-Boldt's maid will be a cat! They always are, in books."

Margaret had laughed at this advice, but

in her heart she rather believed it. Her new work seemed so enchanting to her that it was not easy to believe that she did not stand in somebody's light. She was glad that by a last-moment arrangement she was to arrive at the Grand Central Station at almost the same moment as Mrs. Carr-Boldt herself, who was coming home from a three-weeks' visit in the Middle West. Margaret gave only half her attention to the flying country that was beginning to shape itself into streets and rows of houses; all the last half-hour of the trip was clouded by the nervous fear that she would somehow fail to find Mrs. Carr-Boldt in the confusion at the railroad terminal.

But happily enough the lady was found without trouble, or rather Margaret was found, felt an authoritative tap on her shoulder, caught a breath of fresh violets and a glimpse of her patron's clear-skinned, resolute face. They whirled through wet, deserted streets; Mrs. Carr-Boldt gracious

and talkative, Margaret nervously interested and amused.

Their wheels presently grated against a curb, a man in livery opened the limousine door. Margaret saw an immense stone mansion facing the park, climbed a dazzling flight of wide steps, and was in a great hall that faced an interior court, where there were Florentine marble benches, and the great lifted leaves of palms. She was a little dazed by crowded impressions: impressions of height and spaciousness and richness, and opening vistas; a great marble stairway, and a landing where there was an immense designed window in clear leaded glass; rugs, tapestries, mirrors, polished wood and great chairs with brocaded seats and carved dark backs. Two little girls, heavy, well-groomed little girls—one spectacled and good-natured looking, the other rather pretty, with a mass of fair hair—were coming down the stairs with an eager little German woman. They kissed their

mother, much diverted by the mad rushes and leaps of the two white poodles who accompanied them.

“These are my babies, Miss Paget,” said Mrs. Carr-Boldt. “This is Victoria, who’s eleven, and Harriet, who’s six. And these are Monsieur——”

“Monsieur Patou and Monsieur Mouche,” said Victoria, introducing the dogs with entire ease of manner. The German woman said something forcibly, and Margaret understood the child’s reply in that tongue: “Mamma won’t blame you, Fräulein; Harriet and I wished them to come down!”

Presently they all went up in a luxuriously fitted little lift, Margaret being carried to the fourth floor to her own rooms, to which a little maid escorted her.

When the maid had gone Margaret walked to the door and tried it, for no reason whatever; it was shut. Her heart was beating violently. She walked into the middle of the room and looked at herself

in the mirror, and laughed a little breathless laugh. Then she took off her hat carefully and went into the bedroom that was beyond her sitting-room, and hung her hat in a fragrant white closet that was entirely and delightfully empty, and put her coat on a hanger, and her gloves and bag in the empty big top drawer of a great mahogany bureau. Then she went back to the mirror and looked hard at her own beauty reflected in it; and laughed her little laugh again.

“It’s too good—it’s too much!” she whispered.

She investigated her domain, after quelling a wild desire to sit down at the beautiful desk and try the new pens, the crystal ink-well, and the heavy paper, with its severely engraved address, in a long letter to Mother.

There was a tiny upright piano in the sitting-room, and at the fireplace a deep thick rug, and an immense leather arm-

chair. A clock in crystal and gold flanked by two crystal candlesticks had the centre of the mantelpiece. On the little round mahogany centre table was a lamp with a wonderful mosaic shade; a little bookcase was filled with books and magazines. Margaret went to one of the three windows, and looked down upon the bare trees and the snow in the park, and upon the rumbling green omnibuses, all bathed in bright chilly sunlight.

A mahogany door with a crystal knob opened into the bedroom, where there was a polished floor, and more rugs, and a gay rosy wall paper, and a great bed with a lace cover. Beyond was a bathroom, all enamel, marble, glass, and nickel-plate, with heavy monogrammed towels on the rack, three new little wash-cloths sealed in glazed paper, three new toothbrushes in paper cases, and a cake of famous English soap just out of its wrapper.

Over the whole little suite there brooded

an exquisite order. Not a particle of dust broke the shining surfaces of the mahogany, not a fallen leaf lay under the great bowl of roses on the desk. Now and then the radiator clanked in the stillness; it was hard to believe in that warmth and silence that a cold winter wind was blowing outside, and that snow still lay on the ground.

Margaret, resting luxuriously in the big chair, became thoughtful; presently she went into the bedroom, and knelt down beside the bed.

“O Lord, let me stay here,” she prayed, her face in her hands. “I want so to stay—make me a success!”

Never was a prayer more generously answered. Miss Paget was an instant success. In something less than two months she became indispensable to Mrs. Carr-Boldt, and was a favorite with every one, from the rather stolid, silent head of the house down to the least of the maids. She

“Oh, no, we don’t, Mother,” Margaret said quickly. “Who are the Carr-Boldts, except for their money? Why, Mrs. Carteret—for all her family!—isn’t *half* the aristocrat Grandma was! And you—you could be a Daughter of The Officers of the Revolution, Mother!”

“Why, Mark, I never heard that!” her mother protested, cleaning the sprinkler with a hairpin.

“Mother!” Julie said eagerly, “Great-grandfather Quincy!”

“Oh, Grandpa,” said Mrs. Paget. “Yes, Grandpa was a paymaster. He was on Governor Hancock’s staff. They used to call him ‘Major.’ But Mark——” she turned off the water, holding her skirts away from the combination of mud and dust underfoot, “that’s a very silly way to talk, dear! Money does make a difference; it does no good to go back into the past and say that this one was a judge and that one a major; we must live our lives where we *are*!”

Margaret had not lost a wholesome respect for her mother's opinion in the two years she had been away, but she had lived in a very different world, and was full of new ideas.

“Mother, do you mean to tell me that if you and Dad hadn't had a perfect pack of children, and moved so much, and if Dad—say—had been in that oil deal that he said he wished he had the money for, and we still lived in the brick house, that you wouldn't be in every way the equal of Mrs. Carr-Boldt?”

“If you mean as far as *money* goes, Mark—no. We might have been well-to-do as country people go, I suppose——”

“Exactly!” said Margaret; “and you would have been as well off as dozens of the people who are going about in society this minute! It's the merest chance that we aren't rich. Just for instance: father's father had twelve children, didn't he?—and left them—how much was it?—about three thousand dollars apiece——”

“And a Godsend it was, too,” said her mother, reflectively.

“But suppose Dad had been the only child, Mother,” Margaret persisted, “he would have had——”

“He would have had the whole thirty-six thousand dollars, I suppose, Mark.”

“Or more,” said Margaret, “for Grandfather Paget was presumably spending money on them all the time.”

“Well, but Mark,” said Mrs. Paget, laughing as at the vagaries of a small child, “Father Paget *did* have twelve children—and Daddy and I eight——” she sighed, as always, at the thought of the little son who was gone—“and there you are! You can’t get away from that, dear.”

Margaret did not answer. But she thought to herself that very few people held Mother’s views of this subject.

Mrs. Carr-Boldt’s friends, for example, did not accept increasing cares in this resigned fashion; their lives were ideally

pleasant and harmonious without the complicated responsibilities of large families. They drifted from season to season without care, always free, always gay, always irreproachably gowned. In winter there were daily meetings, for shopping, for luncheon, bridge, or tea; summer was filled with a score of country visits. There were motor-trips for week-ends, dinners, theatre, and the opera to fill the evenings, German or singing lessons, manicure, masseuse, and dressmaker to crowd the morning hours all the year round. Margaret learned from these exquisite, fragrant creatures the art of being perpetually fresh and charming, learned their methods of caring for their own beauty, learned to love rare toilet waters and powders, fine embroidered linen and silk stockings. There was no particular strain upon her wardrobe now, nor upon her purse; she could be as dainty as she liked. She listened to the conversations that went on about her—sometimes critical

or unconvinced; more often admiring; and as she listened she found slowly but certainly her own viewpoint. She was not mercenary. She would not marry a man *just* for his money, she decided, but just as certainly she would not marry a man who could not give her a comfortable establishment, a position in society.

The man seemed in no hurry to appear; as a matter of fact, the men whom Margaret met were openly anxious to evade marriage, even with the wealthy girls of their own set. Margaret was not concerned; she was too happy to miss the love-making element; the men she saw were not of a type to inspire a sensible, busy, happy girl with any very deep feeling. And it was with generous and perfect satisfaction that she presently had news of Julie's happy engagement. Julie was to marry a young and popular doctor, the only child of one of Weston's most prominent families. The little sister's letter bubbled joyously with news.

“Harry’s father is going to build us a little house on the big place, the darling,” wrote Julie; “and we will stay with them until it is done. But in five years Harry says we will have a real honeymoon, *in Europe!* Think of going to Europe *as a married woman*. Mark, I wish you could see my ring; it is a *beauty*, but don’t tell Mother I was silly enough to write about it!”

Margaret delightedly selected a little collection of things for Julie’s trousseau. A pair of silk stockings, a scarf she never had worn, a lace petticoat, pink silk for a waist. Mrs. Carr-Boldt, coming in in the midst of these preparations, insisted upon adding so many other things, from trunks and closets, that Margaret was speechless with delight. Scarves, cobwebby silks in uncut lengths, embroidered lingerie still in the tissue paper of Paris shops, parasols, gloves, and lengths of lace—she piled all of them into Margaret’s arms. Julie’s trousseau was conse-

quently quite the most beautiful Weston had ever seen; and the little sister's cloudless joy made the fortnight Margaret spent at home at the time of the wedding a very happy one. It was a time of rush and flurry, laughter and tears, of roses, and girls in white gowns. But some ten days before the wedding Julie and Margaret happened to be alone for a peaceful hour over their sewing, and fell to talking seriously.

"You see, our house will be small," said Julie; "but I don't care—we don't intend to stay in Weston all our lives. Don't breathe this to any one, Mark, but if Harry does as well as he's doing now for two years, we'll rent the little house, and we're going to Baltimore for a year for a special course. Then—you know he's devoted to Doctor McKim, he always calls him 'the chief'—then he thinks *maybe* McKim will work him into his practice—he's getting old, you know, and that means New York!"

"Oh, Ju—*really!*"

“I don’t see why not,” Julie said, dimpling. “Harry’s crazy to do it. He says he doesn’t propose to live and die in Weston. McKim could throw any amount of hospital practice his way, to begin with. And you know Harry’ll have something—and the house will rent. I’m crazy,” said Julie, enthusiastically, “to take one of those lovely old apartments on Washington Square, and meet a few nice people, you know, and really *make* something of my life!”

“Mrs. Carr-Boldt and I will spin down for you every few days,” Margaret said, falling readily in with the plan. “I’m glad you’re not going to simply get into a rut the way some of the other girls have, cooking and babies and nothing else!” she said.

“I think that’s an awful mistake,” Julie said placidly. “Starting in right is so important. I don’t want to be a mere drudge like Ethel or Louise—they may like it. I don’t! Of course, this isn’t a matter to talk of,” she went on, coloring a little. “I’d

never breathe this to Mother! But it's perfectly absurd to pretend that girls don't discuss these things. I've talked to Betty and Louise—we all talk about it, you know. And Louise says they haven't had *one* free second since Buddy came. She can't keep one maid, and she says the idea of *two* maids eating their three meals a day, whether she's home or not, makes her perfectly sick! Some one's got to be with him every single second, even now, when he's four—to see that he doesn't fall off something or put things in his mouth. And as Louise says—it means no more week-end trips; you can't go visiting overnight, you can't even go for a day's drive or a day on the beach, without extra clothes for the baby, a mosquito-net and an umbrella for the baby—milk packed in ice for the baby—somebody trying to get the baby to take his nap—it's awful! It would *end* our Baltimore plan, and that means New York, and New York means everything to Harry and

me!” finished Julie, contentedly, flattening a finished bit of embroidery on her knee, and regarding it complacently.

“Well, I think you’re right,” Margaret approved. “Things are different now from what they were in Mother’s day.”

“And look at Mother,” Julie said. “One long slavery! Life’s too short to wear yourself out that way!”

Mrs. Paget’s sunny cheerfulness was sadly shaken when the actual moment of parting with the exquisite, rose-hatted, gray-frocked Julie came; her face worked pitifully in its effort to smile; her tall figure, awkward in an ill-made, unbecoming new silk, seemed to droop tenderly over the little clinging wife. Margaret, stirred by the sight of tears on her mother’s face, stood with an arm about her, when the bride and groom drove away in the afternoon sunshine.

“I’m going to stay with you until she gets back!” she reminded her mother.

“And you know you’ve always said you wanted the girls to marry, Mother,” urged Mr. Paget. Rebecca felt this a felicitous moment to ask if she and the boys could have the rest of the ice cream.

“Divide it evenly,” said Mrs. Paget, wiping her eyes and smiling. “Yes, I know, Daddy dear, I’m an ungrateful woman! I suppose your turn will come next, Mark, and then I don’t know what I *will* do!”

CHAPTER IV

BUT Margaret's turn did not come for nearly a year. Then—in Germany again, and lingering at a great Berlin hotel because the spring was so beautiful, and the city so sweet with linden bloom, and especially because there were two Americans at the hotel whose game of bridge it pleased Mr. and Mrs. Carr-Boldt daily to hope they could match—then Margaret transformed within a few hours from a merely pretty, very dignified, perfectly contented secretary, entirely satisfied with what she wore as long as it was suitable and fresh, into a living woman whose cheeks paled and flushed at nothing but her thoughts, who laughed at herself in her mirror, loitered over her toilet trying one gown after another, and walked

half-smiling through a succession of rosy dreams.

It all came about very simply. One of the aforementioned bridge players wonder'd if Mrs. Carr-Boldt and her niece—oh, wasn't it?—her secretary then—would like to hear a very interesting young American professor lecture this morning?—wondered, when they were fanning themselves in the airy lecture-room, if they would care to meet Professor Tenison?

Margaret looked into a pair of keen, humorous eyes, answered with her own smile Professor Tenison's sudden charming one, lost her small hand in his big firm one. Then she listened to him talk, as he strode about the platform, boyishly shaking back the hair that fell across his forehead. After that he walked to the hotel with them, through dazzling seas of perfume, and of flowers, under the enchanted shifting green of great trees—or so Margaret thought. There was a plunge from the hot street into

the awninged cool gloom of the hotel, and then a luncheon, when the happy steady murmur from their own table seemed echoed by the murmurous clink and stir and laughter all about them, and accented by the not-too-close music from the band.

Doctor Tenison was everything charming, Margaret thought, instantly drawn by the unaffected, friendly manner, and watching the interested gleam of his blue eyes and the white flash of his teeth. He was a gentleman, to begin with; distinguished at thirty-two in his chosen work; big and well-built, without suggesting the athlete, of an old and honored American family, and the only son of a rich—and eccentric—old doctor whom Mrs. Carr-Boldt chanced to know.

He was frankly delighted at the chance that had brought him in contact with these charming people; and as Mrs. Carr-Boldt took an instant fancy to him, and as he was staying at their own hotel, they saw him after that every day, and several times a

day. Margaret would come down the great sun-bathed stairway in the morning to find him patiently waiting in a porch chair. Her heart would give a great leap—half joy, half new strange pain, as she recognized him. There would be time for a chat over their fruit and eggs before Mr. Carr-Boldt came down, all ready for a motor-trip, or Mrs. Carr-Boldt, swathed in cream-colored coat and flying veils, joined them with an approving “Good-morning.”

Margaret would remember these breakfasts all her life: the sun-splashed little table in a corner of the great dining-room, the rosy fatherly waiter who was so much delighted with her German, the busy picturesque traffic in the street just below the wide-open window. She would always remember a certain filmy silk striped gown, a wide hat loaded with daisies; always love the odor of linden trees in the spring.

Sometimes the professor went with them on their morning drive, to be dropped at the

lecture-hall with Margaret and Mrs. Carr-Boldt. The latter was pleased to take the course of lectures very seriously, and carried a handsome Russian leather note-book, and a gold pencil. Sometimes after luncheon they all went on an expedition together, and now and then Margaret and Doctor Tenison went off alone on foot, to explore the city. They would end the afternoon with coffee and little cakes in some tea-room, and come home tired and merry in the long shadows of the spring sunset, with wilted flowers from the street markets in their hands.

There was one glorious tramp in the rain, when the professor's great laugh rang out like a boy's for sheer high spirits, and when Margaret was an enchanting vision in her long coat, with her cheeks glowing through the blown wet tendrils of her hair. That day they had tea in the deserted charming little parlor of a tiny inn, and drank it toasting their feet over a glowing fire.

“Is Mrs. Carr-Boldt your mother's or

your father's sister?" John Tenison asked, watching his companion with approval.

"Oh, good gracious!" said Margaret, laughing over her teacup. "Haven't I told you yet that I'm only her secretary? I never saw Mrs. Carr-Boldt until five years ago."

"Perhaps you did tell me. But I got it into my head, that first day, that you were aunt and niece——"

"People do, I think," Margaret said thoughtfully, "because we're both fair." She did not say that but for Mrs. Carr-Boldt's invaluable maid the likeness would have been less marked, on this score at least. "I taught school," she went on simply, "and Mrs. Carr-Boldt happened to come to my school, and she asked me to come to her."

"You're all alone in the world, Miss Paget?" He was eying her musingly; the direct question came quite naturally.

"Oh, dear me, no! My father and mother are living"; and feeling, as she always did,

a little claim on her loyalty, she added: "We are, or were, rather, Southern people—but my father settled in a very small New York town——"

"Mrs. Carr-Boldt told me that—I'd forgotten——" said Professor Tenison, and he carried the matter entirely out of Margaret's hands—much, much further indeed than she would have carried it, by continuing, "She tells me that Quincyport was named for your mother's grandfather, and that Judge Paget was your father's father."

"Father's uncle," Margaret corrected, although as a matter of fact Judge Paget had been no nearer than her father's second cousin. "But father always called him uncle," Margaret assured herself inwardly. To the Quincyport claim she said nothing. Quincyport was in the county that Mother's people had come from; Quincy was a very unusual name, and the original Quincy had been a Charles, which certainly was one of Mother's family names. Margaret and

Julie, browsing about among the colonial histories and genealogies of the Weston Public Library years before, had come to a jubilant certainty that Mother's grandfather *must* have been the same man. But she did not feel quite so positive now.

"Your people aren't still in the South, you said?"

"Oh, no!" Margaret cleared her throat. "They're in Weston—Weston, New York."

"*Weston!* Not near Dayton?"

"Why, yes! Do you know Dayton?"

"Do I know Dayton?" He was like an eager child. "Why, my Aunt Pamela lives there; the only mother I ever knew! I knew Weston, too, a little. Lovely homes there, some of them—old colonial houses. And your mother lives there? Is she fond of flowers?"

"She loves them," Margaret said, vaguely uncomfortable.

"Well, she must know Aunt Pamela," said John Tenison, enthusiastically. "I

expect they'd be great friends. And *you* must know Aunt Pam. She's like a dainty old piece of china, or a—I don't know, a tea rose! She's never married, and she lives in the most charming brick house, with brick walls and hollyhocks all about it, and such an atmosphere inside! She has an old maid and an old gardener, and—don't you know—she's the sort of woman who likes to sit down under a portrait of your great-grandfather, in a dim parlor full of mahogany and rose jars, with her black silk skirts spreading about her, and an Old Blue cup in her hand, and talk family—how cousin this married a man whose people aren't anybody, and cousin that is outraging precedent by naming her child for her husband's side of the house. She's a funny, dear old lady! You know, Miss Paget," the professor went on, with his eager, impersonal air, "when I met you, I *thought* you didn't quite seem like a New Yorker and a Bar Harborer—if that's the word! Aunt

Pam—you know she's my only mother, I got all my early knowledge from her!—Aunt Pam detests the usual New York girl, and the minute I met you I knew she'd like you. You'd sort of fit into the Dayton picture, with your braids, and those ruffly things you wear!"

Margaret said simply, "I would love to meet her," and began slowly to draw on her gloves. It surely was not requisite that she should add, "But you must not confuse my home with any such exquisitely ordered existence as that. We are poor people, our house is crowded, our days a severe and endless struggle with the ugly things of life. We have good blood in our veins, but not more than hundreds of thousands of other American families. My mother would not understand one tenth of your aunt's conversation; your aunt would find very uninteresting the things that are vital to my mother."

No, she couldn't say that. She picked

up her dashing little hat, and pinned it over her loosened soft mass of yellow hair, and buttoned up her storm coat, and plunged her hands deep in her pockets. No, the professor would call on her at Bar Harbor, take a yachting trip with the Carr-Boldts perhaps, and then—and then, when they were really good friends, some day she would ask Mother to have a simple little luncheon, and Mrs. Carr-Boldt would let her bring Doctor Tenison down in the motor from New York. And meantime—no need to be too explicit.

For just two happy weeks Margaret lived in Wonderland. The fourteen days were a revelation to her. Life seemed to grow warmer, more rosy-colored. Little things became significant; every moment carried its freight of joy. Her beauty, always notable, became almost startling; there was a new glow in her cheeks and lips, new fire in the dark-lashed eyes that were so charming a contrast to her bright hair.

Like a pair of joyous and irresponsible children she and John Tenison walked through the days, too happy ever to pause and ask themselves whither they were going.

Then abruptly it ended. Victoria, brought down from school in Switzerland with various indications of something wrong, was in a flash a sick child; a child who must be hurried home to the only surgeon in whom Mrs. Carr-Boldt placed the least trust. There was hurried packing, telephoning, wiring; it was only a few hours after the great German physician's diagnosis that they were all at the railway station, breathless, nervous, eager to get started.

Doctor Tenison accompanied them to the station, and in the five minutes' wait before their train left, a little incident occurred, the memory of which clouded Margaret's dreams for many a day to come. Arriving, as they were departing, were the St. George Allens, noisy, rich, arrogant New Yorkers, for whom Margaret had a special dislike.

The Allens fell joyously upon the Carr-Boldt party, with a confusion of greetings. "And Jack Tenison!" shouted Lily Allen, delightedly. "Well, what *fun!* What are you doing here?"

"I'm feeling a little lonely," said the professor, smiling at Mrs. Carr-Boldt.

"Nothing like that; unsay them woyds," said Maude Allen, cheerfully. "Mamma, make him dine with us! Say you will."

"I assure you I was dreading the lonely evening," John Tenison said gratefully. Margaret's last glimpse of his face was between Lily's pink and cherry hat and Maude's astonishing headgear of yellow straw, gold braid, spangled quills, and calla lilies. She carried a secret heartache through the worried fortnight of Victoria's illness and the busy days that followed; for Mrs. Carr-Boldt had one of many nervous breakdowns, and took her turn at the hospital when Victoria came home. For the first time in five happy years Margaret drooped,

and for the first time a longing for money and power of her own gnawed at the girl's heart. If she had but her share of these things, she could hold her own against a hundred Maude and Lily Allens.

As it was, she told herself a little bitterly, she was only a secretary, one of the hundred paid dependents of a rich woman. She was only, after all, a little middle-class country school teacher.

CHAPTER V

SO YOU'RE going home to your own people for the week-end, Peggy? And how many of you are there, I always forget?" said young Mrs. George Crawford, negligently. She tipped back in her chair, half shut her novel, half shut her eyes, and looked critically at her fingernails.

Outside the big country house summer sunshine flooded the smooth lawns, sparkled on the falling diamonds and still pool of the fountain, glowed over acres of matchless wood and garden. But deep awnings made a clear cool shade indoors, and the wide rooms were delightfully breezy.

Margaret, busy with a ledger and cheque-book, smiled absently, finished a long column, made an orderly entry, and wiped her pen.

“Seven,” said she, smiling.

“Seven!” echoed Mrs. Potter, lazily. “My heaven—seven children! How early Victorian!”

“Isn’t it?” said a third woman, a very beautiful woman, Mrs. Watts Watson, who was also idling and reading in the white-and-gray morning-room. “Well,” she added, dropping her magazine, and locking her hands about her head, “my grandmother had ten. Fancy trying to raise ten children!”

“Oh, everything’s different now,” the first speaker said indifferently. “Everything’s more expensive, life is more complicated. People used to have roomier houses, aunts and cousins and grandmothers living with them; there was always some one at home with the children. Nowadays we don’t do that.”

“And thank the saints we don’t!” said Mrs. Watson, piously. “If there’s one thing I *can’t* stand, it’s a houseful of things-in-law!”

“Of course; but I mean it made the family problem simpler,” Mrs. Crawford pursued. “Oh—and I don’t know! Everything was so simple. All this business of sterilizing, and fumigating, and pasteurizing, and vaccinating, and boiling in boracic acid wasn’t done in those days,” she finished vaguely.

“Now there you are—now *there you are!*” said Mrs. Carr-Boldt, entering into the conversation with sudden force. Entirely recovered after her nervous collapse, as brisk as ever in her crisp linen gown, she was signing the cheques that Margaret handed her, frowningly busy and absorbed with her accounts. Now she leaned back in her chair, glanced at the watch at her wrist, and relaxed the cramped muscles of her body. “That’s exactly it, Rose,” said she to Mrs. Crawford. “Life *is* more complicated. People—the very people who ought to have children—simply cannot afford it! And who’s to blame? Can you blame a woman whose life is packed full of

other things she simply cannot avoid, if she declines to complicate things any further? Our grandmothers didn't have telephones, or motor-cars, or week-end affairs, or even—for that matter—manicures and hair-dressers! A good heavy silk was full dress all the year 'round. They washed their own hair. The 'upstairs girl' answered the door-bell—why, they didn't even have talcum powder and nursery refrigerators, and sanitary rugs that have to be washed every day! Do you suppose my grandmother ever took a baby's temperature, or had its eyes and nose examined, or its adenoids cut? They had more children, and they lost more children—without any reason or logic whatever. Poor things, they never thought of doing anything else, I suppose! A fat old darky nurse brought up the whole crowd—it makes one shudder to think of it! Why, I had *always* a trained nurse, and the regular nurse used to take two baths a day. I insisted on *that*, and both nurseries

were washed out every day with chloride of potash solution, and the iron beds washed every week! And even then Vic had this mastoid trouble, and Harriet got everything, almost."

"Exactly," said Mrs. Watson. "That's you, Hattie, with all the money in the world. Now do you wonder that some of the rest of us, who have to think of money—in short," she finished decidedly, "do you wonder that people are *not* having children? At first, naturally, one doesn't want them—for three or four years, I'm sure, the thought doesn't come into one's head. But then, afterward—you see, I've been married fifteen years now!—afterward, I think it would be awfully nice to have one or two little kiddies, if it was a possible thing. But it isn't."

"No, it isn't," Mrs. Crawford agreed. "You don't want to have them unless you're able to do everything in the world for them. If I were Hat here, I'd have a dozen."

“Oh, no, you wouldn’t,” Mrs. Carr-Boldt assured her promptly. “No, you wouldn’t! You can’t leave everything to servants—there are clothes to think of, and dentists, and special teachers, and it’s frightfully hard to get a nursery governess. And then you’ve got to see that they know the right people—don’t you know?—and give them parties—I tell you it’s a *strain*.”

“Well, I don’t believe my mother with her seven ever worked any harder than you do!” said Margaret, with the admiration in her eyes that was so sweet to the older woman. “Look at this morning—did you sit down before you came in here twenty minutes ago?”

“I? Indeed I didn’t!” Mrs. Carr-Boldt said. “I had my breakfast and letters at seven, bath at eight, straightened out that squabble between Swann and the cook—I think Paul is still simmering, but that’s neither here nor there!—then I went down with the vet to see the mare. Joe’ll never

forgive me if I've really broken the creature's knees!—then I telephoned mother, and saw Harriet's violin man, and talked to that Italian Joe sent up to clean the oils—he's in the gallery now, and—let's see——”

“Italian lesson,” Margaret prompted.

“Italian lesson,” the other echoed, “and then came in here to sign my cheques.”

“You're so executive, Harriet!” said Mrs. Crawford, languidly.

“Apropos of Swann,” Margaret said, “he confided to me that *he* has seven children—on a little farm down on Long Island.”

“The butler—oh, I dare say!” Mrs. Watson agreed. “They can, because they've no standard to maintain—seven, or seventeen—the only difference in expense is the actual amount of bread and butter consumed.”

“It's too bad,” said Mrs. Crawford. “But you've got to handle the question sanely and reasonably, like any other. Now, I love children,” she went on. “I'm

perfectly crazy about my sister's little girl. She's eleven now, and the cutest thing alive. But when I think of all Mabel's been through, since she was born—I realize that it's a little *too* much to expect of any woman. Now, look at us—there are thousands of people fixed as we are. We're in an apartment hotel, with one maid. There's no room for a second maid, no porch and no backyard. Well, the baby comes—one loses, before and after the event, just about six months of *everything*, and of course the expense is frightful, but no matter!—the baby comes. We take a house. That means three indoor maids, George's chauffeur, a man for lawn and furnace—that's five——”

“Doubling expenses,” said Mrs. Carr-Boldt, thoughtfully.

“Doubling——! *Trebling*, or more. But that's not all. Baby must be out from eleven to three every day. So you've got to go sit by the carriage in the park while

nurse goes home for her lunch. Or, if you're out for luncheon, or giving a luncheon, she brings baby home, bumps the carriage into the basement, carries the baby upstairs, eats her lunch in snatches—the maids don't like it, and I don't blame them! I know how it was with Mabel; she had to give up that wonderful old apartment of theirs on Gramercy Park. Sid had his studio on the top floor, and she had such a lovely flat on the next floor, but there was no lift, and no laundry, and the kitchen was small—a baby takes so much fussing! And then she lost that splendid cook of hers, Germaine. *She* wouldn't stand it. Up to that time she'd been cooking and waiting, too, but the baby ended that. Mabel took a house, and Sid paid studio rent besides, and they had two maids, and then three maids—and what with their fighting, and their days off, and eternally changing, Mabel was a *wreck*. I've seen her trying to play a bridge hand with Dorothy bobbing about on her

arm—poor girl! Finally they went to a hotel, and of course the child got older, and was less trouble. But to this day Mabel doesn't dare leave her alone for one second. And when they go out to dinner, and leave her alone in the hotel, of course the child cries——!”

“That's the worst of a kiddie,” Mrs. Watson said. “You can't ever turn 'em off, as it were, or make it spades! They're always right on the job. I'll never forget Elsie Clay. She was the best friend I had—my bridesmaid, too. She married, and after a while they took a house in Jersey because of the baby. I went out there to lunch one day. There she was in a house perfectly buried in trees, with the rain sopping down outside, and smoke blowing out of the fireplace, and the drawing-room as dark as pitch at two o'clock. Elsie said she used to nearly die of loneliness, sitting there all afternoon long listening to the trains whistling, and the maid thumping

irons in the kitchen, and picking up the baby's blocks. And they quarrelled, you know, she and her husband—that was the beginning of the trouble. Finally the boy went to his grandmother, and now I believe Elsie's married again, and living in California somewhere."

Margaret, hanging over the back of her chair, was an attentive listener.

"But people—people in town have children!" she said. "The Blankenships have one, and haven't the de Normandys?"

"The Blankenship boy is in college," said Mrs. Carr-Boldt; "and the little de Normandys lived with their grandmother until they were old enough for boarding-school."

"Well, the Deanes have three!" Margaret said triumphantly.

"Ah, well, my dear! Harry Deane's a rich man, and she was a Pell of Philadelphia," Mrs. Crawford supplied promptly. "Now the Eastmans have three, too, with a trained nurse apiece."

"I see," Margaret admitted slowly.

"Far wiser to have none at all," said Mrs. Carr-Boldt, in her decisive way, "than to handicap them from the start by letting them see other children enjoying pleasures and advantages they can't afford. And now, girls, let's stop wasting time. It's half-past eleven. Why can't we have a game of auction right here and now?"

Margaret returned to her cheque-book with speed. The other two, glad to be aroused, heartily approved the idea.

"Well, what does this very businesslike aspect imply?" Mrs. Carr-Boldt asked her secretary.

"It means that I can't play cards, and you oughtn't," Margaret said, laughing.

"Oh? Why not?"

"Because you've *lots* of things to do, and I've got to finish these notes, and I have to sit with Harriet while she does her German——"

"Where's Fräulein?"

"Fräulein's going to drive Vic over to

the Partridges' for luncheon, and I promised Swann I'd talk to him about favors and things for to-morrow night."

"Well—busy Lizzie! And what have I to do?"

Margaret reached for a well-filled date-book.

"You were to decide about those alterations, the porch and dining-room, you know," said she. "There are some architect's sketches around here; the man's going to be here early in the morning. You said you'd drive to the yacht club, to see about the stage for the children's play; you were to stop on the way back and see old Mrs. McNab a moment. You wanted to write Mrs. Polk a note to catch the *Kaiserin Augusta*, and luncheon's early because of the Kellogg bridge." She shut the book. "And call Mr. Carr-Boldt at the club at one," she added.

"All that, now fancy!" said her employer, admiringly.

She had swept some scattered magazines from a small table, and was now seated there, negligently shuffling a pack of cards in her fine white hands.

“Ring, will you, Peggy?” said she.

“And the boat races are to-day, and you dine at Oaks-in-the-Field,” Margaret supplemented inflexibly.

“Yes? Well, come and beat the seven of clubs,” said Mrs. Carr-Boldt, spreading the deck for the draw.

“Fräulein,” she said sweetly, a moment later, when a maid had summoned that worthy and earnest governess, “tell Miss Harriet that Mother doesn’t want her to do her German to-day, it’s too warm. Tell her that she’s to go with you and Miss Victoria for a drive. Thank you. And, Fräulein, will you telephone old Mrs. McNab, and say that Mrs. Carr-Boldt is lying down with a severe headache, and she won’t be able to come in this morning? Thank you. And, Fräulein, telephone the yacht

club, will you? And tell Mr. Mathews that Mrs. Carr-Boldt is indisposed and he'll have to come back this afternoon. I'll talk to him before the children's races. And—one thing more! Will you tell Swann Miss Paget will see him about to-morrow's dinner when she comes back from the yacht club to-day? And tell him to send us something cool to drink now. Thank you so much. No, shut it. Thank you. Have a nice drive!"

They all drew up their chairs to the table.

"You and I, Rose," said Mrs. Watson. "I'm so glad you suggested this, Hattie. I am dying to play."

"It really rests me more than anything else," said Mrs. Carr-Boldt. "Two spades."

CHAPTER VI

ARCHERTON, a blur of flying trees and houses, bright in the late sunlight, Pottsville, with children wading and shouting, under the bridge, Hunt's Crossing, then the next would be Weston and home.

Margaret, beginning to gather wraps and small possessions together, sighed. She sighed partly because her head ached, partly because the hot trip had mussed her usual fresh trimness, largely because she was going home.

This was August; her last trip home had been between Christmas and the New Year. She had sent a box from Germany at Easter, ties for the boys, silk scarves for Rebecca, books for Dad; and she had written Mother for her birthday in June, and enclosed an

exquisite bit of lace in the letter; but although Victoria's illness had brought her to America nearly three months ago, it had somehow been impossible, she wrote them, to come home until now. Margaret had paid a great deal for the lace, as a sort of salve for her conscience—not that Mother would ever wear it!

Here was Weston. Weston looking its very ugliest in the level pitiless rays of the afternoon sun. The town, like most of its inhabitants, was wilted and grimed after the burden and heat of the long summer day. Margaret carried her heavy suitcase slowly up Main Street. Shop windows were spotted and dusty, and shopkeepers, standing idle in their doorways, looked spotted and dusty, too. A cloud of flies fought and surged about the closely guarded door of the butcher shop; a delivery cart was at the curb, the discouraged horse switching an ineffectual tail.

As Margaret passed this cart, a tall boy of

fourteen came out of the shop with a bang of the wire-netting door, and slid a basket into the back of the cart.

“Teddy!” said Margaret, irritation evident in her voice in spite of herself.

“Hello, Mark!” said her brother, delightedly. “Say, great to see you! Get in on the four-ten?”

“Ted,” said Margaret, kissing him, as the Pagets always quite simply kissed each other when they met, “what are you driving Costello’s cart for?”

“Like to,” said Theodore, simply. “Mother doesn’t care. Say, you look swell, Mark!”

“What makes you want to drive this horrid cart, Ted?” protested Margaret. “What does Costello pay you?”

“Pay me?” scowled her brother, gathering up the reins. “Oh, come out of it, Marg’ret! He doesn’t pay me anything. Don’t you make Mother stop me, either, will you?” he ended anxiously.

"Of course I won't!" Margaret said impatiently.

"Giddap, Ruth!" said Theodore; but departing, he pulled up to add cheerfully, "Say, Dad didn't get his raise."

"Did?" said Margaret, brightening.

"*Didn't!*" He grinned affectionately upon her as with a dislocating jerk the cart started a ricocheting career down the street with that abandon known only to butchers' carts. Margaret, changing her heavy suitcase to the rested arm, was still vexedly watching it, when two girls, laughing in the open doorway of the express company's office across the street, caught sight of her. One of them, a little vision of pink hat and ruffles, and dark eyes and hair, came running to join her.

Rebecca was now sixteen, and of all the handsome Pagets the best to look upon. She was dressed according to her youthful lights; every separate article of her apparel to-day, from her rowdyish little hat to her

openwork hose, represented a battle with Mrs. Paget's preconceived ideas as to propriety in dress, with the honors largely for Rebecca. Rebecca had grown up, in eight months, her sister thought, confusedly; she was no longer the adorable, un-self-conscious tomboy who fought and skated and toboganned with the boys.

"Hello, darling dear!" said Rebecca. "Too bad no one met you! We all thought you were coming on the six. Crazy about your suit! Here's Maudie Pratt. You know Maudie, don't you, Mark?"

Margaret knew Maudie. Rebecca's infatuation for plain, heavy-featured, complacent Miss Pratt was a standing mystery in the Paget family. Margaret smiled, bowed.

"I think we stumbled upon a pretty little secret of yours to-day, Miss Margaret," said Maudie, with her best company manner, as they walked along. Margaret raised her eyebrows. "Rebel and I," Maudie

went on—Rebecca was at the age that seeks a piquant substitute for an unpoetical family name—“Rebel and I are wondering if we may ask you who Mr. John Tenison is?”

John Tenison! Margaret’s heart stood still with a shock almost sickening, then beat furiously. What—how—who on earth had told them anything of John Tenison? Coloring high, she looked sharply at Rebecca.

“Cheer up, angel,” said Rebecca, “he’s not dead. He sent a telegram to-day, and Mother opened it——”

“Naturally,” said Margaret, concealing an agony of impatience, as Rebecca paused apologetically.

“He’s with his aunt, at Dayton, up the road here,” continued Rebecca; “and wants you to wire him if he may come down and spend to-morrow here.”

Margaret drew a relieved breath. There was time to turn around, at least.

“Who is he, sis?” asked Rebecca.

“Why, he’s an awfully clever professor, honey,” Margaret answered serenely. “We heard him lecture in Germany this spring, and met him afterward. I liked him very much. He’s tremendously interesting.” She tried to keep out of her voice the thrill that shook her at the mere thought of him. Confused pain and pleasure stirred her to the very heart. He wanted to come to see her, he must have telephoned Mrs. Carr-Boldt and asked to call, or he would not have known that she was at home this week-end—surely that was significant, surely that meant something! The thought was all pleasure, so great a joy and pride indeed that Margaret was conscious of wanting to lay it aside, to think of, dream of, ponder over, when she was alone. But, on the other hand, there was instantly the miserable conviction that he mustn’t be allowed to come to Weston, no—no—she couldn’t have him see her home and her people on a crowded hot summer Sunday, when the

town looked its ugliest, and the children were home from school, and when the scramble to get to church and to safely accomplish the one o'clock dinner exhausted the women of the family. And how could she keep him from coming, what excuse could she give?

"Don't you want him to come—is he old and fussy?" asked Rebecca, interestedly.

"I'll see," Margaret answered vaguely. "No, he's only thirty-two or four."

"*And charming!*" said Maudie archly. Margaret eyed her with a coolness worthy of Mrs. Carr-Boldt herself, and then turned rather pointedly to Rebecca.

"How's Mother, Becky?"

"Oh, she's fine!" Rebecca said, absently in her turn. When Maudie left them at the next corner, she said quickly:

"Mark, did you see where we were when I saw you?"

"At the express office——? Yes," Margaret said, surprised.

“Well, listen,” said Rebecca, reddening. “Don’t say anything to Mother about it, will you? She thinks those boys are fresh in there—she don’t like me to go in!”

“Oh, Beck—then you oughtn’t!” Margaret protested.

“Well, I wasn’t!” Rebecca said uncomfortably. “We went to see if Maudie’s racket had come. You won’t—will you, Mark?”

“Tell Mother—no, I won’t,” Margaret said, with a long sigh. She looked sideways at Rebecca—the dainty, fast-forming little figure, the even ripple and curl of her plaited hair, the assured pose of the pretty head. Victoria Carr-Boldt, just Rebecca’s age, was a big schoolgirl still, self-conscious and inarticulate, her well-groomed hair in an unbecoming “club,” her well-hung skirts unbecomingly short. Margaret had half expected to find Rebecca at the same stage of development.

Rebecca was cheerful now, the promise exacted, and cheerfully observed:

“Dad didn’t get his raise—isn’t that the limit?”

Margaret sighed again, shrugged wearily. They were in their own quiet side street now, a street lined with ugly, shabby houses and beautified by magnificent old elms and maples. The Pagets’ own particular gate was weather-peeled, the lawn trampled and bare. A bulging wire-netting door gave on the shabby old hall Margaret knew so well; she went on into the familiar rooms, acutely conscious, as she always was for the first hour or two at home, of the bareness and ugliness everywhere—the old sofa that sagged in the seat, the scratched rockers, the bookcases overflowing with coverless magazines, and the old square piano half-buried under loose sheets of music.

Duncan sat on the piano bench—gloomily sawing at a violoncello. Robert—nine now, with all his pretty baby roundness gone, a lean little burned, peeling face, and big teeth missing when he smiled, stood in

the bay window, twisting the already limp net curtains into a tight rope. Each boy gave Margaret a kiss that seemed curiously to taste of dust, sunburn, and freckles, before she followed a noise of hissing and voices to the kitchen to find Mother.

The kitchen, at five o'clock on Saturday afternoon, was in wild confusion, and insufferably hot. Margaret had a distinct impression that not a movable article therein was in place, and not an available inch of tables or chairs unused, before her eyes reached the tall figure of the woman in a gown of chocolate percale, who was frying cutlets at the big littered range. Her face was dark with heat and streaked with perspiration. She turned as Margaret entered, and gave a delighted cry.

“Well, there’s my girl! Bless her heart! Look out for this spoon, lovey,” she added immediately, giving the girl a guarded embrace. Tears of joy stood frankly in her fine eyes.

“I meant to have all of this out of the way, dear,” apologized Mrs. Paget, with a gesture that included cakes in the process of frosting, salad vegetables in the process of cooling, soup in the process of getting strained, great loaves of bread that sent a delicious fragrance over all the other odors. “But we didn’t look for you until six.”

“Oh, no matter!” Margaret said bravely.

“Rebecca tell you Dad didn’t get his raise?” called Mrs. Paget, in a voice that rose above the various noises of the kitchen. “Blanche!” she protested, “can’t that wait?” for the old negress had begun to crack ice with deafening smashes. But Blanche did not hear, so Mrs. Paget continued loudly: “Dad saw Redman himself; he’ll tell you about it! Don’t stay in the kitchen in that pretty dress, dear! I’m coming right upstairs.”

It was very hot upstairs; the bedrooms smelled faintly of matting, the soap in the bathroom was shrivelled in its saucer. In

Margaret's old room the week's washing had been piled high on the bed. She took off her hat and linen coat, brushed her hair back from her face, flinging her head back and shutting her eyes the better to fight tears as she did so, and began to assort the collars and shirts and put them away. For Dad's bureau—for Bruce's bureau—for the boys' bureau, tablecloths to go downstairs, towels for the shelves in the bathroom. Two little shirtwaists for Rebecca with little holes torn through them where collar and belt pins belonged.

Her last journey took her to the big, third-story room where the three younger boys slept. The three narrow beds were still unmade, and the western sunlight poured over tumbled blankets and the scattered small possessions that seem to ooze from the pores of little boys. Margaret set her lips distastefully as she brought order out of chaos. It was all wrong, somehow, she thought, gathering handkerchiefs

and matches and "Nick Carters" and the oiled paper that had wrapped caramels from under the pillows that would in a few hours harbor a fresh supply.

She went out on the porch in time to put her arms about her father's shabby shoulders when he came in. Mr. Paget was tired, and he told his wife and daughters that he thought he was a very sick man. Margaret's mother met this statement with an anxious solicitude that was very soothing to the sufferer. She made Mark get Daddy his slippers and loose coat, and suggested that Rebecca shake up the dining-room couch before she established him there, in a rampart of pillows. No outsider would have dreamed that Mrs. Paget had dealt with this exact emergency some hundreds of times in the past twenty years.

Mr. Paget, reclining, shut his eyes, remarked that he had had an "awful, awful day," and wondered faintly if it would be too much trouble to have "somebody"

make him just a little milk toast for his dinner. He smiled at Margaret when she sat down beside him; all the children were dear, but the oldest daughter knew she came first with her father.

“Getting to be an old, old man!” he said wearily, and Margaret hated herself because she had to quell an impatient impulse to tell him he was merely tired and cross and hungry, before she could say, in the proper soothing tone, “Don’t talk that way, Dad darling!” She had to listen to a long account of the “raise,” wincing every time her father emphasized the difference between her own position and that of her employer. Dad was at least the equal of any one in Weston! Why, a man Dad’s age oughtn’t to be humbly asking a raise, he ought to be dictating now. It was just Dad’s way of looking at things, and it was all wrong.

“Well, I’ll tell you one thing!” said Rebecca, who had come in with a brimming

soup plate of milk toast, "Joe Redman gave a picnic last month, and he came here with his mother, in the car, to ask me. And I was the scornfullest thing you ever saw, wasn't I, Ted? Not much!"

"Oh, Beck, you oughtn't to mix social and business things that way!" Margaret said helplessly.

"Dinner!" screamed the nine-year-old Robert, breaking into the room at this point, and "Dinner!" said Mrs. Paget, wearily, cheerfully, from the chair into which she had dropped at the head of the table. Mr. Paget, revived by sympathy, milk toast, and Rebecca's attentions, took his place at the foot, and Bruce the chair between Margaret and his mother. Like the younger boys, whose almost confluent freckles had been brought into unusual prominence by violently applied soap and water, and whose hair dripped on their collars, he had brushed up for dinner, but his negligee shirt and corduroy trousers were stained and

spotted from machine oil. Margaret, comparing him secretly to the men she knew, as daintily groomed as women, in their spotless white, felt a little resentment that Bruce's tired face was so contented, and said to herself again that it was all wrong.

Dinner was the same old haphazard meal with which she was so familiar; Blanche supplying an occasional reproof to the boys, Ted ignoring his vegetables, and ready in an incredibly short time for a second cutlet, and Robert begging for corn syrup, immediately after the soup, and spilling it from his bread. Mrs. Paget was flushed, her disappearances kitchenward frequent. She wanted Margaret to tell her all about Mr. Tenison. Margaret laughed, and said there was nothing to tell.

"You might get a horse and buggy from Peterson's," suggested Mrs. Paget, interestedly, "and drive about after dinner."

"Oh, Mother, I don't think I had better let him come!" Margaret said. "There's

so many of us, and such confusion, on Sunday! Ju and Harry are almost sure to come over."

"Yes, I guess they will," Mrs. Paget said, with her sudden radiant smile. "Ju is so dear in her little house, and Harry's so sweet with her," she went on with vivacity. "Daddy and I had dinner with them Tuesday. Bruce said Rebecca was lovely with the boys—we're going to Julie's again some time. I declare it's so long since we've been anywhere without the children that we both felt funny. It was a lovely evening."

"You're too much tied, Mother," Margaret said affectionately.

"Not now!" her mother protested radiantly. "With all my babies turning into men and women so fast. And I'll have you all together to-morrow—and your friend I hope, too, Mark," she added hospitably. "You had better let him come, dear. There's a big dinner, and I always freeze

more cream than we need, anyway, because Daddy likes a plate of it about four o'clock, if there's any left."

"Well—but there's nothing to do," Margaret protested.

"No, but dinner takes quite a while," Mrs. Paget suggested a little doubtfully; "and we could have a nice talk on the porch, and then you could go driving or walking. I wish there *was* something cool and pleasant to do, Mark," she finished a little wistfully. "You do just as you think best about asking him to come."

"I think I'll wire him that another time would be better," said Margaret, slowly. "Some time we'll regularly arrange for it."

"Well, perhaps that would be best," her mother agreed. "Some other time we'll send the boys off before dinner, and have things all nice and quiet. In October, say, when the trees are so pretty. I don't know but what that's my favorite time of all the year!"

Margaret looked at her as if she found something new in the tired, bright face. She could not understand why her mother—still too heated to commence eating her dinner—should radiate so definite an atmosphere of content, as she sat back a little breathless, after the flurry of serving. She herself felt injured and sore, not at the mere disappointment it caused her to put off John Tenison's visit, but because she felt more acutely than ever to-night the difference between his position and her own.

"Something nice has happened, Mother?" she hazarded, entering with an effort into the older woman's mood.

"Nothing special." Her mother's happy eyes ranged about the circle of young faces. "But it's so lovely to have you here, and to have Ju coming to-morrow," she said. "I just wish Daddy could build a house for each one of you, as you marry and settle down, right around our house in a circle, as they say people do sometimes in the Old

World. I think then I'd have nothing in life to wish for!"

"Oh, Mother—in Weston!" Margaret said hopelessly, but her mother did not catch it.

"Not, Mark," she went on hastily and earnestly, "that I'm not more than grateful to God for all His goodness, as it is! I look at other women, and I wonder, I wonder—what I have done to be so blessed! Mark—" her face suddenly glowed, she leaned a little toward her daughter, "dearie, I *must* tell you," she said; "it's about Ju——"

Their eyes met in the pause.

"Mother—really?" Margaret said slowly.

"She told me on Tuesday," Mrs. Paget said, with glistening eyes. "Now, not a word to any one, Mark—but she'll want you to know!"

"And is she glad?" Margaret said, unable to rejoice.

"Glad?" Mrs. Paget echoed, her face gladness itself.

“Well, Ju’s so young—just twenty-one,” Margaret submitted a little uncertainly; “and she’s been so free—and they’re *just* in the new house! And I thought they were going to Europe!”

“Oh, Europe!” Mrs. Paget dismissed it cheerfully. “Why, it’s the happiest time in a woman’s life, Mark! Or I don’t know, though,” she went on thoughtfully, “I don’t know but what I was happiest when you were all tiny, tumbling about me, and climbing into my lap. . . . Why, you love children, dear,” she finished, with a shade of reproach in her voice, as Margaret still looked sober.

“Yes, I know, Mother,” Margaret said. “But Julie’s only got the one maid, and I don’t suppose they can have another. I hope to goodness Ju won’t get herself all run down!”

Her mother laughed. “You remind me of Grandma Paget,” said she, cheerfully; “she lived ten miles away when we were

married, but she came in when Bruce was born. She was rather a proud, cold woman herself, but she was very sweet to me. Well, then little Charlie came, fourteen months later, and she took that very seriously. Mother was dead, you know, and she stayed with me again, and worried me half sick telling me that it wasn't fair to Bruce and it wasn't fair to Charlie to divide my time between them that way. Well, then when my third baby was coming, I didn't dare tell her. Dad kept telling me to, and I couldn't, because I knew what a calamity a third would seem to her! Finally she went to visit Aunt Rebecca out West, and it was the very day she got back that the baby came. She came upstairs—she'd come right up from the train, and not seen any one but Dad; and he wasn't very intelligible, I guess—and she sat down and took the baby in her arms, and says she, looking at me sort of patiently, yet as if she was exasperated, too: 'Well, this is a nice way to

do, the minute my back's turned! What are you going to call him, Julia?' And I said, 'I'm going to call her Margaret, for my dear husband's mother, and she's going to be beautiful and good, and grow up to marry the President!'" Mrs. Paget's merry laugh rang out. "I never shall forget your grandmother's face.

"Just the same," Mrs. Paget added, with a sudden deep sigh, "when little Charlie left us, the next year, and Brucie and Dad were both so ill, she and I agreed that you—you were just talking and trying to walk—were the only comfort we had! I could wish my girls no greater happiness than my children have been to me," finished Mother, contentedly.

"I know," Margaret began, half angrily; "but what about the children?" she was going to add. But somehow the arguments she had used so plausibly did not utter themselves easily to Mother, whose children would carry into their own middle age a

wholesome dread of her anger. Margaret faltered, and merely scowled.

“I don’t like to see that expression on your face, dearie,” her mother said, as she might have said it to an eight-year-old child. “Be my sweet girl! Why, marriage isn’t marriage without children, Mark. I’ve been thinking all week of having a baby in my arms again—it’s so long since Rob was a baby.”

Margaret devoted herself, with a rather sullen face, to her dessert. Mother would never feel as she did about these things, and what was the use of arguing? In the silence she heard her father speak loudly and suddenly.

“I am not in a position to have my children squander money on concerts and candy,” he said. Margaret forgot her own grievance, and looked up. The boys looked resentful and gloomy; Rebecca was flushed, her eyes dropped, her lips trembling with disappointment.

“I had promised to take them to the Elks’ Concert and dance,” Mrs. Paget interpreted hastily. “But now Dad says the Bakers are coming over to play whist.”

“Is it going to be a good show, Ted?” Margaret asked.

“Oh,” Rebecca flashed into instant glowing response. “It’s going to be a *dandy*! Every one’s going to be there! Ford Patterson is going to do a monologue—he’s as good as a professional!—and George is going to send up a bunch of carrots and parsnips! And the Weston Male Quartette, Mark, and a playlet by the Hunt’s Crossing Amateur Theatrical Society!”

“Oh—oh!”—Margaret mimicked the eager rush of words. “Let me take them, Dad,” she pleaded, “if it’s going to be as fine as all that! I’ll stand treat for the crowd.”

“Oh, Mark, you darling!” burst from the rapturous Rebecca.

“Say, gee, we’ve got to get there early!”

Theodore warned them, finishing his pudding with one mammoth spoonful.

“If you take them, my dear,” Mr. Paget said graciously, “of course Mother and I are quite satisfied.”

“I’ll hold Robert by one ear and Rebecca by another,” Margaret promised; “and if she so much as dares to look at George or Ted or Jimmy Barr or Paul, I’ll——”

“Oh, Jimmy belongs to Louise, now,” said Rebecca, radiantly. There was a joyous shout of laughter from the light-hearted juniors, and Rebecca, seeing her artless admission too late, turned scarlet while she laughed. Dinner broke up in confusion, as dinner at home always did, and everybody straggled upstairs to dress.

Margaret, changing her dress in a room that was insufferably hot, because the shades must be down, and the gas-lights as high as possible, reflected that another forty-eight hours would see her speeding back to the world of cool, awninged interiors,

uniformed maids, the clink of iced glasses, the flash of white sails on blue water. She could surely afford for that time to be patient and sweet. She lifted Rebecca's starched petticoat from the bed to give Mother a seat, when Mother came rather wearily in to watch them.

"Sweet girl to take them, Mark," said Mother, appreciatively. "I was going to ask Brucie. But he's gone to bed, poor fellow; he's worn out to-night."

"He had a letter from Ned Gunther this morning," said Rebecca, cheerfully—powdering the tip of her pretty nose, her eyes almost crossed with concentration—"and I think it made him blue all day."

"Ned Gunther?" said Margaret.

"Chum at college," Rebecca elucidated; "a lot of them are going to Honolulu, just for this month, and of course they wanted Bruce. Mark, does that show?"

Margaret's heart ached for the beloved brother's disappointment. There it was

again, all wrong! Before she left the house with the rioting youngsters, she ran upstairs to his room. Bruce, surrounded by scientific magazines, a drop-light with a vivid green shade over his shoulder, looked up with a welcoming smile.

“Sit down and talk, Mark,” said he.

Margaret explained her hurry.

“Bruce—this isn’t much fun!” she said, looking about the room with its shabby dresser and worn carpet. “Why aren’t you going to the concert?”

“Is there a concert?” he asked, surprised.

“Why, didn’t you hear us talking at dinner? The Elks, you know.”

“Well—sure! I meant to go to that. I forgot it was to-night,” he said, with his lazy smile. “I came home all in, forgot everything.”

“Oh, come!” Margaret urged, as eagerly as Rebecca ever did. “It’s early, Bruce, come on! You don’t have to shave! We’ll hold a seat—come on!”

“Sure, I will!” he said, suddenly roused. The magazines rapped on the floor, and Margaret had barely shut the door behind her when she heard his bare feet follow them.

It was like old times to sit next to him through the hot merry evening, while Rebecca glowed like a little rose among her friends, and the smaller boys tickled her ear with their whispered comments. Margaret had sent a telegram to Professor Tenison, and felt relieved that at least that strain was spared her. She even danced with Bruce after the concert, and with one or two old friends.

Afterward they strolled back slowly through the inky summer dark, finding the house hot and close when they came in. Margaret went upstairs, hearing her mother’s apologetic, “Oh, Dad, why didn’t I give you back your club?” as she passed the dining-room door. She knew Mother hated whist, and wondered rather irritably why

she played it. The Paget family was slow to settle down. Robert became tearful and whining before he was finally bumped protesting into bed. Theodore and Duncan prolonged their ablutions until the noise of shouting, splashing, and thumping in the bathroom brought Mother to the foot of the stairs. Rebecca was conversational. She lay with her slender arms locked behind her head on the pillow, and talked, as Julie had talked on that memorable night five years ago. Margaret, restless in the hot darkness, wondering whether the maddening little shaft of light from the hall gas was annoying enough to warrant the effort of getting up and extinguishing it, listened and listened.

Rebecca wanted to join the Stage Club, but Mother wouldn't let her unless Bruce did. Rebecca belonged to the Progressive Diners. Did Mark suppose Mother'd think she was crazy if she asked the family not to be in evidence when the crowd came to

the house for the salad course? And Rebecca wanted to write to Bruce's chum, not regularly, you know, Mark, but just now and then, he was so nice! And Mother didn't like the idea. Margaret was obviously supposed to lend a hand with these interesting tangles.

“. . . and I said, 'Certainly not! I won't unmask at all, if it comes to that!' . . . And imagine that elegant fellow carrying my old books and my skates! So I wrote, and Maudie and I decided. . . . And Mark, if it wasn't a perfectly *gorgeous* box of roses! . . . That old, old dimity, but Mother pressed and freshened it up. . . . Not that I want to marry him, or any one . . .”

Margaret wakened from uneasy drowsing with a start. The hall was dark now, the room cooler. Rebecca was asleep. Hands, hands she knew well, were drawing a light covering over her shoulders. She opened her eyes to see her mother.

“I’ve been wondering if you’re disappointed about your friend not coming tomorrow, Mark?” said the tender voice.

“Oh, no-o!” said Margaret, hardily. “Mother—why are you up so late?”

“Just going to bed,” said the other, soothingly. “Blanche forgot to put the oatmeal into the cooker, and I went downstairs again. I’ll say my prayers in here.”

Margaret went off to sleep again, as she had so many hundred times before, with her mother kneeling beside her.

CHAPTER VII

IT SEEMED but a few moments before the blazing Sunday was precipitated upon them, and everybody was late for everything.

The kitchen was filled with the smoke from hot griddles blue in the sunshine when Margaret went downstairs; and in the dining-room the same merciless light fell upon the sticky syrup pitcher, and upon the stains on the tablecloth. Cream had been brought in in the bottle, the bread tray was heaped with orange skins, and the rolls piled on the tablecloth. Bruce, who had already been to church with Mother and was off for a day's sail, was dividing his attention between Robert and his watch. Rebecca, daintily busy with the special cup and plate that were one of her little

affectations, was all ready for the day, except as to dress, wearing a thin little kimono over her blue ribbons and starched embroideries. Mother was putting up a little lunch for Bruce. Confusion reigned. The younger boys were urged to hurry, if they wanted to make the "nine." Rebecca was going to wait for the "half-past ten," because the "kids sang at nine, and it was fierce." Mr. Paget and his sons departed together, and the girls went upstairs for a hot, tiring tussle with beds and dusting before starting for church. They left their mother busy with the cream freezer in the kitchen. It was very hot even then.

But it was still hotter, walking home in the burning midday stillness. A group of young people waited lazily for letters, under the trees outside the post-office door. Otherwise the main street was deserted. A languid little breeze brought the far echoes of pianos and phonographs from this direction and that.

“Who’s that on the porch?” said Rebecca, suddenly, as they neared home, instantly finding the stranger among her father and the boys. Margaret, glancing up sharply, saw, almost with a sensation of sickness, the big, ungainly figure, the beaming smile, and the shock of dark hair that belonged to nobody else in the world but John Tenison. A stony chill settled about her heart as she went up the steps and gave him her hand.

Oh, if he only couldn’t stay to dinner, she prayed. Oh, if only he could spare them time for no more than a flying visit! With a sinking heart she smiled her greetings.

“Doctor Tenison—this is very nice of you!” Margaret said. “Have you met my father—my small brothers?”

“We have been having a great talk,” said John Tenison, genially, “and this young man”—he indicated Robert—“has been showing me the colored supplement of the paper. I didn’t have any word from you, Miss Paget,” he went on, “so I took

the chance of finding you. And your mother has assured me that I will not put her out by staying to have luncheon with you."

"Oh, that's nice!" Margaret said mechanically, trying to dislodge Robert from the most comfortable chair by a significant touch of her fingers on his small shoulder. Robert perfectly understood that she wanted the chair, but continued in absorbed study of the comic supplement, merely wriggling resentfully at Margaret's touch. Margaret, at the moment, would have been glad to use violence on the stubborn, serene little figure. When he was finally dislodged, she sat down, still flushed from her walk and the nervousness Doctor Tenison's arrival caused her, and tried to bring the conversation into a normal channel. But an interruption occurred in the arrival of Harry and Julie in the runabout; the little boys swarmed down to examine it. Julie, very pretty, with a perceptible little new air

of dignity, went upstairs to freshen hair and gown, and Harry, pushing his straw hat back the better to mop his forehead, immediately engaged Doctor Tenison's attention with the details of what sounded to Margaret like a particularly uninteresting operation, which he had witnessed the day before.

Utterly discouraged, and acutely wretched, Margaret presently slipped away, and went into the kitchen, to lend a hand with the dinner preparations if help was needed. The room presented a scene if possible a little more confused than that of the day before, and was certainly hotter. Her mother, flushed and hurried, in a fresh but rather unbecoming gingham, was putting up a cold supper for the younger boys, who, having duly attended to their religious duties, were to take a long afternoon tramp, with a possible interval of fishing. She buttered each slice of the great loaf before she cut it, and lifted it carefully on the knife

before beginning the next slice. An opened pot of jam stood at her elbow. A tin cup and the boys' fishing-gear lay on a chair. Theodore and Duncan themselves hung over these preparations; never apparently helping themselves to food, yet never with empty mouths. Blanche, moaning "The Palms" with the insistence of one who wishes to show her entire familiarity with a melody, was at the range.

Roast veal, instead of the smothered chickens her mother had so often, and cooked so deliciously, a mountain of mashed potato—corn on the cob, and an enormous heavy salad mantled with mayonnaise—Margaret could have wept over the hopelessly plebeian dinner!

"Mother, mayn't I get down the finger-bowls," she asked; "and mayn't we have black coffee in the silver pot, afterward?"

Mrs. Paget looked absently at her for a dubious second. "I don't like to ask Blanche to wash all that extra glass," she

said, in an undertone, adding briskly to Theodore, "No, no, Ted! You can't have all that cake. Half that!" and to Blanche herself, "Don't leave the door open when you go in, Blanche; I just drove all the flies out of the dining-room." Then she returned to Margaret with a cordial: "Why, certainly, dear! Any one who wants coffee, after tea, can have it! Dad always wants his cup of tea."

"Nobody but us ever serves tea with dinner!" Margaret muttered; but her mother did not hear it. She buckled the strap of the lunch-box, straightened her back with an air of relief, and pushed down her rolled-up sleeves.

"Don't lose that napkin, Ted," said she, and receiving the boy's grateful kiss haphazard between her hair and forehead, she added affectionately: "You're more than welcome, dear! We're all ready, Mark—go and tell them, dear! All right, Blanche."

Ruffled and angry, Margaret went to

summon the others to dinner. Maudie had joined them on the porch now, and had been urged to stay, and was already trying her youthful wiles on the professor.

“Well, he’ll have to leave on the five o’clock!” Margaret reflected, steeled to bitter endurance until that time. For everything went wrong, and dinner was one long nightmare for her. Professor Tenison’s napkin turned out to be a traycloth. Blanche, asked for another, disappeared for several minutes, and returned without it, to whisper in Mrs. Paget’s ear. Mrs. Paget immediately sent her own fresh napkin to the guest. The incident, or something in their murmured conversation, gave Rebecca and Maudie “the giggles.” There seemed an exhausting amount of passing and repassing of plates. The room was hot, the supply of ice insufficient. Mr. Paget dwelt on his favorite grievance—“the old man isn’t needed, these days. They’re getting all young fellows into the bank.

They put young college fellows in there who are getting pretty near the money I am—after twenty-five years!” In any pause, Mrs. Paget could be heard, patiently dissuading little Robert from his fixed intention of accompanying the older boys on their walk, whether invited or uninvited.

John Tenison behaved charmingly, eating his dinner with enjoyment, looking interestedly from one face to the other, sympathetic, alert, and amused. But Margaret writhed in spirit at what he must be thinking.

Finally the ice cream, in a melting condition, and the chocolate cake, very sticky, made their appearance; and although these were regular Sunday treats, the boys felt called upon to cheer. Julie asked her mother in an audible undertone if she “ought” to eat cake. Doctor Tenison produced an enormous box of chocolates, and Margaret was disgusted with the frantic scramble her brothers made to secure them.

"If you're going for a walk, dear," her mother said, when the meal was over, "you'd better go. It's almost three now."

"I don't know whether we will, it's so hot," Margaret said, in an indifferent tone, but she could easily have broken into disheartened tears.

"Oh, go," Julie urged, "it's much cooler out." They were up in Margaret's old room, Mrs. Paget tying a big apron about Julie's ruffled frock, preparatory to an attack upon the demoralized kitchen. "We think he's lovely," the little matron went on approvingly. "Don't fall in love with him, Mark."

"Why not?" Margaret said carelessly, pinning on her hat.

"Well, I don't imagine he's a marrying man," said the young authority, wisely. Margaret flushed, and was angry at herself for flushing. But when Mrs. Paget had gone downstairs, Julie came very simply and charmingly over to her sister, and

standing close beside her with embarrassed eyes on her own hand—very youthful in its plain ring—as she played with the bureau furnishing, she said:

“Mother tell you?”

Margaret looked down at the flushed face.

“Are you sorry, Ju?”

“Sorry!” The conscious eyes flashed into view. “*Sorry!*” Julie echoed in astonishment. “Why, Mark,” she said dreamily—there was no affectation of maturity in her manner now, and it was all the more impressive for that. “Why, Mark,” said she, “it’s—it’s the most wonderful thing that ever happened to me! I think and think”—her voice dropped very low—“of holding it in my arms—mine and Harry’s, you know—and of its little face!”

Margaret, stirred, kissed the wet lashes.

“Ju, but you’re so young—you’re such a baby yourself!” she said.

“And, Mark,” Julie said, unheeding,

“you know what Harry and I are going to call her, if it’s a girl? Not for Mother, for it’s so confusing to have two Julias, but for you! Because,” her arms went about her sister, “you’ve always been such a darling to me, Mark!”

Margaret went downstairs very thoughtfully, and out into the silent Sunday streets. Where they walked, or what they talked of, she did not know. She knew that her head ached, and that the village looked very commonplace, and that the day was very hot. She found it more painful than sweet to be strolling along beside the big, loose-jointed figure, and to send an occasional side glance to John Tenison’s earnest face, which wore its pleasantest expression now. Ah, well, it would be all over at five o’clock, she said wearily to herself, and she could go home and lie down with her aching head in a darkened room, and try not to think what to-day *might* have been. Try not to think of the dainty little luncheon Annie

would have given them at Mrs. Carr-Boldt's, of the luxurious choice of amusements afterward: motoring over the lovely country roads, rowing on the wide still water, watching the tennis courts, or simply resting in deep chairs on the sweep of velvet lawn above the river.

She came out of a reverie to find Doctor Tenison glancing calmly up from his watch.

"The train was five o'clock, was it?" he said. "I've missed it!"

"Missed it!" Margaret echoed blankly. Then, as the horrible possibility dawned upon her, "Oh, *no!*"

"Oh, yes—bad as that!" he said, laughing at her.

Poor Margaret, fighting despair, struggled to recover herself.

"Well, I thought it might have been important to you!" she said, laughing quite naturally. "There's a seven-six, but it stops everywhere, and a ten-thirty. The

ten-thirty is best, because supper's apt to be a little late."

"The ten-thirty," Doctor Tenison echoed contentedly. Margaret's heart sank—five more hours of the struggle! "But perhaps that's an imposition," he said. "Isn't there a tea-room—isn't there an inn here where we could have a bite?"

"We aren't in Berlin," Margaret reminded him cheerfully. "There's a hotel—but Mother would never forgive me for leading any one *there*! No, we'll take that little walk I told you of, and Mother will give us something to eat later. Perhaps if we're late enough," she added to herself, "we can have just tea and bread and jam alone, after the others."

Suddenly, unreasonably, she felt philosophical and gay. The little episode of missing the train had given her the old dear feeling of adventure and comradeship again. Things couldn't be any worse than they had been at noon, anyway. The experi-

ence had been thoroughly disenchanting. What did a few hours, more or less, matter! Let him be disgusted if he wanted to, she couldn't help it!

It was cooler now, the level late shadows were making even Weston pretty. They went up a steep shady lane to the old graveyard, and wandered, peacefully, contentedly, among the old graves. Margaret gathered her thin gown from contact with the tangled, uncut grass; they had to disturb a flock of nibbling sheep to cross to the crumbling wall. Leaning on the uneven stones that formed it, they looked down at the roofs of the village, half lost in tree-tops; and listened to the barking of dogs, and the shrill voices of children. The sun sank, lower, lower. There was a feeling of dew in the air as they went slowly home.

When, at seven o'clock, they opened the gate, they found on the side porch only Rebecca, enchanting in something pink and dotted, Mother, and Dad.

“Lucky we waited!” said Rebecca, rising, and signalling some wordless message to Margaret that required dimples, widened eyes, compressed lips, and an expression of utter secrecy. “Supper’s all ready,” she added casually.

“Where are the others?” Margaret said, experiencing the most pleasant sensation she had had in twenty-four hours.

“Ju and Harry went home, Rob’s at George’s, boys walking,” said Rebecca, briefly, still dimpling mysteriously with additional information. She gave Margaret an eloquent side glance as she led the way into the dining-room. At the doorway Margaret stopped, astounded.

The room was hardly recognizable now. It was cool and delightful, with the diminished table daintily set for five. The old silver candlesticks and silver teapot presided over blue bowls of berries and the choicest of Mother’s preserved fruits. Some one had found time to put fresh parsley

about the Canton platter of cold meats, some one had made a special trip to Mrs. O'Brien's for the cream that filled the Wedgwood pitcher. Margaret felt tears press suddenly against her eyes.

"Oh, Beck!" she could only stammer when the sisters went into the kitchen for hot water and tea biscuit.

"Mother did it," said Rebecca, returning her hug with fervor. "She gave us all an awful talking to after you left! She said here was dear old Mark, who always worked herself to death for us, trying to make a nice impression, and to have things go smoothly, and we were all acting like Indians, and everything so confused at dinner, and hot and noisy! So, later, when Paul and I and the others were walking, we saw you and Doctor Tenison going up toward the graveyard, and I tore home and told Mother he'd missed the five and would be back; it was after five then, and we just flew!"

It was all like a pleasant awakening after a troubled dream. As Margaret took her place at the little feast she felt an exquisite sensation of peace and content sink into her heart. Mother was so gracious and charming, behind the urn; Rebecca irresistible in her admiration of the famous professor. Her father was his sweetest self, delightfully reminiscent of his boyhood, and his visit to the White House in Lincoln's day, with "my uncle, the judge." But it was to her mother's face that Margaret's eyes returned most often; she wanted—she was vaguely conscious that she wanted—to get away from the voices and laughter, and think about Mother. How sweet she was, just sweet, and after all, how few people were that in this world! They were clever, and witty, and rich—plenty of them, but how little sweetness there was! How few faces, like her mother's, did not show a line that was not all tenderness and goodness.

They laughed over their teacups like old

friends; the professor and Rebecca shouting joyously together, Mr. Paget one broad twinkle, Mrs. Paget radiantly reflecting, as she always did reflect, the others' mood. It was a memorably happy hour.

And after tea they sat on the porch, and the stars came out, and presently the moon sent silver shafts through the dark foliage of the trees. Little Rob came home, and climbed silently, contentedly, into his father's lap.

"Sing something, Mark," said Dad, then; and Margaret, sitting on the steps with her head against her mother's knee, found it very simple to begin in the darkness one of the old songs he loved:

"Don't you cry, ma honey,
Don't you weep no more."

Rebecca, sitting on the rail, one slender arm flung above her head about the pillar, joined her own young voice to Margaret's sweet and steady one. The others hummed

a little. John Tenison, sitting watching them, his locked hands hanging between his knees, saw in the moonlight a sudden glitter on the mother's cheek.

Presently Bruce, tired and happy and sunburned, came through the splashed silver-and-black of the street to sit by Margaret, and put his arm about her; and the younger boys, returning full of the day's great deeds, spread themselves comfortably over the lower steps. Before long all their happy voices rose together, on "Believe me," and "Working on the Railroad," and "Seeing Nellie Home," and a dozen more of the old songs that young people have sung for half a century in the summer moonlight.

And then it was time to say good-night to Professor Tenison. "Come again, sir!" said Mr. Paget, heartily; the boys slid their hands, still faintly suggestive of fish, cordially into his; Rebecca promised to mail him a certain discussed variety of fern the very next day; Bruce's voice sounded all

hearty good-will as he hoped that he wouldn't miss Doctor Tenison's next visit. Mrs. Paget, her hand in his, raised keen, almost anxious eyes to his face.

"But surely you'll be down our way again?" said she, unsmilingly.

"Oh, surely." The professor was unable to keep his eyes from moving toward Margaret, and the mother saw it.

"Good-bye for the present, then," she said, still very gravely.

"Good-bye, Mrs. Paget," said Doctor Tenison. "It's been an inestimable privilege to meet you all. I haven't ever had a happier day."

Margaret, used to the extravagant speeches of another world, thought this merely very charming politeness. But her heart sang as they walked away together. He liked them—he had had a nice time!

"Now I know what makes you so different from other women," said John Tenison, when he and Margaret were alone. "It's

having that wonderful mother! She—she—well, she's one woman in a million; I don't have to tell you that! It's something to thank God for, a mother like that; it's a privilege to know her. I've been watching her all day, and I've been wondering what *she* gets out of it—that was what puzzled me; but now, just now, I've found out! This morning, thinking what her life is, I couldn't see what *repaid* her, do you see? What made up to her for the unending, unending effort, and sacrifice, the pouring out of love and sympathy and help—year after year after year. . . .”

He hesitated, but Margaret did not speak.

“You know,” he went on musingly, “in these days, when women just serenely ignore the question of children, or at most, as a special concession, bring up one or two—just the one or two whose expenses can be comfortably met!—there's something magnificent in a woman like your mother, who

begins eight destinies instead of one! She doesn't strain and chafe to express herself through the medium of poetry or music or the stage, but she puts her whole splendid philosophy into her nursery—launches sound little bodies and minds that have their first growth cleanly and purely about her knees. Responsibility—that's what these other women say they are afraid of! But it seems to me there's no responsibility like that of decreeing that young lives simply *shall not be*. Why, what good is learning, or elegance of manner, or painfully acquired fineness of speech, and taste and point of view, if you are not going to distil it into the growing plants, the only real hope we have in the world! You know, Miss Paget," his smile was very sweet in the half darkness, "there's a higher tribunal than the social tribunal of this world, after all; and it seems to me that a woman who stands there, as your mother will, with a forest of new lives about her, and a record

like hers, will—will find she has a Friend at court!” he finished whimsically.

They were at a lonely corner, and a garden fence offering Margaret a convenient support, she laid her arms suddenly upon the rosevine that covered it, and her face upon her arms, and cried as if her heart was broken.

“Why, why—my dear girl!” the professor said, aghast. He laid his hand on the shaking shoulders, but Margaret shook it off.

“I’m not what you think I am!” she sobbed out, incoherently. “I’m not different from other women; I’m just as selfish and bad and mean as the worst of them! And I’m not worthy to t-tie my m-mother’s *shoes!*”

“Margaret!” John Tenison said unsteadily. And in a flash her drooping bright head was close to his lips, and both his big arms were about her. “You know I love you, don’t you Margaret?” he said

hoarsely, over and over, with a sort of fierce intensity. "You know that, don't you? *Don't* you, Margaret?"

Margaret could not speak. Emotion swept her like a rising tide from all her familiar moorings; her heart thundered, there was a roaring in her ears. She was conscious of a wild desire to answer him, to say one hundredth part of all she felt; but she could only rest, breathless, against him, her frightened eyes held by the eyes so near, his arms about her.

"You do, don't you, Margaret?" he said more gently. "You love me, don't you? *Don't* you?"

And after a long time, or what seemed a long time, while they stood motionless in the summer night, with the great branches of the trees moving a little overhead, and garden scents creeping out on the damp air, Margaret said, with a sort of breathless catch in her voice:

"You *know* I do!" And with the words

the fright left her eyes, and happy tears filled them, and she raised her face to his.

Coming back from the train half an hour later, she walked between a new heaven and a new earth! The friendly stars seemed just overhead; a thousand delicious odors came from garden beds and recently watered lawns. She moved through the confusion that always attended the settling down of the Pagets for the night like one in a dream, and was glad to find herself at last lying in the darkness beside the sleeping Rebecca again. Now, now, she could think!

But it was all too wonderful for reasonable thought. Margaret clasped both her hands against her rising heart. He loved her. She could think of the very words he had used in telling her, over and over again. She need no longer wonder and dream and despair: he had *said* it. He loved her, had loved her from the very first. His old aunt suspected it, and his chum suspected it,

and he had thought Margaret knew it. And beside him in that brilliant career that she had followed so wistfully in her dreams, Margaret saw herself, *his wife*. Young and clever and good to look upon—yes, she was free to-night to admit herself all these good things for his sake!—and his wife, mounting as he mounted beside the one man in the world she had elected to admire and love. “Doctor and Mrs. John Tenison”—so it would be written. “Doctor Tenison’s wife”—“This is Mrs. Tenison”—she seemed already to hear the magical sound of it!

Love—what a wonderful thing it was! How good God was to send this best of all gifts to her! She thought how it belittled the other good things of the world. She asked no more of life, now; she was loved by a good man, and a great man, and she was to be his wife. Ah, the happy years together that would date from to-night—Margaret was thrilling already to their delights. “For better or worse,” the old words came

to her with a new meaning. There would be no worse, she said to herself with sudden conviction—how could there be? Poverty, privation, sickness might come—but to bear them with John—to comfort and sustain him, to be shut away with him from all the world but the world of their own four walls—why, that would be the greatest happiness of all! What hardship could be hard that knitted their two hearts closer together; what road too steep if they essayed it hand in hand?

And that—her confused thoughts ran on—that was what had changed all life for Julie. She had forgotten Europe, forgotten all the idle ambitions of her girlhood, because she loved her husband; and now the new miracle was to come to her—the miracle of a child, the little perfect promise of the days to come. How marvellous—how *marvellous* it was! The little imperative, helpless third person, bringing to radiant youth and irresponsibility the terrors of danger

and anguish, and the great final joy, to share together. That was life. Julie was living; and although Margaret's own heart was not yet a wife's, and she could not yet find room for the love beyond that, still she was strangely, deeply stirred now by a longing for all the experiences that life held.

How she loved everything and everybody to-night—how she loved just being alive—just being Margaret Paget, lying here in the dark dreaming and thinking. There was no one in the world with whom she would change places to-night! Margaret found herself thinking of one woman of her acquaintance after another—and her own future, opening all color of rose before her, seemed to her the one enviable path through the world.

In just one day, she realized with vague wonder, her slowly formed theories had been set at naught, her whole philosophy turned upside down. Had these years of protest and rebellion done no more than

lead her in a wide circle, past empty gain, and joyless mirth, and the dead sea fruit of riches and idleness, back to her mother's knees again? She had met brilliant women, rich women, courted women—but where among them was one whose face had ever shone as her mother's shone to-day? The overdressed, idle dowagers; the matrons, with their too-gay frocks, their too-full days, their too-rich food; the girls, all crudeness, artifice, all scheming openly for their own advantage—where among them all was happiness? Where among them was one whom Margaret had heard say—as she has heard her mother say so many, many times—“Children, this is a happy day,”—“Thank God for another lovely Sunday all together,”—“Isn't it lovely to get up and find the sun shining?”—“Isn't it good to come home hungry to such a nice dinner?”

And what a share of happiness her mother had given the world! How she had planned and worked for them all—Margaret let her

arm fall across the sudden ache in her eyes as she thought of the Christmas mornings, and the stuffed stockings at the fireplace that proved every childish wish remembered, every little hidden hope guessed! Darling Mother—she hadn't had much money for those Christmas stockings, they must have been carefully planned, down to the last candy cane. And how her face would beam, as she sat at the breakfast-table, enjoying her belated coffee, after the cold walk to church, and responding warmly to the onslaught of kisses and hugs that added fresh color to her cold, rosy cheeks! What a mother she was—Margaret remembered her making them all help her clear up the Christmas disorder of tissue paper and ribbons; then came the inevitable bed making, then tippetts and overshoes, for a long walk with Dad. They would come back to find the dining-room warm, the long table set, the house deliciously fragrant from the immense turkey that their mother,

a fresh apron over her holiday gown, was basting at the oven. Then came the feast, and then games until twilight, and more table-setting; and the baby, whoever he was, was tucked away upstairs before tea, and the evening ended with singing, gathered about Mother at the piano.

“How happy we all were!” Margaret said; “and how she worked for us!”

And suddenly theories and speculation ended, and she *knew*. She knew that faithful, self-forgetting service, and the love that spends itself over and over, only to be renewed again and again, are the secret of happiness. For another world, perhaps leisure and beauty and luxury—but in this one, “Who loses his life shall gain it.” Margaret knew now that her mother was not only the truest, the finest, the most generous woman she had ever known, but the happiest as well.

She thought of other women like her mother; she suddenly saw what made their

lives beautiful. She could understand now why Emily Porter, her old brave little associate of school-teaching days, was always bright, why Mary Page, plodding home from the long day at the library desk to her little cottage and crippled sister, at night, always made one feel the better and happier for meeting her.

Mrs. Carr-Boldt's days were crowded to the last instant, it was true; but what a farce it was, after all, Margaret said to herself in all honesty, to humor her in her little favorite belief that she was a busy woman! Milliner, manicure, butler, chef, club, card-table, tea-table—these and a thousand things like them filled her day, and they might all be swept away in an hour, and leave no one the worse. Suppose her own summons came; there would be a little flurry throughout the great establishment, legal matters to settle, notes of thanks to be written for flowers. Margaret could imagine Victoria and Harriet, awed but

otherwise unaffected, home from school in midweek, and to be sent back before the next Monday. Their lives would go on unchanged, their mother had never buttered bread for them, never schemed for their boots and hats, never watched their work and play, and called them to her knees for praise and blame. Mr. Carr-Boldt would have his club, his business, his yacht, his motor-cars—he was well accustomed to living in cheerful independence of family claims.

But life without Mother——! In a sick moment of revelation Margaret saw it. She saw them gathering in the horrible emptiness and silence of the house Mother had kept so warm and bright, she saw her father's stooped shoulders and trembling hands, she saw Julie and Beck, red-eyed, white-cheeked, in fresh black—she seemed to hear the low-toned voices that would break over and over again so cruelly into sobs. What could they do—who could take up the work she laid down—who would

watch and plan and work for them all, now? Margaret thought of the empty place at the table, of the room that, after all these years, was no longer "Mother's room——"

Oh, no—no—no!—She began to cry bitterly in the dark. No, please God, they would hold her safe with them for many years. Mother should live to see some of the fruits of the long labor of love. She should know that with every fresh step in life, with every deepening experience, her children grew to love her better, turned to her more and more! There would be Christmases as sweet as the old ones, if not so gay; there would come a day—Margaret's whole being thrilled to the thought—when little forms would run ahead of John and herself up the worn path, and when their children would be gathered in Mother's experienced arms! Did life hold a more exquisite moment, she wondered, than that in which she would hear her mother praise them!

All her old castles in the air seemed cheap

and tinselled to-night, beside these tender dreams that had their roots in the real truths of life. Travel and position, gowns and motor-cars, yachts and country houses, these things were to be bought in all their perfection by the highest bidder, and always would be. But love and character and service, home and the wonderful charge of little lives—the “pure religion breathing household laws” that guided and perfected the whole—these were not to be bought, they were only to be prayed for, worked for, bravely won.

“God has been very good to me,” Margaret said to herself very seriously; and in her old childish fashion she made some new resolves. From now on, she thought, with a fervor that made it seem half accomplished, she would be a very different woman. If joy came, she would share it as far as she could; if sorrow, she would show her mother that her daughter was not all unworthy of her. To-morrow, she thought, she would

go and see Julie. Dear old Ju, whose heart was so full of the little Margaret! Margaret had a sudden tender memory of the days when Theodore and Duncan and Rob were all babies in turn. Her mother would gather the little daily supply of fresh clothes from bureau and chest every morning, and carry the little bath-tub into the sunny nursery window, and sit there with only a bobbing downy head and waving pink fingers visible from the great warm bundle of bath apron. . . . Ju would be doing that now.

And she had sometimes wished, or half formed the wish, that she and Bruce had been the only ones! Yes, came the sudden thought, but it wouldn't have been Bruce and Margaret, after all, it would have been Bruce and Charlie.

Good God! That was what women did, then, when they denied the right of life to the distant, unwanted, possible little person! Calmly, constantly, in all placid

philosophy and self-justification, they kept from the world—not only the troublesome new baby, with his tears and his illnesses, his merciless exactions, his endless claim on mind and body and spirit—but perhaps the glowing beauty of a Rebecca, the buoyant indomitable spirit of a Ted, the sturdy charm of a small Robert, whose grip on life, whose energy and ambition were as strong as Margaret's own!

Margaret stirred uneasily, frowned in the dark. It seemed perfectly incredible, it seemed perfectly *impossible* that if Mother had had only the two—and how many thousands of women didn't have that!—she, Margaret, a pronounced and separate entity, travelled, ambitious, and to be the wife of one of the world's great men, might not have been lying here in the summer night, rich in love and youth and beauty and her dreams!

It was all puzzling, all too big for her to understand. But she could do what Mother

did, just take the nearest duty and fulfil it, and sleep well, and rise joyfully to fresh effort.

Margaret felt as if she would never sleep again. The summer night was cool, she was cramped and chilly; but still her thoughts raced on, and she could not shut her eyes. She turned and pressed her face resolutely into the pillow, and with a great sigh renounced the joys and sorrows, the lessons and the awakening that the long day had held.

A second later there was a gentle rustle at the door.

“Mark,” a voice whispered. “Can’t you sleep?”

Margaret locked her arms tight about her mother, as the older woman knelt beside her.

“Why, how cold you are, sweetheart!” her mother protested, tucking covers about her. “I *thought* I heard you sigh! I got up to lock the stairway door: Baby’s gotten a trick of walking in his sleep when he’s overtired. It’s nearly one o’clock, Mark! What have you been doing?”

“Thinking.” Margaret put her lips very close to her mother’s ear. “Mother——” she stammered and stopped. Mrs. Paget kissed her.

“Daddy and I thought so,” she said simply; and further announcement was not needed. “My darling little girl!” she added tenderly; and then, after a silence, “He is very fine, Mark, so unaffected, so gentle and nice with the boys. I—I think I’m glad, Mark. I lose my girl, but there’s no happiness like a happy marriage, dear.”

“No, you won’t lose me, Mother,” Margaret said, clinging very close. “We hadn’t much time to talk, but this much we did decide. You see, John—John goes to Germany for a year, next July. So we thought—in June or July, Mother, just as Julie’s was! Just a little wedding like Ju’s. You see, that’s better than interrupting the term, or trying to settle down, when we’d have to move in July. And, Mother, I’m going to write Mrs. Carr-Boldt—she can get

a thousand girls to take my place, her niece is dying to do it!—and I'm going to take my old school here for the term. Mr. Forbes spoke to me about it after church this morning; they want me back. I want this year at home; I want to see more of Bruce and Ju, and sort of stand by darling little Beck! But it's for you, most of all, Mother," said Margaret, with difficulty. "I've always loved you, Mother, but you don't know how wonderful I think you are——" She broke off pitifully, "Ah, *Mother!*"

For her mother's arms had tightened convulsively about her, and the face against her own was wet.

"Are you talking?" said Rebecca, rearing herself up suddenly, with a web of bright hair falling over her shoulder. "You said your prayers on Mark last night," said she, reproachfully; "come over and say them on me to-night, Mother."

THE END

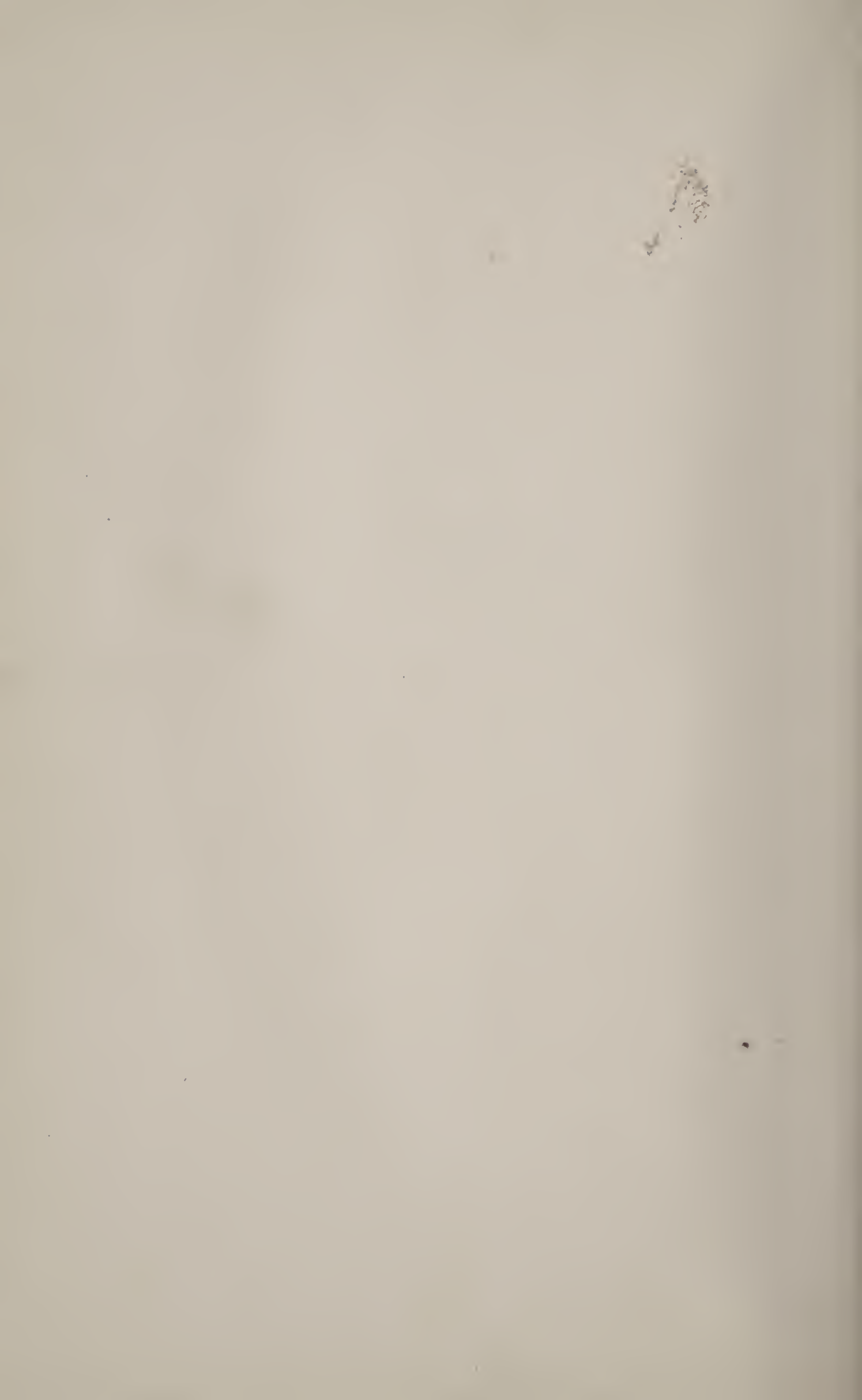
THE TREASURE

TO

IDA M. TARBELL


WITH MANY HAPPY MEMORIES OF THE
CONNECTICUT FARM

CHAPTER I



THE TREASURE

CHAPTER I

LIZZIE, who happened to be the Salisbury's one servant at the time, was wasteful. It was almost her only fault, in Mrs. Salisbury's eyes, for such trifles as her habit of becoming excited and "saucy," in moments of domestic stress, or to ask boldly for other holidays than her alternate Sunday and Thursday afternoons, or to resent at all times the intrusion of any person, even her mistress, into her immaculate kitchen, might have been overlooked. Mrs. Salisbury had been keeping house in a suburban town for twenty years; she was not considered an exacting mistress. She was perfectly willing to forgive Lizzie what was said in the hurried hours before the company dinner or impromptu lunch, and to

let Lizzie slip out for a walk with her sister in the evening, and to keep out of the kitchen herself as much as was possible. So much might be conceded to a girl who was honest and clean, industrious, respectable, and a fair cook.

But the wastefulness was a serious matter. Mrs. Salisbury was a careful and an experienced manager; she resented waste; indeed, she could not afford to tolerate it. She liked to go into the kitchen herself every morning, to eye the contents of icebox and pantry, and decide upon needed stores. Enough butter, enough cold meat for dinner, enough milk for a nourishing soup, eggs and salad for luncheon—what about potatoes?

Lizzie deliberately frustrated this housewifely ambition. She flounced and muttered when other hands than her own were laid upon her icebox. She turned on rushing faucets, rattled dishes in her pan. Yet Mrs. Salisbury felt that she must personally superintend these matters, because Lizzie was so wasteful. The girl had not been three months in the Salis-

bury family before all bills for supplies soared alarmingly.

This was all wrong. Mrs. Salisbury fretted over it a few weeks, then confided her concern to her husband. But Kane Salisbury would not listen to the details. He scowled at the introduction of the topic, glanced restlessly at his paper, murmured that Lizzie might be "fired"; and, when Mrs. Salisbury had resolutely bottled up her seething discontent inside of herself, she sometimes heard him murmuring, "Bad—bad—management" as he sat chewing his pipe-stem on the dark porch or beside the fire.

Alexandra, the eighteen-year-old daughter of the house, was equally incurious and unreasonable about domestic details.

"But, honestly, Mother, you know you're afraid of Lizzie, and she knows it," Alexandra would declare gaily; "I can't tell you how I'd manage her, because she's not my servant, but I know I would do *something!*"

Beauty and intelligence gave Alexandra, even at eighteen, a certain serene poise and

self-reliance that lifted her above the old-fashioned topics of "trouble with girls," and housekeeping, and marketing. Alexandra touched these subjects under the titles of "budgets," "domestic science," and "efficiency." Neither she nor her mother recognized the old, homely subjects under their new names, and so the daughter felt a lack of interest, and the mother a lack of sympathy, that kept them from understanding each other. Alexandra, ready to meet and conquer all the troubles of a badly managed world, felt that one small home did not present a very terrible problem. Poor Mrs. Salisbury only knew that it was becoming increasingly difficult to keep a general servant at all in a family of five, and that her husband's salary, of something a little less than four thousand dollars a year, did not at all seem the princely sum that they would have thought it when they were married on twenty dollars a week.

From the younger members of the family, Fred, who was fifteen, and Stanford, three years younger, she expected, and got, no sym-

pathy. The three young Salisburys found money interesting only when they needed it for new gowns, or matinée tickets, or tennis rackets, or some kindred purchase. They needed it desperately, asked for it, got it, spent it, and gave it no further thought. It meant nothing to them that Lizzie was wasteful. It was only to their mother that the girl's slipshod ways were becoming an absolute trial.

Lizzie, very neat and respectful, would interfere with Mrs. Salisbury's plan of a visit to the kitchen by appearing to ask for instructions before breakfast was fairly over. When the man of the house had gone, and before the children appeared, Lizzie would inquire:

"Just yourselves for dinner, Mrs. Salisbury?"

"Just ourselves. Let—me—see——" Mrs. Salisbury would lay down her newspaper, stir her cooling coffee. The memory of last night's vegetables would rise before her; there must be baked onions left, and some of the corn.

"There was some lamb left, wasn't there?" she might ask.

Amazement on Lizzie's part.

"That wasn't such an awful big leg, Mrs. Salisbury. And the boys had Perry White in, you know. There's just a little plateful left. I gave Sam the bones."

Mrs. Salisbury could imagine the plateful: small, neat, cold.

"Sometimes I think that if you left the joint on the platter, Lizzie, there are scrapings, you know——" she might suggest.

"I scraped it," Lizzie would answer briefly, conclusively.

"Well, that for lunch, then, for Miss Sandy and me," Mrs. Salisbury would decide hastily. "I'll order something fresh for dinner. Were there any vegetables left?"

"There were a few potatoes, enough for lunch," Lizzie would admit guardedly.

"I'll order vegetables, too, then!" And Mrs. Salisbury would sigh. Every housekeeper knows that there is no economy in ordering afresh for every meal.

"And we need butter——"

"Butter again! Those two pounds gone?"

“There’s a little piece left, not enough, though. And I’m on my last cake of soap, and we need crackers, and vanilla, and sugar, unless you’re not going to have a dessert, and salad oil——”

“Just get me a pencil, will you?” This was as usual. Mrs. Salisbury would pencil a long list, would bite her lips thoughtfully, and sigh as she read it over.

“Asparagus to-night, then. And, Lizzie, don’t serve so much melted butter with it as you did last time; there must have been a cupful of melted butter. And, another time, save what little scraps of vegetables there are left; they help out so at lunch——”

“There wasn’t a saucerful of onions left last night,” Lizzie would assert, “and two cobs of corn, after I’d had my dinner. You couldn’t do much with those. And, as for butter on the asparagus”—Lizzie was very respectful, but her tone would rise aggrievedly—“it was every bit eaten, Mrs. Salisbury!”

“Yes, I know. But we mustn’t let these young vandals eat us out of house and home,

you know," the mistress would say, feeling as if she were doing something contemptibly small. And, worsted, she would return to her paper. "But I don't care, we cannot afford it!" Mrs. Salisbury would say to herself, when Lizzie had gone, and very thoughtfully she would write out a check payable to "cash." "I used to use up little odds and ends so deliciously, years ago!" she sometimes reflected disconsolately. "And Kane always says we never live as well now as we did then! He always praised my dinners."

Nowadays Mr. Salisbury was not so well satisfied. Lizzie rang the changes upon roasted and fried meats, boiled and creamed vegetables, baked puddings and canned fruits contentedly enough. She made cup cake and sponge cake, sponge cake and cup cake all the year round. Nothing was ever changed, no unexpected flavor ever surprised the palates of the Salisbury family. May brought strawberry shortcake, December cottage puddings, cold beef always made a stew; creamed codfish was never served without baked potatoes.

The Salisbury table was a duplicate of some millions of other tables, scattered the length and breadth of the land.

“And still the bills go up!” fretted Mrs. Salisbury.

“Well, why don’t you fire her, Sally?” her husband asked, as he had asked of almost every maid they had ever had—of lazy Annies, and untidy Selmas, and ignorant Katies. And, as always, Mrs. Salisbury answered patiently:

“Oh, Kane, what’s the *use?* It simply means my going to Miss Crosby’s again, and facing that awful row of them, and beginning that I have three grown children, and no other help——”

“Mother, have you ever had a perfect maid?” Sandy had asked earnestly years before. Her mother spent a moment in reflection, arresting the hand with which she was polishing silver. Alexandra was only sixteen then, and mother and daughter were bridging a gap when there was no maid at all in the Salisbury kitchen.

“Well, there was Libby,” the mother an-

swered at length, "the colored girl I had when you were born. She really was perfect, in a way. She was a clean darky, and such a cook! Daddy talks still of her fried chicken and blueberry pies! And she loved company, too. But, you see, Grandma Salisbury was with us then, and she paid a little girl to look after you, so Libby had really nothing but the kitchen and dining-room to care for. Afterward, just before Fred came, she got lazy and ugly, and I had to let her go. Canadian Annie was a wonderful girl, too," pursued Mrs. Salisbury, "but we only had her two months. Then she got a place where there were no children, and left on two days' notice. And when I think of the others!—the Hungarian girl who boiled two pairs of Fred's little brown socks and darkened the entire wash, sheets and napkins and all! And the colored girl who drank, and the girl who gave us boiled rice for dessert whenever I forgot to tell her anything else! And then Dad and I never will forget the woman who put pudding sauce on his mutton—dear me, dear me!" And Mrs. Salisbury

laughed out at the memory. "Between her not knowing one thing, and not understanding a word we said, she was pretty trying all around!" she presently added. "And, of course, the instant you have them really trained they leave; and that's the end of that! One left me the day Stan was born, and another—and she was a nice girl, too—simply departed when you three were all down with scarlet fever, and left her bed unmade, and the tea cup and saucer from her breakfast on the end of the kitchen table! Luckily we had a wonderful nurse, and she simply took hold and saved the day."

"Isn't it a wonder that there isn't a training school for house servants?" Sandy had inquired, youthful interest in her eye.

"There's no such thing," her mother assured her positively, "as getting one who knows her business! And why? Why, because all the smart girls prefer to go into factories, and slave away for three or four dollars a week, instead of coming into good homes! Do Pearsall and Thompson ever have any diffi-

culty in getting girls for the glove factory? Never! There's a line of them waiting, a block long, every time they advertise. But you may make up your mind to it, dear, if you get a good cook, she's wasteful or she's lazy, or she's irritable, or dirty, or she won't wait on table, or she slips out at night, and laughs under street lamps with some man or other! She's *always* on your mind, and she's always an irritation."

"It just shows what a hopelessly stupid class you have to deal with, Mother," the younger Sandy had said. But at eighteen, she was not so sure.

Alexandra frankly hated housework, and she did not know how to cook. She did not think it strange that it was hard to find a clever and well-trained young woman who would gladly spend all her time in housework and cooking for something less than three hundred dollars a year. Her eyes were beginning to be opened to the immense moral and social questions that lie behind the simple preference of American girls to work for men rather than

for women. Household work was women's sphere, Sandy reasoned, and they had made it a sphere insufferable to other women. Something was wrong.

Sandy was too young, and too mentally independent, to enter very sympathetically into her mother's side of the matter. The younger woman's attitude was tinged with affectionate contempt, and when the stupidity of the maid, or the inconvenience of having no maid at all, interfered with the smooth current of her life, or her busy comings and goings, she became impatient and intolerant.

"Other people manage!" said Alexandra.

"Who, for instance?" demanded her mother, in calm exasperation.

"Oh, everyone—the Bernards, the Watermans! Doilies and finger bowls, and Elsie in a cap and apron!"

"But Doctor and Mrs. Bernard are old people, dear, and the Watermans are three business women—no lunch, no children, very little company!"

"Well, Grace Elliot, then!"

“With two maids, Sandy. That’s a very different matter!”

“And is there any reason why we shouldn’t have two?” asked Sandy, with youthful logic.

“Ah, well, there you come to the question of expense, dear!” And Mrs. Salisbury dismissed the subject with a quiet air of triumph.

But of course the topic came up again. It is the one household ghost that is never laid in such a family. Sometimes Kane Salisbury himself took a part in it.

“Do you mean to tell me,” he once demanded, in the days of the dreadfully incompetent maids who preceded Lizzie, “that it is becoming practically impossible to get a good general servant?”

“Well, I wish you’d try it yourself,” his wife answered, grimly quiet. “It’s just about wearing me out! I don’t know what has become of the good old maid-of-all-work,” she presently pursued, with a sigh, “but she has simply vanished from the face of the earth. Even the greenest girls fresh from the other side begin to talk about having the washing

put out, and to have extra help come in to wash windows and beat rugs! I don't know what we're coming to—you teach them to tell a blanket from a sheet, and how to boil coffee, and set a table, and then away they go to get more money somewhere. Dear me! Your father's mother used to have girls who had the wash on the line before eight o'clock——”

“Yes, but then Grandma's house was simpler,” Sandy contributed, a little doubtfully. “You know, Grandma never put on any style, Mother——”

“Her house was always one of the most comfortable, most hospitable——”

“Yes, I know, Mother!” Alexandra persisted eagerly. “But Fanny never had to answer the door, and Grandma used to let her leave the tablecloth on between meals—Grandma told me so herself!—and no fussing with doilies, or service plates under the soup plates, or glass saucers for dessert. And Grandma herself used to help wipe dishes, or sometimes set the table, and make the beds, if there was company——”

"That may be," Mrs. Salisbury had the satisfaction of answering coldly. "Perhaps she did, although *I* never remember hearing her say so. But my mother always had colored servants, and I never saw her so much as dust the piano!"

"I suppose we couldn't simplify things, Sally? Cut out some of the extra touches?" suggested the head of the house.

Mrs. Salisbury merely shook her head, compressing her lips firmly. It was quite difficult enough to keep things "nice," with two growing boys in the family, without encountering such opposition as this. A day or two later she went into New Troy, the nearest big city, and came back triumphantly with Lizzie.

And at first Lizzie really did seem perfection. It was some weeks before Mrs. Salisbury realized that Lizzie was not truthful; absolutely reliable in money matters, yet Lizzie could not be believed in the simplest statement. Tasteless oatmeal, Lizzie glibly asseverated, had been well salted; weak coffee, or coffee as strong as brown paint, were the

fault of the pot. Lizzie, rushing through dinner so that she might get out; Lizzie throwing out cold vegetables that "weren't worth saving"; Lizzie growing snappy and noisy at the first hint of criticism, somehow seemed worse sometimes than no servant at all.

"I wonder—if we moved into New Troy, Kane," Mrs. Salisbury mused, "and got one of those wonderful modern apartments, with a gas stove, and a dumbwaiter, and hardwood floors, if Sandy and I couldn't manage everything? With a woman to clean and dinners downtown now and then, and a waitress in for occasions."

"And me jumping up to change the salad plates, Mother!" Alexandra put in briskly. "And a pile of dishes to do every night!"

"Gosh, let's not move into the *city*——" protested Stanford. "No tennis, no canoe, no baseball!"

"And we know everyone in River Falls, we'd have to keep coming out here for parties!" Sandy added.

"Well," Mrs. Salisbury sighed, "I admit

that it is too much of a problem for me!" she said. "I know that I married your father on twenty dollars a week," she told the children severely, "and we lived in a dear little cottage, only eighteen dollars a month, and I did all my own work! And never in our lives have we lived so well. But the minute you get inexperienced help, your bills simply double, and inexperienced help means simply one annoyance after another. I give it up!"

"Well, I'll tell you, Mother," Alexandra offered innocently; "perhaps we don't systematize enough ourselves. It ought to be all so well arranged and regulated that a girl would *know* what she was expected to do, and know that you had a perfect right to call her down for wasting or slighting things. Why couldn't women—a bunch of women, say——"

"Why couldn't they form a set of household rules and regulations?" her mother intercepted smoothly. "Because—it's just one of the things that you young, inexperienced people can talk very easily about," she interrupted

herself to say with feeling, "but it never seems to occur to any one of you that every household has its different demands and regulations. The market fluctuates, the size of a family changes—fixed laws are impossible! No. Lizzie is no worse than lots of others, better than the average. I shall hold on to her!"

"Mrs. Sargent says that all these unnecessary demands have been instituted and insisted upon by women," said Alexandra. "She says that the secret of the whole trouble is that women try to live above their class, and make one servant appear to do the work of three——"

The introduction of Mrs. Sargent's name was not a happy one.

"Ellen Sargent," said Mrs. Salisbury icily, "is not a lady herself, in the true sense of the word, and she does very well to talk about class distinctions! She was his stenographer when Cyrus Sargent married her, and the daughter of a tannery hand. Now, just because she has millions, I am not going to be

impressed by anything Ellen Sargent does or says!"

"Mother, I don't think she meant *quality* by 'class,'" Sandy protested. "Everyone knows that Grandfather was General Stanford, and all that! But I think she meant, in a way, the money side of it, the financial division of people into classes!"

"We won't discuss her," decided Mrs. Salisbury majestically. "The money standard is one I am not anxious to judge my friends by!"

Still, with the rest of the family, Mrs. Salisbury was relieved when Lizzie, shortly after this, decided of her own accord to accept a better-paid position. "Unless, Mama says, you'd care to raise me to seven a week," said Lizzie, in parting.

"No, no, I cannot pay that," Mrs. Salisbury said firmly and Lizzie accordingly left.

Her place was taken by a middle-aged French woman, and whipped cream and the subtle flavor of sherry began to appear in the Salisbury bills of fare. Germaine had no idea

whatever of time, and Sandy perforce must set the table whenever there was a company dinner afoot, and lend a hand with the last preparations as well. The kitchen was never really in order in these days, but Germaine cooked deliciously, and Mrs. Salisbury gave eight dinners and a club luncheon during the month of her reign. Then the French woman grew more and more irregular as to hours, and more utterly unreliable as to meals; sometimes the family fared delightfully, sometimes there was almost nothing for dinner. Germaine seemed to fade from sight, not entirely of her own volition, not really discharged; simply she was gone. A Norwegian girl came next, a good-natured, blundering creature whose English was just enough to utterly confuse herself and everyone else. Freda's mistakes were not half so funny in the making as Alexandra made them in anecdotes afterward; and Freda was given to weird chanting, accompanying herself with a banjo, throughout the evenings. Finally a blonde giant known as "Freda's cousin" came to see

her, and Kane Salisbury, followed by his elated and excited boys, had to eject Freda's cousin early in the evening, while Freda wept and chattered to the ladies of the house. After that the cousin called often to ask for her, but Freda had vanished the day after this event, and the Salisburys never heard of her again.

They tried another Norwegian, then a Polack, then a Scandinavian. Then they had a German man and wife for a week, a couple who asserted that they would work, without pay, for a good home. This was a most uncomfortable experience, unsuccessful from the first instant. Then came a low-voiced, good-natured South American negress, Marthe, not much of a cook, but willing and strong.

July was mercilessly hot that year, thirty-one burning days of sunshine. Mrs. Salisbury was not a very strong woman, and she had a great many visitors to entertain. She kept Marthe, because the colored woman did not resent constant supervision, and an almost hourly change of plans. Mrs. Salisbury did almost all of the cooking herself, fussing for

hours in the hot kitchen over the cold meats and salads and ices that formed the little informal cold suppers to which the Salisburys loved to ask their friends on Saturday and Sunday nights.

Alexandra helped fitfully. She would put her pretty head into the kitchen doorway, perhaps to find her mother icing cake.

“Listen, Mother; I’m going over to Con’s. She’s got that new serve down to a *fine* point! And I’ve done the boys’ room and the guest room; it’s all ready for the Cutters. And I put towels and soap in the bathroom, only you’ll have to have Marthe wipe up the floor and the tub.”

“You’re a darling child,” the mother would say gratefully.

“Darling nothing!” And Sandy, with her protest, would lay a cool cheek against her mother’s hot one. “Do you have to stay out here, Mother?” she would ask resentfully. “Can’t the Culled Lady do this?”

“Well, I left her to watch it, and it burned,” Mrs. Salisbury would say, “so now

it has to be pared and frosted. Such a bother! But this is the very last thing, dear. You run along; I'll be out of here in two minutes!"

But it was always something more than two minutes. Sometimes even Kane Salisbury was led to protest.

"Can't we eat less, dear? Or differently? Isn't there some simple way of managing this week-end supper business? Now, Brewer—Brewer manages it awfully well. He has his man set out a big cold roast or two, cheese, and coffee, and a bowlful of salad, and beer. He'll get a fruit pie from the club sometimes, or pastries, or a pot of marmalade——"

"Yes, indeed, we must try to simplify," Mrs. Salisbury would agree brightly. But after such a conversation as this she would go over her accounts very soberly indeed. "Roasts—cheeses—fruit pies!" she would say bitterly to herself. "Why is it that a man will spend as much on a single lunch for his friends as a woman is supposed to spend on her table for a whole week, and then ask her what on earth she has done with her money!"

"Kane, I wish you would go over my accounts," she said one evening, in desperation.

"Just suggest where *you* would cut down!"

Mr. Salisbury ran his eye carelessly over the pages of the little ledger.

"Roast beef, two-forty?" he presently read aloud, questioningly.

"Twenty-two cents a pound," his wife answered simply. But the man's slight frown deepened.

"Too much—too much!" he said, shaking his head.

Mrs. Salisbury let him read on a moment, turn a page or two. Then she said, in a dead calm:

"Do you think my roasts are too big, Kane?"

"Too big? On the contrary," her husband answered briskly, "I like a big roast. Sometimes ours are skimpy-looking before they're even cut!"

"Well!" Mrs. Salisbury said triumphantly. Her smile apprised her husband that he was

trapped, and he put down the account book in natural irritation.

“Well, my dear, it’s your problem!” he said unsympathetically, returning to his newspaper. “I run my business, I expect you to run yours! If we can’t live on our income, we’ll have to move to a cheaper house, that’s all, or take Stanford out of school and put him to work. Dickens says somewhere—and he never said a truer thing!” pursued the man of the house comfortably, “that, if you spend a sixpence less than your income every week, you are rich. If you spend a sixpence more, you never may expect to be anything but poor!”

Mrs. Salisbury did not answer. She took up her embroidery, whose bright colors blurred and swam together through the tears that came to her eyes.

“Never expect to feel anything but poor!” she echoed sadly to herself. “I am sure I never do! Things just seem to run away with me; I can’t seem to get *hold* of them. I don’t see where it’s going to end!”

“Mother,” said Alexandra, coming in from

the kitchen, "Marthe says that all that delicious chicken soup is spoiled. The idiot, she says that you left it in the pantry to cool, and she forgot to put it on the ice! Now, what shall we do, just skip soup, or get some beef extract and season it up?"

"Skip soup," said Mr. Salisbury cheerfully.

"We can't very well, dear," said his wife patiently, "because the dinner is just soup and a fish salad, and one needs the hot start in a perfectly cold supper. No. I'll go out."

"Can't you just tell me what to do?" asked Alexandra impatiently.

But her mother had gone. The girl sat on the arm of the deserted chair, swinging an idle foot.

"I wish I could cook!" she fretted.

"Can't you, Sandy?" her father asked.

"Oh, some things! Rabbits and fudge and walnut wafers! But I mean that I wish I understood sauces and vegetables and seasoning, and getting things cooked all at the same moment! I don't mean that I'd like to do it, but I would like to know how. Now, Mother'll

scare up some perfectly delicious soup for dinner, cream of something or other, and I could do it perfectly well, if only I knew how!"

"Suppose I paid you a regular salary, Sandy——" her father was beginning, with the untiring hopefulness of the American father. But the girl interrupted vivaciously:

"Dad, darling, that isn't practical! I'd love it for about two days. Then we'd settle right down to washing dishes, and setting tables, and dusting and sweeping, and wiping up floors—horrors, horrors, horrors!"

She left her perch to take in turn an arm of her father's chair.

"Well, what's the solution, pussy?" asked Kane Salisbury, keenly appreciative of the nearness of her youth and beauty.

"It isn't *that*," said Sandy decidedly. "Of course," she pursued, "the Gregorys get along without a maid, and use a fireless cooker, and drink cereal coffee, but admit, darling, that you'd rather have me useless and frivolous as I am!—than Gertrude or Florence or Winifred Gregory! Why, when Floss was mar-

ried, Dad, Gertrude played the piano, for music, and for refreshments they had raspberry ice-cream and chocolate layer cake!"

"Well, I like chocolate layer cake," observed her father mildly. "I thought that was a very pretty wedding; the sisters in their light dresses——"

"Dimity dresses at a wedding!" Alexandra reproached him, round-eyed. "And they are so boisterously proud of the fact that they live on their father's salary," she went on, arranging her own father's hair fastidiously; "it's positively offensive the way they bounce up to change plates and tell you how to make the neck of mutton appetizing, or the heart of a cow, or whatever it is! And their father pushes the chairs back, Dad, and helps roll up the napkins—I'd die if you ever tried it!"

"But they all work, too, don't they?"

"Work? Of course they work! And every cent of it goes into the bank. Winnie and Florence are buying gas shares, and Gertrude

means to have a year's study in Europe, if you please!"

"That doesn't sound very terrible," said Kane Salisbury, smiling. But some related thought darkened his eyes a moment later. "You wouldn't have much gas stock if I was taken, Pussy," said he.

"No, darling, and let that be a lesson to you not to die!" his daughter said blithely. "But I could work, Dad," she added more seriously, "if Mother didn't mind so awfully. Not in the kitchen, but somewhere. I'd love to work in a settlement house."

"Now, there you modern girls are," her father said. "Can't bear to clear away the dinner plates in your own houses, yet you'll cheerfully suggest going to live in the filthiest parts of the city, working, as no servant is ever expected to work, for people you don't know!"

"I know it's absurd," Sandy agreed, smiling. Her answer was ready somewhere in her mind, but she could not quite find it. "But, you see, that's a *new* problem," she presently

offered, "that's ours to-day, just as managing your house was Mother's when she married you. Circumstances have changed. I couldn't ever take up the kitchen question just as it presents itself to Mother. I—people my age don't believe in a servant class. They just believe in a division of labor, all dignified. If some girl I knew, Grace or Betty, say, came into our kitchen—and that reminds me!" she broke off suddenly.

"Of what?"

"Why, of something Owen—Owen Sargent was saying a few days ago. His mother's quite daffy about establishing social centers and clubs for servant girls, you know, and she's gotten into this new thing, a sort of college for servants. Now I'll ask Owen about it. I'll do that to-morrow. That's just what I'll do!"

"Tell me about it," her father said. But Alexandra shook her head.

"I don't honestly know anything about it, Dad. But Owen had a lot of papers and a sort of prospectus. His mother was wishing

that she could try one of the graduates, but she keeps six or seven house servants, and it wouldn't be practicable. But I'll see. I never thought of us! And I'll bring Owen home to dinner to-morrow. Is that all right, Mother?" she asked, as her mother came back into the room.

"Owen? Certainly, dear; we're always glad to see him," Mrs. Salisbury said, a shade too casually, in a tone well calculated neither to alarm nor encourage, balanced to keep events uninterruptedly in their natural course. But Alexandra was too deep in thought to notice a tone.

"You'll see—this is something entirely new, and just what we need!" she said gaily.

CHAPTER II

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THE constant visits of Owen Sargent, had he been but a few years older, and had Sandy been a few years older, would have filled Mrs. Salisbury's heart with a wild maternal hope. As it was, with Sandy barely nineteen, and Owen not quite twenty-two, she felt more tantalizing discomfort in their friendship than satisfaction. Owen was a dear boy, queer, of course, but fine in every way, and Sandy was quite the prettiest girl in River Falls; but it was far too soon to begin to hope that they would do the entirely suitable and acceptable thing of falling in love with each other. "That would be quite too perfect!" thought Mrs. Salisbury, watching them together.

No; Owen was too rich to be overlooked by all sorts of other girls, scrupulous and unscrupulous. Every time he went with his

mother for a week to Atlantic City or New York, Mrs. Salisbury writhed in apprehension of the thousand lures that must be spread on all sides about his lumbering feet. He was just the sweet, big, simple sort to be trapped by some little empty-headed girl, some little marplot clever enough to pretend an interest in the prison problem, or the free-milk problem, or some other industrial problem in which Owen had seen fit to interest himself. And her lovely, dignified Sandy, reflected the mother, a match for him in every way, beautiful, good, clever, just the woman to win him, by her own charm and the charms of children and home, away from the somewhat unnatural interests with which he had surrounded himself, must sit silent and watch him throw himself away.

Sandy, of course, had never had any idea of Owen in this light, of that her mother was quite sure. Sandy treated him as she did her own brothers, frankly, despotically, delightfully. And perhaps it was wiser, after all, not to give the child a hint, for it was evident

that the shy, gentle Owen was absolutely at home and happy in the Salisbury home; nothing would be gained by making Sandy feel self-conscious and responsible now.

Mrs. Salisbury really did not like Owen Sargent very well, although his money made her honestly think she did. He had a wide, pleasant, but homely face, and an aureole of upstanding yellow hair, and a manner as unaffected as might have been expected from the child of his plain old genial father, and his mother, the daughter of a tanner. He lived alone, with his widowed mother, in a pleasant, old-fashioned house, set in park-like grounds that were the pride of River Falls. His mother often asked waitresses' unions and fresh-air homes to make use of these grounds for picnics, but Mrs. Salisbury knew that the house belonged to Owen, and she liked to dream of a day when Sandy's babies should tumble on those smooth lawns, and Sandy, erect and beautifully furred, should bring her own smart little motor car through that tall iron gateway.

These dreams made her almost effusive in her manner to Owen, and Owen, who was no fool, understood perfectly what she was thinking of him; he understood his own energetic, busy mother; and he understood Sandy's mother, too. He knew that his money made him well worth any mother's attention.

But, like her mother, he believed Sandy too young to have taken any cognizance of it. He thought the girl liked him as she liked anyone else, for his own value, and he sometimes dreamed shyly of her pleasure in suddenly realizing that Mrs. Owen Sargent would be a rich woman, the mistress of a lovely home, the owner of beautiful jewels.

Both, however, were mistaken in Sandy. Her blue, blue eyes, so oddly effective under the silky fall of her straight, mouse-colored hair, were very keen. She knew exactly why her mother suggested that Owen should bring her here or there in the car, "Daddy and the boys and I will go in our old trap, just behind you!" She knew that Owen thought that her quick hand over his, in a game of

hearts, the thoughtful stare of her demure eyes, across the dinner table, the help she accepted so casually, climbing into his big car—were all evidences that she was as unconscious of his presence as Stan was. But in reality the future for herself of which Sandy confidently dreamed was one in which, in all innocent complacency, she took her place beside Owen as his wife. Clumsy, wild-haired, bashful he might be at twenty-two, but the far-sighted Sandy saw him ten years, twenty years later, well groomed, assured of manner, devotedly happy in his home life. She considered him entirely unable to take care of himself, he needed a good wife. And a good, true, devoted wife Sandy knew she would be, fulfilling to her utmost power all his lonely, little-boy dreams of birthday parties and Christmas revels.

To do her justice, she really and deeply cared for him. Not with passion, for of that as yet she knew nothing, but with a real and absorbing affection. Sandy read "Love in a Valley" and the "Sonnets from the Portu-

guese" in these days, and thought of Owen. Now and then her well-disciplined little heart surprised her by an unexpected flutter in his direction.

She duly brought him home with her to dinner on the evening after her little talk with her parents. Owen was usually to be found browsing about the region where Sandy played marches twice a week for sewing classes in a neighborhood house. They often met, and Sandy sometimes went to have tea with his mother, and sometimes, as to-day, brought him home with her.

Owen had with him the letters, pamphlets and booklet issued by the American School of Domestic Science, and after dinner, while the Salisbury boys wrestled with their lessons, the three others and Owen gathered about the drawing-room table, in the late daylight, and thoroughly investigated the new institution and its claims. Sandy wedged her slender little person in between the two men. Mrs. Salisbury sat near by, reading what was handed to her. The older woman's attitude

was one of dispassionate unbelief; she smiled a benign indulgence upon these newfangled ideas. But in her heart she felt the stirring of feminine uneasiness and resentment. It was *her* sacred region, after all, into which these young people were probing so light-heartedly. These were her secrets that they were exploiting; her methods were to be disparaged, tossed aside.

The booklet, with its imposing A.S.D.S. set out fair and plain upon a brown cover, was exhaustive. Its frontispiece was a portrait of one Eliza Slocumb Holley, founder of the school, and on its back cover it bore the vignetted photograph of a very pretty graduate, in apron and cap, with her broom and feather duster. In between these two pictures were pages and pages of information, dozens of pictures. There were delightful long perspectives of model kitchens, of vegetable gardens, orchards, and dairies. There were pictures of girls making jam, and sterilizing bottles, and arranging trays for the sick. There were girls amusing children and making beds. There

were glimpses of the model flats, built into the college buildings, with gas stoves and dumb-waiters. And there were the usual pictures of libraries, and playgrounds, and tennis courts.

“Such *nice*-looking girls!” said Sandy.

“Oh, Mother says that they are splendid girls,” Owen said, bashfully eager, “just the kind that go in for trained nursing, you know, or stenography, or bookkeeping.”

“They must be a solid comfort, those girls,” said Mrs. Salisbury, leaning over to read certain pages with the others. “‘First year,’” she read aloud. “‘Care of kitchen, pantry, and utensils—fire-making—disposal of refuse—table-setting—service—care of furniture—cooking with gas—patent sweepers—sweeping—dusting—care of silver—bread—vegetables—puddings——’”

“Help!” said Sandy. “It sounds like the essence of a thousand Mondays! No one could possibly learn all that in one year.”

“It’s a long term, eleven months,” her father said, deeply interested. “That’s not all

of the first year, either. But it's all practical enough."

"What do they do the last year, Mother?"

Mrs. Salisbury adjusted her glasses.

"'Third year,' " she read obligingly. "'All soups, sauces, salads, ices and meats. Infant and invalid diet. Formal dinners, arranged by season. Budgets. Arrangement of work for one maid. Arrangement of work for two maids. Menus, with reference to expense, with reference to nourishment, with reference to attractiveness. Chart of suitable meals for children, from two years up. Table manners for children. Classic stories for children at bedtime. Flowers, their significance upon the table. Picnics——'"

"But, no; there's something beyond that," Owen said. Mrs. Salisbury turned a page.

"'Fourth Year. Post-graduate, not obligatory,'" she read. "'Unusual German, Italian, Russian and Spanish dishes. Translation of menus. Management of laundries, hotels and institutions. Work of a chef. Work of subordinate cooks. Ordinary poisons.

Common dangers of canning. Canning for the market. Professional candy-making——’ ”

“Can you beat it!” said Owen.

“It’s extraordinary!” Mrs. Salisbury conceded. Her husband asked the all-important question :

“What do you have to pay for one of these paragons?”

“It’s all here,” Mrs. Salisbury said. But she was distracted in her search of a scale of prices by the headlines of the various pages. “‘Rules Governing Employers,’ ” she read, with amusement. “Isn’t this too absurd? ‘Employers of graduates of the A.S.D.S. will kindly respect the conditions upon which, and only upon which, contracts are based.’ ” She glanced down the long list of items. “‘A comfortably furnished room,’ ” she read at random, “‘weekly half holiday—access to nearest public library or family library—opportunity for hot bath at least twice weekly—two hours if possible for church attendance on Sunday—annual two weeks’ holiday, or two holidays of one week each—full payment of

salary in advance, on the first day of every month'—what a preposterous idea!" Mrs. Salisbury broke off to say. "How is one to know that she wouldn't skip off on the second?"

"In that case the school supplies you with another maid for the unfinished term," explained Sandy, from the booklet.

"Well——" the lady was still a little unsatisfied. "As if they didn't have privileges enough now!" she said. "It's the same old story: we are supposed to be pleasing them, not they us!"

"'In a family where no other maid is kept,'" read Alexandra, "'a graduate will take entire charge of kitchen and dining room, go to market if required, do ordinary family washing and ironing, will clean bathroom daily, and will clean and sweep every other room in the house, and the halls, once thoroughly every week. She will be on hand to answer the door only one afternoon every week, besides Sunday——'"

"What!" ejaculated Mrs. Salisbury.

"I should like to know who does it on other days!" Alexandra added amazedly.

"Don't *you* think that's ridiculous, Kane?" his wife asked eagerly.

"We-el," the man of the house said temperately, "I don't know that I do. You see, otherwise the girl has a string tied on her all the time. People in our position, after all, needn't assume that we're too good to open our own door——"

"That's exactly it, sir," Owen agreed eagerly; "Mother says that that's one of the things that have upset the whole system for so long! Just the convention that a lady can't open her own door——"

"But we haven't found the scale of wages yet——" Mrs. Salisbury interrupted sweetly but firmly. Alexandra, however, resumed the recital of the duties of one maid.

"'She will not be expected to assume the care of young children,'" she read, "nor to sleep in the room with them. She will not be expected to act as chaperone or escort at night. She——'"

“It *doesn't* say that, Sandy!”

“Oh, yes, it does! And, listen! ‘*Note.* Employers are respectfully requested to maintain as formal an attitude as possible toward the maid. Any intimacy, or exchange of confidences, is especially to be avoided’ ”—Alexandra broke off to laugh, and her mother laughed with her, but indignantly.

“Insulting!” she said lightly. “Does anyone suppose for an instant that this is a serious experiment?”

“Come, that doesn't sound very ridiculous to me,” her husband said. “Plenty of women do become confidential with their maids, don't they?”

“Dear me, how much you do know about women!” Alexandra said, kissing the top of her father's head. “Aren't you the bad old man!”

“No; but one might hope that an institution of this kind would put the American servant in her place,” Mrs. Salisbury said seriously, “instead of flattering her and spoiling her beyond all reason. I take my maid's receipt for

salary in advance; I show her the bathroom and the library—that's the idea, is it? Why, she might be a boarder! Next, they'll be asking for a place at the table and an hour's practice on the piano."

"Well, the original American servant, the 'neighbor's girl,' who came in to help during the haying season, and to put up the preserves, probably *did* have a place at the table," Mr. Salisbury submitted mildly.

"Mother thinks that America never will have a real servant class," Owen added uncertainly; "that is, until domestic service is elevated to the—the dignity of office work, don't you know? Until it attracts the nicer class of women, don't you know? Mother says that many a good man's fear of old age would be lightened, don't you know?—if he felt that, in case he lost his job, or died, his daughters could go into good homes, and grow up under the eye of good women, don't you know?"

"Very nice, Owen, but not very practical!" Mrs. Salisbury said, with her indulgent, motherly smile. "Oh, dear me, for the good

old days of black servants, and plenty of them!" she sighed. For though Mrs. Salisbury had been born some years after the days of plenty known to her mother on her grandfather's plantation, before the war, she was accustomed to detailed recitals of its grandeurs.

"Here we are!" said Alexandra, finding a particular page that was boldly headed "Terms."

"'For a cook and general worker, no other help,'" she read, "'thirty dollars per month——'"

"Not so dreadful," her father said, pleasantly surprised.

"But, listen, Dad! Thirty dollars for a family of two, and an additional two dollars and a half monthly for each other member of the family. That would make ours thirty-seven dollars and a half, wouldn't it?" she computed swiftly.

"Awful! Impossible!" Mrs. Salisbury said instantly, almost in relief. The discussion made her vaguely uneasy. What did these

casual amateurs know about the domestic problem, anyway? Kane, who was always anxious to avoid details; Sandy, all youthful enthusiasm and ignorance, and Owen Sargent, quoting his insufferable mother? For some moments she had been fighting an impulse to soothe them all with generalities. "Never mind; it's always been a problem, and it always will be! These new schemes are all very well, but don't trouble your dear heads about it any longer!"

Now she sank back, satisfied. The whole thing was but a mad, utopian dream. Thirty-seven dollars indeed! "Why, one could get two good servants for that!" thought Mrs. Salisbury, with the same sublime faith with which she had told her husband, in poorer days, years ago, that, if they could but afford her, she knew they could get a "fine girl" for three dollars a week. The fact that the "fine girl" did not apparently exist did not at all shake Mrs. Salisbury's confidence that she could get two "good girls." Her hope in the untried solution rose with every failure.

“Thirty-seven is steep,” said Kane Salisbury slowly. “However! What do we pay now, Mother?”

“Five a week,” said that lady inflexibly.

“But we paid Germaine more,” said Alexandra eagerly. “And didn’t you pay Lizzie six and a half?”

“The last two months I did, yes,” her mother agreed unwillingly. “But that comes only to twenty-six or seven,” she added.

“But, look here,” said Owen, reading. “Here it says: *Note.* Where a graduate is required to manage on a budget, it is computed that she saves the average family from two to seven dollars weekly on food and fuel bills.’ ”

“Now that begins to sound like horse sense,” Mr. Salisbury began. But the mistress of the house merely smiled, and shook a dubious head, and the younger members of the family here created a diversion by reminding their sister’s guest, with animation, that he had half-asked them to go out for a short ride in his car. Alexandra accordingly ran for a veil,

and the young quartette departed with much noise, Owen stuffing his pamphlets and booklet into his pocket before he went.

Mr. and Mrs. Salisbury settled down contentedly to double Canfield, the woman crushing out the last flicker of the late topic with a placid shake of the head, when the man asked her for her honest opinion of the American School of Domestic Science. "I don't truly think it's at all practical, dear," said Mrs. Salisbury regretfully. "But we might watch it for a year or two and go into the question again some time, if you like. Especially if some one else has tried one of these maids, and we have had a chance to see how it goes!"

The very next morning Mrs. Salisbury awakened with a dull headache. Hot sunlight was streaming into the bedroom, an odor of coffee, drifting upstairs, made her feel suddenly sick. Her first thought was that she *could* not have Sandy's two friends to luncheon, and she *could* not keep a shopping and tea engagement with a friend of her own!

She might creep through the day somehow, but no more.

She dressed slowly, fighting dizziness, and went slowly downstairs, sighing at the sight of disordered music and dust in the dining-room, the sticky chafing-dish and piled plates in the pantry. In the kitchen was a litter of milk bottles, saucepans, bread and crumbs and bread knife encroaching upon a basket of spilled berries, egg shells and melting bacon. The blue sides of the coffee-pot were stained where the liquid and grounds had bubbled over it. Marthe was making toast, the long fork jammed into a plate hole of the range. Mrs. Salisbury thought that she had never seen sunlight so mercilessly hot and bright before——

“Rotten coffee!” said Mr. Salisbury cheerfully, when his wife took her place at the table.

“And she *never* uses the poacher!” Alexandra added reproachfully. “And she says that the cream is sour because the man leaves it at half-past four, right there in the sunniest

corner of the porch—can't he have a box or something, Mother?"

"Gosh, I wouldn't care what she did if she'd get a move on," said Stanford frankly. "She's probably asleep out there, with her head in the frying pan!"

Mrs. Salisbury went into the kitchen again. She had to pause in the pantry because the bright squares of the linoleum, and the brassy faucets, and the glare of the geraniums outside the window seemed to rush together for a second.

Marthe was on the porch, exchanging a few gay remarks with the garbage man before shutting the side door after him. The big stove was roaring hot, a thick odor of boiling clothes showed that Marthe was ready for her cousin Nancy, the laundress, who came once a week. A saucepan deeply gummed with cereal was soaking beside the hissing and smoking frying pan. Mrs. Salisbury moved the frying pan, and the quick heat of the coal fire rushed up at her face——

"Why," she whispered, opening anxious

eyes after what seemed a long time, "who fainted?"

A wheeling and rocking mass of light and shadow resolved itself into the dining-room walls, settled and was still. She felt the soft substance of a sofa pillow under her head, the hard lump that was her husband's arm supporting her shoulders.

"That's it—now she's all right!" said Kane Salisbury, his kind, concerned face just above her own. Mrs. Salisbury shifted heavy, languid eyes, and found Sandy.

"Darling, you fell!" the daughter whispered. White-lipped, pitiful, with tears still on her round cheeks, Sandy was fanning her mother with a folded newspaper.

"Well, how silly of me!" Mrs. Salisbury said weakly. She sighed, tried too quickly to sit up, and fainted quietly away again.

This time she opened her eyes in her own bed, and was made to drink something sharp and stinging, and directed not to talk. While her husband and daughter were hanging up

things, and reducing the tumbled room to order, the doctor arrived.

“Dr. Hollister, I call this an imposition!” protested the invalid smilingly. “I have been doing a little too much, that’s all! But don’t you dare say the word rest-cure to me again!”

But Doctor Hollister did not smile; there was no smiling in the house that day.

“Mother may have to go away,” Alexandra told anxious friends, very sober, but composed. “Mother may have to take a rest-cure,” she said a day or two later.

“But you won’t let them send me to a hospital again, Kane?” pleaded his wife one evening. “I almost die of lonesomeness, wondering what you and the children are doing! Couldn’t I just lie here? Marthe and Sandy can manage somehow, and I promise you I truly won’t worry, just lie here like a queen!”

“Well, perhaps we’ll give you a trial,” smiled Kane Salisbury, very much enjoying an hour of quiet, at his wife’s bedside. “But don’t count on Marthe. She’s going.”

“Marthe is?” Mrs. Salisbury only leaned

a little more heavily on the strong arm that held her, and laughed comfortably. "I refuse to concern myself with such sordid matters," she said. "But why?"

"Because I've got a new girl, hon."

"You have!" She shifted about to stare at him, aroused by his tone. Light came. "You've not gotten one of those college cooks, have you, Kane?" she demanded. "Oh, Kane! Not at thirty-seven dollars a month! Oh, you have, you wicked, extravagant boy!"

"Cheaper than a trained nurse, petty!"

Mrs. Salisbury was still shaking a scandalized head, but he could see the pleasure and interest in her eyes. She sank back in her pillows, but kept her thin fingers gripped tightly over his.

"How you do spoil me, Tip!" The name took him back across many years to the little eighteen-dollar cottage and the days before Sandy came. He looked at his wife's frail little figure, the ruffled frills that showed under her loose wrapper, at throat and elbows. There was something girlish still about her

hanging dark braid, her big eyes half visible in the summer twilight.

“Well, you may depend upon it, you’re in for a good long course of spoiling now, Miss Sally!” said he.

CHAPTER III

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JUSTINE HARRISON, graduate servant of the American School of Domestic Science, arrived the next day. If Mrs. Salisbury was half consciously cherishing an expectation of some one as crisp and cheerful as a trained nurse might have been, she was disappointed. Justine was simply a nice, honest-looking American country girl, in a cheap, neat, brown suit and a dreadful hat. She smiled appreciatively when Alexandra showed her her attractive little room, unlocked what Sandy saw to be a very orderly trunk, changed her hot suit at once for the gray gingham uniform, and went to Mrs. Salisbury's room with great composure, for instructions. In passing, Alexandra—feeling the situation to be a little odd, yet bravely, showed her the back stairway and

the bathroom, and murmured something about books being in the little room off the drawing-room downstairs. Justine smiled brightly.

“Oh, I brought several books with me,” she said, “and I subscribe to two weekly magazines and one monthly. So usually I have enough to read.”

“How do you do? You look very cool and comfortable, Justine. Now, you’ll have to find your own way about downstairs. You’ll see the coffee next to the bread box, and the brooms are in the laundry closet. Just do the best you can. Mr. Salisbury likes dry toast in the morning—eggs in some way. We get eggs from the milkman; they seem fresher. But you have to tell him the day before. And I understood that you’ll do most of the washing? Yes. My old Nancy was here day before yesterday, so there’s not much this week.” It was in some such disconnected strain as this that Mrs. Salisbury welcomed and initiated the new maid.

Justine bowed reassuringly.

“I’ll find everything, Madam. And do you

wish me to manage and to market for awhile until you are about again?"

The invalid sent a pleading glance to Sandy.

"Oh, I think my daughter will do that," she said.

"Oh, now, why, Mother?" Sandy asked, in affectionate impatience. "I don't begin to know as much about it as Justine probably does. Why not let her?"

"If Madam will simply tell me what sum she usually spends on the table," said Justine, "I will take the matter in hand."

Mrs. Salisbury hesitated. This was the very stronghold of her authority. It seemed terrible to her, indelicate, to admit a stranger.

"Well, it varies a little," she said restlessly. "I am not accustomed to spending a set sum." She addressed her daughter. "You see, I've been paying Nancy every week, dear," said she, "and the other laundry. And little things come up——"

"What sum would be customary, in a family this size?" Alexandra asked briskly of the graduate servant.

Justine was business-like.

“Seven dollars for two persons is the smallest sum we are allowed to handle,” she said promptly. “After that each additional person calls for three dollars weekly in our minimum scale. Four or five dollars a week per person, not including the maid, is the usual allowance.”

“Mercy! Would that be twenty dollars for table alone?” the mistress asked. “It is never that now, I think. Perhaps twice a week,” she said, turning to Alexandra, “your father gives me five dollars at the breakfast table——”

“But, Mother, you telephone and charge at the market, and Lewis & Sons, too, don’t you?” Sandy asked.

“Well, yes, that’s true. Yes, I suppose it comes to fully twenty-five dollars a week, when you think of it. Yes, it probably comes to more. But it never *seems* so much, somehow. Well, suppose we say twenty-five——”

“Twenty-five, I’ll tell Dad.” Alexandra confirmed it briskly.

“I used to keep accounts, years ago,” Mrs.

Salisbury said plaintively. "Your father——" and again she turned to her daughter, as if to make this revelation of her private affairs less distressing by so excluding the stranger. "Your father has always been the most generous of men," she said; "he always gives me more money if I need it, and I try to do the best I can." And a little annoyed, in her weakness and helplessness by this business talk, she lay back on her pillow, and closed her eyes.

"Twenty-five a week, then!" Alexandra said, closing the talk by jumping up from a seat on her mother's bed, and kissing the invalid's eyes in parting. Justine, who had remained standing, followed her down to the kitchen, where, with cheering promptitude, the new maid fell upon preparations for dinner. Alexandra rather bashfully suggested what she had vaguely planned for dinner; Justine nodded intelligently at each item; presently Alexandra left her, busily making butter-balls, and went upstairs to report.

"Nothing sensational about her," said Sandy to her mother, "but she takes hold! She's got

some bleaching preparation of soda or something drying on the sink-board; she took the shelf out of the icebox the instant she opened it, and began to scour it while she talked. She's got a big blue apron on, and she's hung a nice clean white one on the pantry door."

There was nothing sensational about the tray which Justine carried up to the sick room that evening—nothing sensational in the dinner which was served to the diminished family. But the Salisbury family began that night to speak of Justine as the "Treasure."

"Everything hot and well seasoned and nicely served," said the man of the house in high satisfaction, "and the woman looks like a servant, and acts like one. Sandy says she's turning the kitchen upside down, but, I say, give her her head!"

The Treasure, more by accident than design, was indeed given her head in the weeks that followed, for Mrs. Salisbury steadily declined into a real illness, and the worried family was only too glad to delegate all the domestic problems to Justine. The invalid's con-

dition, from "nervous breakdown" became "nervous prostration," and August was made terrible for the loving little group that watched her by the cruel fight with typhoid fever into which Mrs. Salisbury's exhausted little body was drawn. Weak as she was physically, her spirit never failed her; she met the overwhelming charges bravely, rallied, sank, rallied again and lived. Alexandra grew thin, if prettier than ever, and Owen Sargent grew bold and big and protecting to meet her need. The boys were "angels," their sister said, helpful, awed and obedient, but the children's father began to stoop a little and to show gray in the thick black hair at his temples.

Soberly, sympathetically, Justine steered her own craft through all the storm and confusion of the domestic crisis. Trays appeared and disappeared without apparent effort. Hot and delicious meals were ready at the appointed hours, whether the pulse upstairs went up or down. Tradespeople were paid; there was always ice; there was always hot water. The muffled telephone never went unanswered,

the doctor never had to ring twice for admittance. If fruit was sent up to the invalid, it was icy cold; if soup was needed, it appeared, smoking hot, and guiltless of even one floating pinpoint of fat.

Alexandra and the trained nurse always found the kitchen the same: orderly, aired, silent, with Justine, a picture of domestic efficiency, sitting by the open window, or on the shady side porch, shelling peas or peeling apples, or perhaps wiping immaculate glasses with an immaculate cloth at the sink. The ticking clock, the shining range, the sunlight lying in clean-cut oblongs upon the bright linoleum, Justine's smoothly braided hair and crisp percales, all helped to form a picture wonderfully restful and reassuring in troubled days.

Alexandra, tired with a long vigil in the sick room, liked to slip down late at night, to find Justine putting the last touches to the day's good work. A clean checked towel would be laid over the rising, snowy mound of dough; the bubbling oatmeal was locked in

the fireless cooker, doors were bolted, window shades drawn. There was an admirable precision about every move the girl made.

The two young women liked to chat together, and sometimes, when some important message took her to Justine's door in the evening, Alexandra would linger, pleasantly affected by the trim little apartment, the roses in a glass vase, Justine's book lying open-faced on the bed, or her unfinished letter waiting on the table. For all exterior signs, at these times, she might have been a guest in the house.

Promptly, on every Saturday evening, the Treasure presented her account book to Mr. Salisbury. There was always a small balance, sometimes five dollars, sometimes one, but Justine evidently had well digested Dickens' famous formula for peace of mind.

"You're certainly a wonder, Justine!" said the man of the house more than once. "How do you manage it?"

"Oh, I cut down in dozens of ways," the girl returned, with her grave smile. "You

don't notice it, but I know. You have kidney stews, and onion soups, and cherry pies, instead of melons and steaks and ice-cream, that's all!"

"And everyone just as well pleased," he said, in real admiration. "I congratulate you."

"It's only what we are all taught at college," Justine assured him. "I'm just doing what they told me to! It's my business."

"It's pretty big business, and it's been waiting a long while," said Kane Salisbury.

When Mrs. Salisbury began to get well, she began to get very hungry. This was plain sailing for Justine, and she put her whole heart into the dainty trays that went upstairs three times a day. While she was enjoying them, Mrs. Salisbury liked to draw out her clever maid, and the older woman and the young one had many a pleasant talk together. Justine told her mistress that she had been country-born and bred, and had grown up with a country girl's longing for nice surroundings and education of the better sort.

"My name is not Justine at all," she said smilingly, "nor Harrison, either, although I chose it because I have cousins of that name. We are all given names when we go to college and take them with us. Until the work is recognized, as it must be some day, as dignified and even artistic, we are advised to sink our own identities in this way."

"You mean that Harrison isn't your name?" Mrs. Salisbury felt this to be really a little alarming, in some vague way.

"Oh, no! And Justine was given me as a number might have been."

"But what *is* your name?" The question fell from Mrs. Salisbury as naturally as an "Ouch!" would have fallen had somebody dropped a lighted match on her hand. "I had no idea of that!" she went on artlessly. "But I suppose you told Mr. Salisbury?"

The luncheon was finished, and now Justine stood up, and picked up the tray.

"No. That's the very point. We use our college names," she reiterated simply. "Will

you let me bring you up a little more custard, Madam?"

"No, thank you," Mrs. Salisbury said, after a second's pause. She looked a little thoughtful as Justine walked away. There is no real reason why one's maid should not wear an assumed name, of course. Still——

"What a ridiculous thing that college must be!" said Mrs. Salisbury, turning comfortably in her pillows. "But she certainly is a splendid cook!"

About this point, at least, there was no argument. Justine did not need cream or sherry, chopped nuts or mushroom sauces to make simple food delicious. She knew endless ways in which to serve food; potatoes became a nightly surprise, macaroni was never the same, rice had a dozen delightful rôles. Because the family enjoyed her maple custard or almond cake, she did not, as is the habit with cooks, abandon every other flavoring for maple or almond. She was following a broader schedule than that supplied by the personal tastes

of the Salisburys, and she went her way serenely.

Not so much as a teaspoonful of cold spinach was wasted in these days. Justine's "left-over" dishes were quite as good as anything else she cooked; her artful combinations, her garnishes of pastry, her illusive seasoning, her enveloping and varied sauces disguised and transformed last night's dinner into a real feast to-night.

The Treasure went to market only twice a week, on Saturdays and Tuesdays. She planned her meals long beforehand, with the aid of charts brought from college, and paid cash for everything she bought. She always carried a large market basket on her arm on these trips, and something in her trim, strong figure and clean gray gown, as she started off, appealed to a long-slumbering sense of householder's pride in Mr. Salisbury. It seemed good to him that a person who worked so hard for him and for his should be so bright and contented looking, should like her life so well.

Late in September Mrs. Salisbury came downstairs again to a spotless drawing-room and a dining-room gay with flowers. Dinner was a little triumph, and after dinner she was escorted to a deep chair, and called upon to admire new papers and hangings, cleaned rugs and a newly polished floor.

“You are wonderful, wonderful people, every one of you!” said the convalescent, smiling eyes roving about her. “Grass paper, Kane, and such a dear border!” she said. “And everything feeling so clean! And my darling girl writing letters and seeing people all these weeks! And my boys so good! And dear old Daddy carrying the real burden for everyone—what a dreadfully spoiled woman I am! And Justine—come here a minute, Justine——”

The Treasure, who was clearing the dining-room table, came in, and smiled at the pretty group, mother and father, daughter and sons, all rejoicing in being well and together again.

“I don’t know how I am ever going to thank you, Justine,” said Mrs. Salisbury, with a little

emotion. She took the girl's hand in both her transparent white ones. "Do believe that I appreciate it," she said. "It has been a comfort to me, even when I was sickest, even when I apparently didn't know anything, to know that you were here, that everything was running smoothly and comfortably, thanks to you. We could not have managed without you!"

Justine returned the finger pressure warmly, also a little stirred.

"Why, it's been a real pleasure," she said a little huskily. She had to accept a little chorus of thanks from the other members of the family before, blushing very much and smiling, too, she went back to her work.

"She really has managed everything," Kane Salisbury told his wife later. "She handles all the little monthly bills, telephone and gas and so on; seems to take it as a matter of course that she should."

"And what shall I do now, Kane? Go on that way, for a while anyway?" asked his wife.

"Oh, by all means, dear! You must take

things easy for a while. By degrees you can take just as much or as little as you want, with the managing."

"You dear old idiot," the lady said tenderly, "don't worry about that! It will all come about quite naturally and pleasantly."

Indeed, it was still a relief to depend heavily upon Justine. Mrs. Salisbury was quite bewildered by the duties that rose up on every side of her; Sandy's frocks for the fall, the boys' school suits, calls that must be made, friends who must be entertained, and the opening festivities of several clubs to which she belonged.

She found things running very smoothly downstairs, there seemed to be not even the tiniest flaw for a critical mistress to detect, and the children had added a bewildering number of new names to their lists of favorite dishes. Justine was asked over and over again for her Manila curry, her beef and kidney pie, her scones and German fruit tarts, and for a brown and crisp and savory dish in which the mistress of the house recognized, under the

title of *chou farci*, an ordinary cabbage as a foundation.

“Oh, let’s not have just chickens or beef,” Sandy would plead when a company dinner was under discussion. “Let’s have one of Justine’s fussy dishes. Leave it to Justine!”

For the Treasure obviously enjoyed company dinner parties, and it was fascinating to Sandy to see how methodically, and with what delightful leisure, she prepared for them. Two or three days beforehand her cake-making, silver-polishing, sweeping and cleaning were well under way, and the day of the event itself was no busier than any other day.

Yet it was on one of these occasions that Mrs. Salisbury first had what she felt was good reason to criticize Justine. During a brief absence from home of both boys, their mother planned a rather formal dinner. Four of her closest friends, two couples, were asked, and Owen Sargent was invited by Sandy to make the group an even eight. This was as many as the family table accommodated comfortably, and seemed quite an event. Ordi-

narily the mistress of the house would have been fussing for some days beforehand, in her anxiety to have everything go well, but now, with Justine's brain and Justine's hands in command of the kitchen end of affairs, she went to the other extreme, and did not give her own and Sandy's share of the preparations a thought until the actual day of the dinner.

For, as was stipulated in her bond, except for a general cleaning once a week, the Treasure did no work downstairs outside of the dining-room and kitchen, and made no beds at any time. This meant that the daughter of the house must spend at least an hour every morning in bed-making, and perhaps another fifteen minutes in that mysteriously absorbing business known as "straightening" the living room. Usually Sandy was very faithful to these duties; more, she whisked through them cheerfully, in her enthusiastic eagerness that the new domestic experiment should prove a success.

But for a morning or two before this particular dinner she had shirked her work. Per-

haps the novelty of it was wearing off a little. There was a tennis tournament in progress at the Burning Woods Country Club, two miles away from River Falls, and Sandy, who was rather proud of her membership in this very smart organization, did not want to miss a moment of it. Breakfast was barely over before somebody's car was at the door to pick up Miss Salisbury, who departed in a whirl of laughter and a flutter of bright veils, to be gone, sometimes, for the entire day.

She had gone in just this way on the morning of the dinner, and her mother, who had quite a full program of her own for the morning, had had breakfast in bed. Mrs. Salisbury came downstairs at about ten o'clock to find the dining-room airing after a sweeping; curtains pinned back, small articles covered with a dust cloth, chairs at all angles. She went on to the kitchen, where Justine was beating mayonnaise.

"Don't forget chopped ice for the shaker, the last thing," Mrs. Salisbury said, adding, with a little self-conscious rush, "And, oh, by

the way, Justine, I see that Miss Alexandra has gone off again, without touching the living room. Yesterday I straightened it a little bit, but I have two club meetings this morning, and I'm afraid I must fly. If—if she comes in for lunch, will you remind her of it?"

"Will she be back for lunch? I thought she said she would not," Justine said, in honest surprise.

"No; come to think of it, she won't," her mother admitted, a little flatly. "She put her room and her brothers' room in order," she added inconsequently.

Justine did not answer, and Mrs. Salisbury went slowly out of the kitchen, annoyance rising in her heart. It was all very well for Sandy to help out about the house, but this inflexible idea of holding her to it was nonsense!

Ruffled, she went up to her room. Justine had carried away the breakfast tray, but there were towels and bath slippers lying about, a litter of mail on the bed, and Mr. Salisbury's discarded linen strewn here and there. The dressers were in disorder, window curtains

were pinned back for more air, and the coverings of the twin beds thrown back and trailing on the floor. Fifteen minutes' brisk work would have straightened the whole, but Mrs. Salisbury could not spare the time just then. The morning was running away with alarming speed; she must be dressed for a meeting at eleven o'clock, and, like most women of her age, she found dressing a slow and troublesome matter; she did not like to be hurried with her brushes and cold creams, her ruffles and veil.

The thought of the unmade beds did not really trouble her when, trim and dainty, she went off in a friend's car to the club at eleven o'clock, but when she came back, nearly two hours later, it was distinctly an annoyance to find her bedroom still untouched. She was tired then, and wanted her lunch; but instead she replaced her street dress with a loose house gown, and went resolutely to work.

Musing over her solitary luncheon, she found the whole thing a little absurd. There was still the drawing-room to be put in order,

and no reason in the world why Justine should not do it. The girl was not overworked, and she was being paid thirty-seven dollars and fifty cents every month! Justine was big and strong, she could toss the little extra work off without any effort at all.

She wondered why it is almost a physical impossibility for a nice woman to ask a maid the simplest thing in the world, if she is fairly certain that that maid will be ungracious about it.

“Dear me!” thought Mrs. Salisbury, eating her chop and salad, her hot muffin and tart without much heart to appreciate these delicacies, “How much time I have spent in my life, going through imaginary conversations with maids! Why couldn’t I just step to the pantry door and say, in a matter-of-fact tone, ‘I’m afraid I must ask you to put the sitting-room in order, Justine. Miss Sandy has apparently forgotten all about it. I’ll see that it doesn’t occur again.’ And I could add—now that I think of it—‘I will pay you for your extra

time, if you like, and if you will remind me at the end of the month.' ”

“Well, she may not like it, but she can't refuse,” was her final summing up. She went out to the kitchen with a deceptive air of composure.

Justine's occupation, when Mrs. Salisbury found her, strengthened the older woman's resolutions. The maid, in a silent and spotless kitchen, was writing a letter. Sheets of paper were strewn on the scoured white wood of the kitchen table; the writer, her chin cupped in her hand, was staring dreamily out of the kitchen window. She gave her mistress an absent smile, then laid down her pen and stood up.

“I'm writing here,” she explained, “so that I can catch the milkman for the cream.”

Mrs. Salisbury knew that it was useless to ask if everything was in readiness for the evening's event. From where she stood she could see piles of plates already neatly ranged in the warming oven, peeled potatoes were soaking in ice water in a yellow bowl, and the

parsley that would garnish the big platter was ready, crisp and fresh in a glass of water.

“Well, you look nice and peaceful,” smiled the mistress. “I am just going to dress for a little tea, and I may have to look in at the opening of the Athenæum Club,” she went on, fussing with a frill at her wrist, “so I may be as late as five. But I’ll bring some flowers when I come. Miss Alexandra will probably be at home by that time, but if she isn’t—if she isn’t, perhaps you would just go in and straighten the living room, Justine? I put things somewhat in order yesterday, and dusted a little, but, of course, things get scattered about, and it needs a little attention. She may of course be back in time to do it——”

Her voice drifted away into casual silence. She looked at Justine expectantly, confidently. The maid flushed uncomfortably.

“I’m sorry,” she said frankly. “But that’s against one of our rules, you know. I am not supposed to——”

“Not ordinarily, I understand that,” Mrs.

Salisbury agreed quickly. "But in an emergency——"

Again she hesitated. And Justine, with the maddening gentleness of the person prepared to carry a point at all costs, answered again:

"It's the rule. I'm sorry; but I am not supposed to."

"I should suppose that you were in my house to make yourself useful to me," Mrs. Salisbury said coldly. She used a tone of quiet dignity; but she knew that she had had the worst of the encounter. She was really a little dazed by the firmness of the rebuff.

"They make a point of our keeping to the letter of the law," Justine explained.

"Not knowing what my particular needs are, nor how I like my house to be run, is that it?" the other woman asked shrewdly.

"Well——" Justine hung upon an embarrassed assent. "But perhaps they won't be so firm about it as soon as the school is really established," she added eagerly.

"No; I think they will not!" Mrs. Salisbury agreed with a short laugh, "inasmuch as they

cannot, if they ever hope to get any foothold at all!"

And she left the kitchen, feeling that in the last remark at least she had scored, yet very angry at Justine, who made this sort of warfare necessary.

"If this sort of thing keeps up, I shall simply have to let her *go!*" she said.

But she was trembling, and she came to a full stop in the front hall. It was maddening; it was unbelievable; but that neglected half hour of work threatened to wreck her entire day. With every fiber of her being in revolt, she went into the sitting-room.

This was Alexandra's responsibility, after all, she said to herself. And, after a moment's indecision, she decided to telephone her daughter at the Burning Woods Club.

"Hello, Mother," said Alexandra, when a page had duly informed her that she was wanted at the telephone. Her voice sounded a little tired, faintly impatient. "What is it, Mother?"

"Why, I ought to go to Mary Bell's tea,

dearie, and I wanted just to look in at the Athenæum——” Mrs. Salisbury began, a little inconsequently. “How soon do you expect to be home?” she broke off to ask.

“I don’t know,” said Sandy lifelessly.

“Are you coming back with Owen?”

“No,” Sandy said, in the same tone. “I’ll come back with the Prichards, I guess, or with one of the girls. Owen and the Brice boy are taking Miss Satterlee for a little spin up around Feather Rock.”

“Miss *who?*” But Mrs. Salisbury knew very well who Miss Satterlee was. A pretty and pert and rowdyish little dancer, she had managed to captivate one or two of the prominent matrons of the club, and was much in evidence there, to the great discomfort of the more conservative Sandy and her intimates.

Now Sandy’s mother ended the conversation with a few very casual remarks, in not too sympathetic or indignant a vein. Then, with heart and mind in anything but a hospitable or joyous state, she set about the task of putting the sitting room in order. She

abandoned once and for all any hope of getting to her club or her tea that afternoon, and was therefore possessed of three distinct causes of grievance.

With her mother heart aching for the quiet misery betrayed by Sandy's voice, she could not blame the girl. Nor could she blame herself. So Justine got the full measure of her disapproval, and, while she worked, Mrs. Salisbury refreshed her soul with imaginary conversations in which she kindly but firmly informed Justine that her services were no longer needed——

However, the dinner was perfect. Course smoothly followed course; there was no hesitating, no hitch; the service was swift, noiseless, unobtrusive. The head of the house was obviously delighted, and the guests enthusiastic.

Best of all, Owen arrived early, irreproachably dressed, if a little uncomfortable in his evening clothes, and confided to Sandy that he had had a "rotten time" with Miss Satterlee.

"But she's just the sort of little cat that

catches a dear, great big idiot like Owen," said Sandy to her mother, when the older woman had come in to watch the younger slip into her gown for the evening's affair.

"Look out, dear, or I will begin to suspect you of a *tendresse* in that direction!" the mother said archly.

"For Owen?" Sandy raised surprised brows. "I'm mad about him, I'd marry him to-night!" she went on calmly.

"If you really cared, dear, you couldn't use that tone," her mother said uncomfortably. "Love comes only once, *real* love, that is——"

"Oh, Mother! There's no such thing as real love," Sandy said impatiently. "I know ten good, nice men I would marry, and I'll bet you did, too, years ago, only you weren't brought up to admit it! But I like Owen best, and it makes me sick to see a person like Rose Satterlee annexing him. She'll make him utterly wretched; she's that sort. Whereas I am really decent, don't you know; I'd be the sort of wife he'd go crazier and crazier about. He's one of those unfortunate men who really

don't know what they want until they get something they don't want. They——”

“Don't, dear. It distresses me to hear you talk this way,” Mrs. Salisbury said, with dignity. “I don't know whether modern girls realize how dreadful they are,” she went on, “but at least I needn't have my own daughter show such a lack of—of delicacy and of refinement.” And in the dead silence that followed she cast about for some effective way of changing the subject, and finally decided to tell Sandy what she thought of Justine.

But here, too, Sandy was unsympathetic. Scowling as she hooked the filmy pink and silver of her evening gown, Sandy took up Justine's defense.

“All up to me, Mother, every bit of it! And, honestly now, you had no right to ask her to do——”

“No right!” Exasperated beyond all words, Mrs. Salisbury picked up her fan, gathered her dragging skirts together, and made a dignified departure from the room. “No right!” she echoed, more in pity than anger. “Well,

really, I wonder sometimes what we are coming to! No right to ask my servant, whom I pay thirty-seven and a half dollars a month, to stop writing letters long enough to clean my sitting room! Well, right or wrong, we'll see!"

But the cryptic threat contained in the last words was never carried out. The dinner was perfect, and Owen was back in his old position as something between a brother and a lover, full of admiring great laughs for Sandy and boyish confidences. There was not a cloud on the evening for Mrs. Salisbury. And the question of Justine's conduct was laid on the shelf.

CHAPTER IV

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AFTER the dinner party domestic matters seemed to run even more smoothly than before, but there was a difference, far below the surface, in Mrs. Salisbury's attitude toward the new maid. The mistress found herself incessantly looking for flaws in Justine's perfectness; for things that Justine might easily have done, but would not do.

In this Mrs. Salisbury was unconsciously aided and abetted by her sister, Mrs. Otis, a large, magnificent woman of forty-five, who had a masterful and assured manner, as became a very rich and influential widow. Mrs. Otis had domineered Mrs. Salisbury throughout their childhood; she had brought up a number of sons and daughters in a highly successful manner, and finally she kept a houseful of

servants, whom she managed with a firm hand, and managed, it must be admitted, very well. She had seen the Treasure many times before, but it was while spending a day in November with her sister that she first expressed her disapproval of Justine.

"You spoil her, Sarah," said Mrs. Otis. "She's a splendid cook, of course, and a nice-mannered girl. But you spoil her."

"I? I have nothing to do with it," Mrs. Salisbury asserted promptly. "She does exactly what the college permits; no more and no less."

"Nonsense!" Mrs. Otis said largely, genially. And she exchanged an amused look with Sandy.

The three ladies were in the little library, after luncheon, enjoying a coal fire. The sisters, both with sewing, were in big armchairs. Sandy, idly turning the pages of a new magazine, sat at her mother's feet. The first heavy rain of the season battered at the windows.

"Now, that darning, Sally," Mrs. Otis said, glancing at her sister's sewing. "Why don't

you simply call the girl and ask her to do it? There's no earthly reason why she shouldn't be useful. She's got absolutely nothing to do. The girl would probably be happier with some work in her hands. Don't encourage her to think that she can whisk through her lunch dishes and then rush off somewhere. They have no conscience about it, my dear. You're the mistress, and you are supposed to arrange things exactly to suit yourself, no matter if nobody else has ever done things your way from the beginning of time!"

"That's a lovely theory, Auntie," said Alexandra, "but this is an entirely different situation."

For answer Mrs. Otis merely compressed her lips, and flung the pink yarn that she was knitting into a baby's sacque steadily over her flashing needles.

"Where's Justine now?" she asked, after a moment.

"In her room," Mrs. Salisbury answered.

"No; she's gone for a walk, Mother," Sandy said. "She loves to walk in the rain,

and she wanted to change her library book, and send a telegram or something——”

“Just like a guest in the house!” Mrs. Otis observed, with fine scorn. “Surely she asked you if she might go, Sally?”

“No. Her—her work is done. She—comes and goes that way.”

“Without saying a word? And who answers the door?” Mrs. Otis was unaffectedly astonished now.

“She does if she’s in the house, Mattie, just as she answers the telephone. But she’s only actually on duty one afternoon a week.”

“You see, the theory is, Auntie,” Sandy supplied, “that persons on our income—I won’t say of our position, for Mother hates that—but on our income, aren’t supposed to require formal door-answering very often.”

Mrs. Otis, her knitting suspended, moved her round eyes from mother to daughter and back again. She did not say a word, but words were not needed.

“I know it seems outrageous, in some ways, Mattie,” Mrs. Salisbury presently said, with

a little nervous laugh. "But what is one to do?"

"Do?" echoed her sister roundly. "*Do?* Well, I know I keep six house servants, and have always kept at least three, and I never heard the equal of *this* in all my days! Do?—I'd show you what I'd do fast enough! Do you suppose I'd pay a maid thirty-seven dollars a month to go tramping off to the library in the rain, and to tell me what my social status was? Why, Evelyn keeps two, and pays one eighteen and one fifteen, and do you suppose she'd allow either such liberties? Not at all. The downstairs girl wears a nice little cap and apron—'Madam, dinner is served,' she says——"

"Yes, but Evelyn's had seven cooks since she was married," Sandy, who was not a great admirer of her young married cousin, put in here, "and Arthur said that she actually cried because she could not give a decent dinner!"

"Evelyn's only a beginner, dear," said Evelyn's mother sharply, "but she has the right spirit. No nonsense, regular holidays, and

hard work when they are working is the only way to impress maids. Mary Underwood," she went on, turning to her sister, "says that, when she and Fred are to be away for a meal, she deliberately lays out extra work for the maid; she says it keeps her from getting ideas. No, Sally," Mrs. Otis concluded, with the older-sister manner she had worn years ago, "no, dear; you are all wrong about this, and sooner or later this girl will simply walk over you, and you'll see it as I do. Changing her book at the library, indeed! How did she know that you mightn't want tea served this afternoon?"

"She wouldn't serve it, if we did, Aunt Martha," Sandy said, dimpling. "She never serves tea! That's one of the regulations."

"Well, we simply won't discuss it," Mrs. Otis said, firm lines forming themselves at the corners of her capable mouth. "If you like that sort of thing, you like it, that's all! I don't. We'll talk of something else."

But she could not talk of anything else. Presently she burst out afresh.

“Dear me, when I think of the way *Ma* used to manage 'em! No nonsense there; it was walk a chalk line in *Ma*'s house! Your grandmother,” she said to Alexandra, with stern relish, “had had a pack of slaves about her in *her* young days. But, of course, Sally,” she added charitably, “you've been ill, and things do have to run themselves when one's ill——”

“You don't get the idea, Auntie,” Sandy said blithely. “Mother pays for efficiency. Justine isn't a mere extra pair of hands; she's a trained professional worker. She's just like a stenographer, except that what she does is ten times harder to learn than stenography. We can no more ask her to get tea than Dad could ask his head bookkeeper to—well, to drop in here some Sunday and O.K. Mother's household accounts. It's an age of specialization, Aunt Martha.”

“It's an age of utter nonsense,” Mrs. Otis said forcibly. “But if your mother and father like to waste their money that way——”

“There isn't much waste of money to it,”

Mrs. Salisbury put in neatly, "for Justine manages on less than I ever did. I think there's been only one week this fall when she hasn't had a balance."

"A balance of what?"

"A surplus, I mean. A margin left from her allowance."

The pink wool fell heavily into Mrs. Otis's broad lap.

"She handles your money for you, does she, Sally?"

"Why, yes. She seems eminently fitted for it. And she does it for a third less, Mattie, truly. She more than saves the difference in her wages."

"You let her buy things and pay tradesmen, do you?"

"Oh, Auntie, why not?" Alexandra asked, amused but impatient. "Why shouldn't Mother let her do that?"

"Well, it's not my idea of good housekeeping, that's all," Mrs. Otis said staidly. "Managing is the most important part of housekeeping. In giving such a girl financial re-

sponsibilities, you not only let go of the control of your household, but you put temptation in her way. No; let the girl try making some beds, and serving tea, now and then; and do your own marketing and paying, Sally. It's the only way."

"Justine tempted—why, she's not that sort of girl at all!" Alexandra laughed gaily.

"Very well, my dear, perhaps she's not, and perhaps you young girls know everything that is to be known about life," her aunt answered witheringly. "But when grown business men were cheated as easily as those men in the First National were," she finished impressively, alluding to recent occurrences in River Falls, "it seems a little astonishing to find a girl your age so sure of her own judgment, that's all."

Sandy's answer, if indirect, was effective.

"How about some tea?" she asked. "Will you have some, either of you? It only takes me a minute to get it."

"And I wish you could have seen Mattie's expression, Kane," Mrs. Salisbury said to her

husband when telling him of the conversation that evening, "really, she glared! I suppose she really can't understand how, with an expensive servant in the house——" Mrs. Salisbury's voice dropped a little on a note of mild amusement. She sat idly at her dressing table, her hair loosened, her eyes thoughtful. When she spoke again, it was with a shade of resentment. "And, really, it *is* most inconvenient," she said. "I don't want to impose upon a girl; I never *did* impose upon a girl; but I like to feel that I'm mistress in my own house. If the work is too hard one day, I will make it easier the next, and so on. But, as Mat says, it *looks* so disobliging in a maid to have her race off; *she* doesn't care whether you get any tea or not; *she's* enjoying herself! And after all one's kindness—— And then another thing," she presently roused herself to add, "Mat thinks that it is very bad management on my part to let Justine handle money. She says——"

"I devoutly wish that Mattie Otis would mind——" Mr. Salisbury did not finish his

sentence. He wound his watch, laid it on his bureau, and went on, more mildly: "If you can do better than Justine, it may or may not be worth your while to take that out of her hands; but, if you can't, it seems to me sheer folly. My Lord, Sally——"

"Yes, I know! I know," Mrs. Salisbury said hastily. "But, really, Kane," she went on slowly, the color coming into her face, "let us suppose that every family had a graduate cook, who marketed and managed. And let us suppose the children, like ours, out of the nursery. Then just what share of her own household responsibility *is* a woman supposed to take?"

"You are eternally saying, not about me, but about other men's wives, that women to-day have too much leisure as it is. But, with a Justine, why, I could go off to clubs and card parties every day! I'd know that the house was clean, the meals as good and as nourishing as could be; I'd know that guests would be well cared for and that bills would be paid. Isn't a woman, the mistress of a house, sup-

posed to do more than that? I don't want to be a mere figurehead."

Frowning at her own reflection in the glass, deeply in earnest, she tried to puzzle it out.

"In the old times, when women had big estates to look after," she presently pursued, "servants, horses, cows, vegetables and fruit gardens, soap-making and weaving and chickens and babies, they had real responsibilities, they had real interests. Housekeeping to-day *isn't* interesting. It's confining, and it's monotonous. But take it away, and what is a woman going to do?"

"That," her husband answered seriously, "is the real problem of the day, I truly believe. That is what you women have to discover. Delegating your housekeeping, how are you going to use your energies, and find the work you want to do in the world? How are you going to manage the questions of being obliged to work at home, and to suit your hours to yourself, and to really express yourselves, and at the same time get done some of

the work of the world that is waiting for women to do.”

His wife continued to eye him expectantly.

“Well, how?” said she.

“I don’t know. I’m asking you!” he answered pointedly. Mrs. Salisbury sighed.

“Dear me, I do get so tired of this talk of efficiency, and women’s work in the world!” she said. “I wish one might feel it was enough to live along quietly, busy with dressmaking, or perhaps now and then making a fancy dessert for guests, giving little teas and card parties, and making calls. It——” a yearning admiration rang in her voice, “it seems such a dignified, pleasant ideal to live up to!” she said.

“Well, it looks as if we had seen the last of that particular type of woman,” her husband said cheerfully. “Or at least it looks as if that woman would find her own level, deliberately separate herself from her more ambitious sisters, who want to develop higher arts than that of mere housekeeping.”

“And how do *you* happen to know so much about it, Kane?”

“I? Oh, it’s in the air, I guess,” the man admitted. “The whole idea is changing. A man used to be ashamed of the idea of his wife working. Now men tell you with pride that their wives paint or write or bind books—Bates’ wife makes loads of money designing toys, and Mrs. Brewster is consulting physician on a hospital staff. Mary Shotwell—she was a trained nurse—what was it she did?”

“She gave a series of talks on hygiene for rich people’s children,” his wife supplied. “And of course Florence Yeats makes candy, and the Gerrish girls have opened a tea room in the old garage. But it seems funny, just the same! It seems funny to me that so many women find it worth while to hire servants, so that they can rush off to make the money to pay the servants! It would seem so much more normal to stay at home and do the housework themselves, and it would *look* better.”

“Well, certain women always will, I suppose. And others will find their outlets in

other ways, and begin to look about for Justines, who will lift the household load. I believe we'll see the time, Sally," said Kane Salisbury thoughtfully, "when a young couple, launching into matrimony, will discuss expenses with a mutual interest; you pay this and I'll pay that, as it were. A trained woman will step into their kitchen, and Madame will walk off to business with her husband, as a matter of course."

"Heaven forbid!" Mrs. Salisbury said piously. "If there is anything romantic or tender or beautiful about married life under those circumstances, I fail to see it, that's all!"

It happened, a week or two later, on a sharp, sunshiny morning in early winter, that Mrs. Salisbury and Alexandra found themselves sauntering through the nicest shopping district of River Falls. There were various small things to be bought for the wardrobes of mother and daughter, prizes for a card party, birthday presents for one of the boys, and a number of other little things.

They happened to pass the windows of

Lewis & Sons' big grocery, one of the finest shops in town, on their way from one store to another, and, attracted by a window full of English preserves, Mrs. Salisbury decided to go in and leave an order.

"I hope that you are going to bring your account back to us, Mrs. Salisbury," said the alert salesman who waited upon them. "We are always sorry to let an old customer go."

"But I have an account here," said Mrs. Salisbury, startled.

The salesman, smiling, shook his head, and one of the members of the firm, coming up, confirmed the denial.

"We were very sorry to take your name off our books, Mrs. Salisbury," said he, with pleasant dignity; "I can remember your coming into the old store on River Street when this young lady here was only a small girl."

His hand indicated a spot about three feet from the floor, as the height of the child Alexandra, and the grown Alexandra dimpled an appreciation of his memory.

"But I don't understand," Mrs. Salisbury

said, wrinkling her forehead; "I had no idea that the account was closed, Mr. Lewis. How long ago was this?"

"It was while you were ill," said Mr. Lewis soothingly. "You might look up the exact date, Mr. Laird."

"But why?" Mrs. Salisbury asked, prettily puzzled.

"That I don't know," answered Mr. Lewis. "And at the time, of course, we did not press it. There was no complaint, of that I'm very sure."

"But I don't understand," Mrs. Salisbury persisted. "I don't see who could have done it except Mr. Salisbury, and, if he had had any reason, he would have told me of it. However," she rose to go, "if you'll send the jams, and the curry, and the chocolate, Mr. Laird, I'll look into the matter at once."

"And you're quite yourself again?" Mr. Lewis asked solicitously, accompanying them to the door. "That's the main thing, isn't it? There's been so much sickness everywhere lately. And your young lady looks as if she

didn't know the meaning of the word. Wonderful morning, isn't it? Good morning, Mrs. Salisbury!"

"Good morning!" Mrs. Salisbury responded graciously. But, as soon as she and Alexandra were out of hearing, her face darkened. "That makes me *wild!*" said she.

"What does, darling?"

"That! Justine having the audacity to change my trade!"

"But why should she want to, Mother?"

"I really don't know. Given it to friends of hers perhaps."

"Oh, Mother, she wouldn't!"

"Well, we'll see." Mrs. Salisbury dropped the subject, and brought her mind back with a visible effort to the morning's work.

Immediately after lunch she interrogated Justine. The girl was drying glasses, each one emerging like a bubble of hot and shining crystal from her checked glass towel.

"Justine," began the mistress, "have we been getting our groceries from Lewis & Sons lately?"

Justine placidly referred to an account book which she took from a drawer under the pantry shelves.

“Our last order was August eleventh,” she announced.

Something in her unembarrassed serenity annoyed Mrs. Salisbury.

“May I ask why?” she suggested sharply.

“Well, they are a long way from here,” Justine said, after a second’s thought, “and they are very expensive grocers, Mrs. Salisbury. Of course, what they have is of the best, but they cater to the very richest families, you know—firms like Lewis & Sons aren’t very much interested in the orders they receive from—well, from upper middle-class homes, people of moderate means. They handle hotels and the summer colony at Burning Woods.”

Justine paused, a little uncertain of her terms, and Mrs. Salisbury interposed an icy question.

“May I ask where you *have* transferred my trade?”

“Not to any one place,” the girl answered readily and mildly. But a little resentful color had crept into her cheeks. “I pay as I go, and follow the bargains,” she explained. “I go to market twice a week, and send enough home to make it worth while for the tradesman. You couldn’t market as I do, Mrs. Salisbury, but the tradespeople rather expect it of a maid. Sometimes I gather an assortment of vegetables into my basket, and get them to make a price on the whole. Or, if there is a sale at any store, I go there, and order a dozen cans, or twenty pounds of whatever they are selling.”

Mrs. Salisbury was not enjoying this revelation. The obnoxious term “upper middle class” was biting like an acid upon her pride. And it was further humiliating to contemplate her maid as a driver of bargains, as dicker-
ing for baskets of vegetables.

“The best is always the cheapest in the long run, whatever it may cost, Justine,” she said, with dignity. “We may not be among the richest families in town,” she was unable to

refrain from adding, "but it is rather amusing to hear you speak of the family as upper middle class!"

"I only meant the—the sort of ordering we did," Justine hastily interposed. "I meant from the grocer's point of view."

"Well, Mr. Lewis sold groceries to my grandmother before I was married," Mrs. Salisbury said loftily, "and I prefer him to any other grocer. If he is too far away, the order may be telephoned. Or give me your list, and I will stop in, as I used to do. Then I can order any little extra delicacy that I see, something I might not otherwise think of. Let me know what you need to-morrow morning, and I'll see to it."

To her surprise, Justine did not bow an instant assent. Instead the girl looked a little troubled.

"Shall I give you my accounts and my ledger?" she asked rather uncertainly.

"No-o, I don't see any necessity for that," the older woman said, after a second's pause.

"But Lewis & Sons is a very expensive

place," Justine pursued; "they never have sales, never special prices. Their cheapest tomatoes are fifteen cents a can, and their peaches twenty-five——"

"Never mind," Mrs. Salisbury interrupted her briskly. "We'll manage somehow. I always did trade there, and never had any trouble. Begin with him to-morrow. And, while, of course, I understand that I was ill and couldn't be bothered in this case, I want to ask you not to make any more changes without consulting me, if you please."

Justine, still standing, her troubled eyes on her employer, the last glass, polished to diamond brightness, in her hand, frowned mutinously.

"You understand that if you do any ordering whatever, Mrs. Salisbury, I will have to give up my budget. You see, in that case, I wouldn't know where I stood at all."

"You would get the bill at the end of the month," Mrs. Salisbury said, displeased.

"Yes, but I don't run bills," the girl persisted.

“I don’t care to discuss it, Justine,” the mistress said pleasantly; “just do as I ask you, if you please, and we’ll settle everything at the end of the month. You shall not be held responsible, I assure you.”

She went out of the kitchen, and the next morning had a pleasant half hour in the big grocery, and left a large order.

“Just a little kitchen misunderstanding,” she told the affable Mr. Lewis, “but when one is ill—— However, I am rapidly getting the reins back into my own hands now.”

After that, Mrs. Salisbury ordered in person, or by telephone, every day, and Justine’s responsibilities were confined to the meat market and greengrocer. Everything went along very smoothly until the end of the month, when Justine submitted her usual weekly account and a bill from Lewis & Sons which was some three times larger in amount than was the margin of money supposed to pay it.

This was annoying. Mrs. Salisbury could not very well rebuke her, nor could she pay the bill out of her own purse. She deter-

mined to put it aside until her husband seemed in a mood for financial advances, and, wrapping it firmly about the inadequate notes and silver given her by Justine, she shut it in a desk drawer. There the bill remained, although the money was taken out for one thing or another; change that must be made, a small bill that must be paid at the door.

Another fortnight went by, and Lewis & Sons submitted another bimonthly bill. Justine also gave her mistress another inadequate sum, what was left from her week's expenditures.

The two grocery bills were for rather a formidable sum. The thought of them, in their desk drawer, rather worried Mrs. Salisbury. One evening she bravely told her husband about them, and laid them before him.

Mr. Salisbury was annoyed. He had been free from these petty worries for some months, and he disliked their introduction again.

"I thought this was Justine's business, Sally?" said he, frowning over his eyeglasses.

“Well, it *is*,” said his wife, “but she hasn’t enough money, apparently, and she simply handed me these, without saying anything.”

“Well, but that doesn’t sound like her. Why?”

“Oh, because I do the ordering, she says. They’re queer, you know, Kane; all servants are. And she seems very touchy about it.”

“Nonsense!” said the head of the house roundly. “Oh, Justine!” he shouted, and the maid, after putting an inquiring head in from the dining-room, duly came in, and stood before him.

“What’s struck your budget that you were so proud of, Justine?” asked Kane Salisbury. “It looks pretty sick.”

“I am not keeping on a budget now,” answered Justine, with a rather surprised glance at her mistress.

“Not; but why not?” asked the man good-naturedly. And his wife added briskly, “Why did you stop, Justine?”

“Because Mrs. Salisbury has been ordering all this month,” Justine said. “And that, of

course, makes it impossible for me to keep track of what is spent. These last four weeks I have only been keeping an account; I haven't attempted to keep within any limit."

"Ah, you see that's it," Kane Salisbury said triumphantly. "Of course that's it! Well, Mrs. Salisbury will have to let you go back to the ordering then. D'ye see, Sally? Naturally, Justine can't do a thing while you're buying at random——"

"My dear, we have dealt with Lewis & Sons ever since we were married," Mrs. Salisbury said, smiling with great tolerance, and in a soothing voice, "Justine, for some reason, doesn't like Lewis & Sons——"

"It isn't that," said the maid quickly. "It's just that it's against the rules of the college for anyone else to do any ordering, unless, of course, you and I discussed it beforehand and decided just what to spend."

"You mean, unless I simply went to market for you?" asked the mistress, in a level tone.

"Well, it amounts to that—yes."

Mrs. Salisbury threw her husband one glance.

“Well, I’ll tell you what we have decided in the morning, Justine,” she said, with dignity. “That’s all. You needn’t wait.”

Justine went back to her kitchen, and Mr. Salisbury, smiling, said:

“Sally, how unreasonable you are! And how you do dislike that girl!”

The outrageous injustice of this scattered to the winds Mrs. Salisbury’s last vestige of calm, and, after one scathing summary of the case, she refused to discuss it at all, and opened the evening paper with marked deliberation.

For the next two or three weeks she did all the marketing herself, but this plan did not work well. Bills doubled in size, and so many things were forgotten, or were ordered at the last instant by telephone, and arrived too late, that the whole domestic system was demoralized.

Presently, of her own accord, Mrs. Salisbury reëstablished Justine with her allowance,

and with full authority to shop when and how she pleased, and peace fell again. But, smoldering in Mrs. Salisbury's bosom was a deep resentment at this peculiar and annoying state of affairs. She began to resent everything Justine did and said, as one human being shut up in the same house with another is very apt to do.

No schooling ever made it easy to accept the sight of Justine's leisure when she herself was busy. It was always exasperating, when perhaps making beds upstairs, to glance from the window and see Justine starting for market, her handsome figure well displayed in her long dark coat, her shining braids half hidden by her simple yet dashing hat.

"I walked home past Perry's," Justine would perhaps say on her return, "to see their prize chrysanthemums. They really are wonderful! The old man took me over the greenhouses himself, and showed me everything!"

Or perhaps, unpacking her market basket by the spotless kitchen table, she would confide innocently:

“Samuels is really having an extraordinary sale of serges this morning. I went in, and got two dress lengths for my sister’s children. If I can find a good dressmaker, I really believe I’ll have one myself. I think”—Justine would eye her vegetables thoughtfully—“I think I’ll go up now and have my bath, and cook these later.”

Mrs. Salisbury could reasonably find no fault with this. But an indescribable irritation possessed her whenever such a conversation took place. The coolness!—she would say to herself, as she went upstairs—wandering about to shops and greenhouses, and quietly deciding to take a bath before luncheon! Why, Mrs. Salisbury had had maids who never once asked for the use of the bathroom, although they had been for months in her employ.

No, she could not attack Justine on this score. But she began to entertain the girl with enthusiastic accounts of the domestics of earlier and better days.

“My mother had a girl,” she said, “a girl

named Norah O'Connor. I remember her very well. She swept, she cleaned, she did the entire washing for a family of eight, and she did all the cooking. And such cookies, and pies, and gingerbread as she made! All for sixteen dollars a month. We regarded Norah as a member of the family, and, even on her holidays she would take three or four of us, and walk with us to my father's grave; that was all she wanted to do. You don't see her like in these days, dear old Norah!"

Justine listened respectfully, silently. Once, when her mistress was enlarging upon the advantages of slavery, the girl commented mildly:

"Doesn't it seem a pity that the women of the United States didn't attempt at least to train all those Southern colored people for house servants? It seems to be their natural element. They love to live in white families, and they have no caste pride. It would seem to be such a waste of good material, letting them worry along without much guidance all

these years. It almost seems as if the Union owed it to them."

"Dear me, I wish somebody would! I, for one, would love to have dear old mammies around me again," Mrs. Salisbury said, with fervor. "They know their place," she added neatly.

"The men could be butlers and gardeners and coachmen," pursued Justine.

"Yes, and with a lot of finely trained colored women in the market, where would you girls from the college be?" the other woman asked, not without a spice of mischievous enjoyment.

"We would be a finer type of servant, for more fastidious people," Justine scored by answering soberly. "You could hardly expect a colored girl to take the responsibility of much actual managing, I should suppose. There would always be a certain proportion of people who would prefer white servants."

"Perhaps there are," Mrs. Salisbury admitted dubiously. She felt, with a sense of triumph, that she had given Justine a pretty

strong hint against "uppishness." But Justine was innocently impervious to hints. As a matter of fact, she was not an exceptionally bright girl; literal, simple, and from very plain stock, she was merely well trained in her chosen profession. Sometimes she told her mistress of her fellow-graduates, taking it for granted that Mrs. Salisbury entirely approved of all the ways of the American School of Domestic Science.

"There's Mabel Frost," said Justine one day. "She would have graduated when I did, but she took the fourth year's work. She really is of a very fine family; her father is a doctor. And she has a position with a doctor's family now, right near here, in New Troy. There are just two in family, and both are doctors, and away all day. So Mabel has a splendid chance to keep up her music."

"Music?" Mrs. Salisbury asked sharply.

"Piano. She's had lessons all her life. She plays very well, too."

"Yes; and some day the doctor or his wife

will come in and find her at the piano, and your friend will lose her fine position," Mrs. Salisbury suggested.

"Oh, Mabel never would have touched the piano without their permission," Justine said quickly, with a little resentful flush.

"You mean that they are perfectly willing to have her use it?" Mrs. Salisbury asked.

"Oh, quite!"

"Have they *adopted* her?"

"Oh, no! No; Mabel is twenty-four or five."

"What's the doctor's name?"

"Mitchell. Dr. Quentin Mitchell. He's a member of the Burning Woods Club."

"A member of the *club*! And he allows——" Mrs. Salisbury did not finish her thought. "I don't want to say anything against your friend," she began again presently, "but for a girl in her position to waste her time studying music seems rather absurd to me. I thought the very idea of the college was to content girls with household positions."

“Well, she is going to be married next spring,” Justine said, “and her husband is quite musical. He plays a church organ. I am going to dinner with them on Thursday, and then to the Gadski concert. They’re both quite music mad.”

“Well, I hope he can afford to buy tickets for Gadski, but marriage is a pretty expensive business,” Mrs. Salisbury said pleasantly, “What is he, a chauffeur—a salesman?” To do her justice, she knew the question would not offend, for Justine, like any girl from a small town, was not fastidious as to the position of her friends; was very fond of the policeman on the corner and his pretty wife, and liked a chat with Mrs. Sargent’s chauffeur when occasion arose.

But the girl’s answer, in this case, was a masterly thrust.

“No; he’s something in a bank, Mrs. Salisbury. He’s paying teller in that little bank at Burton Corners, beyond Burning Woods. But, of course, he hopes for promotion; they all do. I believe he is trying to get into the

River Falls Mutual Savings, but I'm not sure."

Mrs. Salisbury felt the blood in her face. Kane Salisbury had been in a bank when she married him; was cashier of the River Falls Mutual Savings Bank now.

She carried away the asters she had been arranging, without further remark. But Justine's attitude rankled. Mrs. Salisbury, absurd as she felt her own position to be, could not ignore the impertinence of her maid's point of view. Theoretically, what Justine thought mattered less than nothing. Actually it really made a great difference to the mistress of the house.

"I would like to put that girl in her place once!" thought Mrs. Salisbury. She began to wish that Justine would marry, and to envy those of her friends who were still struggling with untrained Maggies and Almas and Chloes. Whatever their faults, these girls were still *servants*, old-fashioned "help"—they drudged away at cooking and beds and

sweeping all day, and rattled dishes far into the night.

The possibility of getting a second little maid occurred to her. She suggested it, tentatively, to Sandy.

"You couldn't, unless I'm mistaken, Mother," Sandy said briskly, eyeing a sandwich before she bit into it. The ladies were at luncheon. "For a graduate servant can't work with any but a graduate servant; that's the rule. At least I *think* it is!" And Sandy, turning toward the pantry, called: "Oh, Justine!"

"Justine," she asked, when the maid appeared, "isn't it true that you graduates can't work with untrained girls in the house?"

"That's the rule," Justine assented.

"And what does the school expect you to pay a second girl?" pursued the daughter of the house.

"Well, where there are no children, twenty dollars a month," said Justine, "with one dollar each for every person more than two in the family. Then, in that case, the head serv-

ant, as we call the cook, would get five dollars less a month. That is, I would get thirty-two dollars, and the assistant twenty-three."

"Gracious!" said Mrs. Salisbury. "Thank you, Justine. We were just asking. Fifty-five dollars for the two!" she ejaculated under her breath when the girl was gone. "Why, I could get a fine cook and waitress for less than that!"

And instantly the idea of two good maids instead of one graduated one possessed her. A fine cook in the kitchen, paid, say twenty-five, and a "second girl," paid sixteen. And none of these ridiculous and inflexible regulations! Ah, the satisfaction of healthily imposing upon a maid again, of rewarding that maid with the gift of a half-worn gown, as a peace offering—Mrs. Salisbury drew a long breath. The time had come for a change.

Mr. Salisbury, however, routed the idea with scorn. His wife had no argument hardy enough to survive the blighting breath of his astonishment. And Alexandra, casually approached, proved likewise unfavorable.

“I am certainly not furthering my own comfort alone in this, as you and Daddy seem inclined to think,” Mrs. Salisbury said severely to her daughter. “I feel that Justine’s system is an imposition upon you, dear. It isn’t right for a pretty girl of your age to be caught dusting the sitting-room, as Owen caught you yesterday. Daddy and I can keep a nice home, we keep a motor car, we put the boys in good schools, and it doesn’t seem fair——”

“Oh, fair your grandmother!” Sandy broke in, with a breezy laugh. “If Owen Sargent doesn’t like it, he can just come *to!* Look at *his* mother, eating dinner the other day with four representatives of the Waitresses’ Union! Marching in a parade with dear knows who! Besides——”

“It is very different in Mrs. Sargent’s case, dear,” said Mrs. Salisbury simply. “She could afford to do anything, and consequently it doesn’t matter what she does! It doesn’t matter what you do, if you can afford not to.

The point is that we can't really afford a second maid."

"I don't see what that has to do with it!" said the girl of the coming generation cheerfully.

"It has *everything* to do with it," the woman of the passing generation answered seriously.

"As far as Owen goes," Sandy went on thoughtfully, "I'm only too much afraid he's the other way. What do you suppose he's going to do now? He's going to establish a little Neighborhood House for boys down on River Street, 'The Cyrus Sargent Memorial.' And, if you please, he's going to *live* there! It's a ducky house; he showed me the blue-prints, with the darlingest apartment for himself you ever saw, and a plunge, and a roof gymnasium. It's going to cost, endowment and all, three hundred thousand dollars——"

"Good heavens!" Mrs. Salisbury said, as one stricken.

"And the worst of it is," Alexandra pur-

sued, with a sympathetic laugh for her mother's concern, "that he'll meet some Madonna-eyed little factory girl or laundry worker down there and feel that he owes it to her to——"

"To break your heart, Sandy," the mother supplied, all tender solicitude.

"It's not so much a question of my heart," Sandy answered composedly, "as it is a question of his entire life. It's so unnecessary and senseless!"

"And you can sit there calmly discussing it!" Mrs. Salisbury said, thoroughly out of temper with the entire scheme of things mundane. "Upon my word, I never saw or heard anything like it!" she observed. "I wonder that you don't quietly tell Owen that you care for him—but it's too dreadful to joke about! I give you up!"

And she rose from her chair, and went quickly out of the room, every line in her erect little figure expressing exasperation and inflexibility. Sandy, smiling sleepily, reopened

an interrupted novel. But she stared over the open page into space for a few moments, and finally spoke:

“Upon my word, I don’t know that that’s at all a bad idea!”

CHAPTER V

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“MRS. SALISBURY,” said Justine, when her mistress came into the kitchen one December morning, “I’ve had a note from Mrs. Sargent——”

“From Mrs. Sargent?” Mrs. Salisbury repeated, astonished. And to herself she said: “She’s trying to get Justine away from me!”

“She writes as Chairman of the Department of Civics of the Forum Club,” pursued Justine, referring to the letter she held in her hand, “to ask me if I will address the club some Thursday on the subject of the College of Domestic Science. I know that you expect to give a card party some Thursday, and I thought I would make sure just which one you meant.”

Mrs. Salisbury, taken entirely unaware, was actually speechless for a moment. The Forum

was, of all her clubs, the one in which membership was most prized by the women of River Falls. It was not a large club, and she had longed for many years somehow to place her name among the eighty on its roll. The richest and most exclusive women of River Falls belonged to the Forum Club; its few rooms, situated in the business part of town, and handsomely but plainly furnished, were full of subtle reminders that here was no mere social center; here responsible members of the recently enfranchised sex met to discuss civic betterment, schools and municipal budgets, commercialized vice and child labor, library appropriations, liquor laws and sewer systems. Local politicians were beginning to respect the Forum, local newspapers reported its conventions, printed its communications.

Mrs. Salisbury was really a little bit out of place among the clever, serious young doctors, the architects, lawyers, philanthropists and writers who belonged to the club. But her membership therein was one of the things in which she felt an unalloyed satisfaction. If

the discussions ever secretly bored or puzzled her, she was quite clever enough to conceal it. She sat, her handsome face, under its handsome hat, turned toward the speaker, her bright eyes immovable as she listened to reports and expositions. And, after the motion to adjourn had been duly made, she had her reward. Rich women, brilliant women, famous women chatted with her cordially as the Forum Club streamed downstairs. She was asked to luncheons, to teas; she was whirled home in the limousines of her fellow-members. No other one thing in her life seemed to Mrs. Salisbury as definite a social triumph as was her membership in the Forum.

Her election had come about simply enough, after years of secret longing to become a member. Sandy, who was about twelve at the time, during a call from Mrs. Sargent, had said innocently:

“Why haven’t you ever joined the Forum, Mother?”

“Why, yes; why not?” Mrs. Sargent had added.

This gave Mrs. Salisbury an opportunity to say:

“Well, I have been a very busy woman, and couldn’t have done so, with these three dear children to watch. But, as a matter of fact, Mrs. Sargent, I have never been asked. At least,” she went on scrupulously, “I am almost sure I never have been!” The implication being that the Forum’s card of invitation might have been overlooked for more important affairs.

“I’ll send you another,” the great lady had said at once. “You’re just the sort we need,” Mrs. Sargent had continued. “We’ve got enough widows and single women in now; what we want are the real mothers, who need shaking out of the groove!”

Mrs. Sargent happened to be President of the Club at that time, so Mrs. Salisbury had only to ignore graciously the rather offensive phrasing of the invitation, and to await the news of her election, which duly and promptly arrived.

And now Justine had been asked to speak

at the Forum! It was the most distasteful bit of information that had come Mrs. Salisbury's way in a long, long time! She felt in her heart a stinging resentment against Mrs. Sargent, with her mad notions of equality, and against Justine, who was so complacently and contentedly accepting this monstrous state of affairs.

"That is very kind of Mrs. Sargent," said she, fighting for dignity; "she is very much interested in working girls and their problems, and I suppose she thinks this might be a good advertisement for the school, too." This idea had just come to Mrs. Salisbury, and she found it vaguely soothing. "But I don't like the idea," she ended firmly; "it—it seems very odd, very—very conspicuous. I should prefer you not to consider anything of the kind."

"I should prefer" was said in the tone that means "I command," yet Justine was not satisfied.

"Oh, but why?" she asked.

"If you force me to discuss it," said Mrs. Salisbury, in sudden anger, "because you are

my maid! My gracious, *you are my maid,*” she repeated, pent-up irritation finding an outlet at last. “There is such a relationship as mistress and maid, after all! While you are in my house you will do as I say. It is the mistress’s place to give orders, not to take them, not to have to argue and defend herself——”

“Certainly, if it is a question about the work the maid is supposed to do,” Justine defended herself, with more spirit than the other woman had seen her show before. “But what she does with her leisure—why it’s just the same as what a clerk does with his leisure, nobody questions it, nobody——”

“I tell you that I will not stand here and argue with you,” said Mrs. Salisbury, with more dignity in her tone than in her words. “I say that I don’t care to have my maid exploited by a lot of fashionable women at a club, and that ends it! And I must add,” she went on, “that I am extremely surprised that Mrs. Sargent should approach you in such a matter, without consulting me!”

“The relationship of mistress and maid,” Justine said slowly, “is what has always made the trouble. Men have decided what they want done in their offices, and never have any trouble in finding boys to fill the vacancies. But women expect——”

“I really don’t care to listen to any further theories from that extraordinary school,” said Mrs. Salisbury decidedly. “I have told you what I expect you to do, and I know you are too sensible a girl to throw away a good position——”

“Mrs. Salisbury, if I intended to say anything in such a little talk, that would reflect on this family, or even to mention it, it would be different, but, as it is——”

“I should hope you *wouldn’t* mention this family!” Mrs. Salisbury said hotly. “But even without that——”

“It would be merely an outline of what the school is, and what it tries to do,” Justine interposed. “Miss Holley, our founder and President, was most anxious to have us inter-

est the general public in this way, if ever we got a chance."

"What Miss Holley—whoever she is—wanted, or wants, is nothing to me!" Mrs. Salisbury said magnificently. "You know what I feel about this matter, and I have nothing more to say."

She left the kitchen on the very end of the last word, and Justine, perforce not answering, hoped that the affair was concluded, once and for all.

"For Mrs. Sargent may think she can exasperate me by patronizing my maid," said Mrs. Salisbury guardedly, when telling her husband and daughter of the affair that evening, "but there is a limit to everything, and I have had about enough of this efficiency business!"

"I can only beg, Mother dear, that you won't have a row with Owen's dear little vacillating, weak-minded ma," said Sandy cheerfully.

"No; but, seriously, don't you both think

it's outrageous?" Mrs. Salisbury asked, looking from one to the other.

"No-o; I see the girl's point," Kane Salisbury said thoughtfully. "What she does with her afternoons off is her own affair, after all; and you can't blame her, if a chance to step out of the groove comes along, for taking advantage of it. Strictly, you have no call to interfere."

"Legally, perhaps I haven't," his wife conceded calmly. "But, thank goodness, my home is not yet a court of law. Besides, Daddy, if one of the young men in the bank did something of which you disapproved, you would feel privileged to interfere."

"If he did something *wrong*, Sally, not otherwise."

"And you would be perfectly satisfied to meet your janitor somewhere at dinner?"

"No; the janitor's colored, to begin with, and, more than that, he isn't the type one meets. But, if he qualified otherwise, I wouldn't mind meeting him just because he happened to be the janitor. Now, young For-

rest turns up at the club for golf, and Sandy and I picked Fred Hall up the other day, coming back from the river." Kane Salisbury, leaning back in his chair, watched the rings of smoke that rose from his cigar. "It's a funny thing about you women," he said lazily. "You keep wondering why smart girls won't go into housework, and yet, if you get a girl who isn't a mere stupid machine, you resent every sign she gives of being an intelligent human being. No two of you keep house alike, and you jump on the girl the instant she hangs a dish towel up the way you don't. It's you women who make life so hard for each other. Now, if any decent man saw a young fellow at the bottom of the ladder, who was as good and clever and industrious as Justine is, he'd be glad to give him a hand up. But no; that means she's above her work, and has to be snubbed."

"Don't talk so cynically, Daddy dear," Mrs. Salisbury said, smiling over her fancy work, as one only half listening.

"I tell you, a change is coming in all these things, Sally," said the cynic, unruffled.

"You bet there is!" his daughter seconded him from the favorite low seat that permitted her to rest her mouse-colored head against his knee.

"Your mother's a conservative, Sandy," pursued the man of the house, encouraged, "but there's going to be some domestic revolutionizing in the next few years. It's hard enough to get a maid now; pretty soon it'll be impossible. Then you women will have to sit down and work the thing out, and ask yourselves why young American girls won't come into your homes, and eat the best food in the land, and get well paid for what they do. You'll have to reduce the work of an American home to a system, that's all, and what you want done that isn't provided for in that system you'll have to do yourselves. There's something in the way you treat a girl now, or in what you expect her to do, that's all wrong!"

"It isn't a question of too much work," Mrs. Salisbury said. "They are much better off when they're worked hard. And I notice

that your bookkeepers are kept pretty busy, Kane," she added neatly.

"For an eight-hour day, Sally. But you expect a twelve or fourteen-hour day from your housemaid——"

"If I pay a maid thirty-seven and a half dollars a month," his wife averred, with precision, "I expect her to do something for that thirty-seven dollars and a half!"

"Well, but, Mother, she does!" Alexandra contributed eagerly. "In Justine's case she does an awful lot! She plans, and saves, and thinks about things. Sometimes she sits writing menus and crossing things out for an hour at a time."

"And then Justine's a pioneer; in a way she's an experiment," the man said. "Experiments are always expensive. That's why the club is interested, I suppose. But in a few years probably the woods will be full of graduate servants—everyone'll have one! They'll have their clubs and their plans together, and that will solve some of the social side of the old trouble. They——"

“Still, I notice that Mrs. Sargent herself doesn’t employ graduate servants!” Mrs. Salisbury, who had been following a wandering line of thought, threw in darkly.

“Because they haven’t any graduates for homes like hers, Mother,” Alexandra supplied. “She keeps eight or nine housemaids. The college is only to supply the average home, don’t you see? Where only one or two are kept—that’s their idea.”

“And do they suppose that the average American woman is willing to go right on paying thirty-seven dollars and fifty cents for a maid?” Mrs. Salisbury asked mildly.

“For five in family, Mother! Justine would only be thirty if three dear little strangers hadn’t come to brighten your home,” Sandy reminded her. “Besides,” she went on, “Justine was telling me only a day or two ago of their latest scheme—they are arranging so that a girl can manage two houses in the same neighborhood. She gets breakfast for the Joneses, say; leaves at nine for market; orders for both families; goes to the Smiths and

serves their hearty meal at noon; goes back to the Joneses at five, and serves dinner."

"And what does she get for all this?" Mrs. Salisbury asked in a skeptical tone.

"The Joneses pay her twenty-five, I believe, and the Smiths fifteen for two in each family."

"What's to prevent the two families having all meals together," Mrs. Salisbury asked, "instead of having to patch out with meals when they had no maid?"

"Well, I suppose they could. Then she'd get her original thirty, and five more for the two extra—you see, it comes out the same, thirty-five dollars a month. Perhaps families will pool their expenses that way some day. It would save buying, too, and table linen, and gas and fuel. And it would be fun! All at our house this month, and all at Aunt Mat's next month!"

"There's one serious objection to sharing a maid," Mrs. Salisbury presently submitted; "she would tell the other family all your private business."

"If they chose to pump her, she might,"

Alexandra said, with unintentional rebuke, and Mr. Salisbury added amusedly:

“No, no, no, Mother! That’s an exploded theory. How much has Justine told you of her last place?”

“But that’s no proof she *wouldn’t*, Kane,” Mrs. Salisbury ended the talk by rising from her chair, taking another nearer the reading lamp, and opening a new magazine. “Justine is a sensible girl,” she added, after a moment. “I have always said that. When all the discussing and theorizing in the world is done, it comes down to this: a servant in my house shall do *as I say*. I have told her that I dislike this ridiculous club idea, and I expect to hear no more of the matter!”

There came a day in December when Mrs. Salisbury came home from the Forum Club in mid-afternoon. Her face was a little pale as she entered the house, her lips tightly set. It was a Thursday afternoon, and Justine’s kitchen was empty. Lettuce and peeled potatoes were growing crisp in yellow bowls of

ice water, breaded cutlets were in the ice chest, a custard cooled in a north window.

Mrs. Salisbury walked rapidly through the lower rooms, came back to the library, and sat down at her desk. A fire was laid in the wide, comfortable fireplace, but she did not light it. She sat, hatted, veiled and gloved, staring fixedly ahead of her for some moments. Then she said aloud, in a firm but quiet voice: "Well, this positively *ends* it!"

A delicate film of dust obscured the shining surface of the writing table. Mrs. Salisbury's mouth curved into a cold smile when she saw it; and again she spoke aloud.

"Thirty-seven dollars and fifty cents, indeed!" she said. "Ha!"

Nearly two hours later Alexandra rushed in. Alexandra looked her prettiest; she was wearing new furs for the first time; her face was radiantly fresh, under the sweep of her velvet hat. She found her mother stretched comfortably on the library couch with a book. Mrs. Salisbury smiled, and there was a certain placid triumph in her smile.

“Here you are, Mother!” Alexandra burst out joyously. “Mother, I’ve just had the most extraordinary experience of my life!” She sat down beside the couch, her eyes dancing, her cheeks two roses, and pushed back her furs, and flung her gloves aside. “My dear,” said Alexandra, catching up the bunch of violets she held for an ecstatic sniff, and then dropping it in her lap again, “wait until I tell you—I’m engaged!”

“My darling girl——” Mrs. Salisbury said, rapturously, faintly.

“To Owen, of course,” Alexandra rushed on radiantly. “But wait until I *tell* you! It’s the most awful thing I ever did in my life, in a *way*,” she interrupted herself to say more soberly. Her voice died away, and her eyes grew dreamy.

Mrs. Salisbury’s heart, rising giddily to heaven on a swift rush of thanks, felt a cold check.

“How do you mean awful, dear?” she said apprehensively.

“Well, wait, and I’ll tell you,” Alexandra

said, recalled and dimpling again. "I met Jim Vance and Owen this morning at about twelve, and Jim simply got red as a beet, and vanished—poor Jim!" The girl paid the tribute of a little sigh to the discarded suitor. "So then Owen asked me to lunch with him—right there in the Women's exchange, so it was quite *comme il faut*, Mother," she pursued, "and, my dear! he told me, as calmly as *that!*—that he might go to New York when Jim goes—Jim's going to visit a lot of Eastern relatives!—so that he, Owen I mean, could study some Eastern settlement houses and get some ideas——"

"I think the country is going mad on this subject of settlement houses, and reforms, and hygiene!" Mrs. Salisbury said, with some sharpness. "However, go on!"

"Well, Owen spoke to me a little about—about Jim's liking me, you know," Alexandra continued. "You know Owen can get awfully red and choky over a thing like that," she broke off to say animatedly. "But to-day he wasn't—he was just brotherly and sweet.

And, Mother, he got so confidential, you know, that I simply *pulled* my courage together, and I determined to talk honestly to him. I clasped my hands—I could see in one of the mirrors that I looked awfully nice, and that helped!—I clasped my hands, and I looked right into his eyes, and I said, quietly, you know, ‘Owen,’ I said ‘I’m going to tell you the truth. You ask me why I don’t care for Jim; this is the reason. I like you too much to care for any other man that way. I don’t want you to say anything now, Owen,’ I said, ‘or to think I expect you to tell me that you have always cared for me. That’d be too *flat*. And I’m not going to say that I’ll never care for anyone else, for I’m only twenty, and I don’t know. But I couldn’t see so much of you, Owen,’ I said, ‘and not care for you, and it seems as natural to tell you so as it would for me to tell another girl. You worry sometimes because you can’t remember your father,’ I said, ‘and because your mother is so undemonstrative with you; but I want you to think, the next time you feel sort of

out of it, that there is a woman who really and truly thinks that you are the best man in the world——’ ”

Mrs. Salisbury had risen to a sitting position; her eyes, fixed upon her daughter's face, were filled with utter horror.

“You are not serious, my child!” she gasped. “Alexandra, tell me that this is some monstrous joke——”

“Serious! I never was more serious in my life,” the girl said stoutly. “I said just that. It was easy enough, after I once got started. And I thought to myself, even then, that if he didn't care he'd be decent enough to say so honestly——”

“But, my child—my *child!*” the mother said, beside herself with outraged pride. “You cannot mean that you so far forgot a woman's natural delicacy—her natural shrinking—her dignity—— Why, what must Owen think of you! Can't you *see* what a dreadful thing you've done, dear!” Her mind, working desperately for an escape from the unbearable situation, seized upon a possible explanation.

“My darling,” she said, “you must try at once to convince him that you were only joking—you can say half-laughingly——”

“But wait!” Alexandra interrupted, unruffled. “He put his hand over mine, and he turned as red as a beet—I wish you could have seen his face, Mother!—and he said—— But,” and the happy color flooded her face, “I honestly can’t tell you what he said, Mother,” Alexandra confessed. “Only it was *darling*, and he is honestly the best man I ever saw in my life!”

“But, dearest, dearest,” her mother said, with desperate appeal. “Don’t you see that you can’t possibly allow things to remain this way? Your dignity, dear, the most precious thing a girl has, you’ve simply thrown it to the winds! Do you want Owen to remind you some day that *you* were the one to speak first?” Her voice sank distressfully, a shamed red burned in her cheeks. “Do you want Owen to be able to say that you cared, and admitted that you cared, before he did?”

Alexandra, staring blankly at her mother, now burst into a gay laugh.

“Oh, Mother, aren’t you *darling*—but you’re so funny!” she said. “Don’t you suppose I know Owen well enough to know whether he cares for me or not? He doesn’t know it himself, that’s the whole point, or rather he *didn’t*, for he does now! And he’ll go on caring more and more every minute, you’ll see! He might have been months finding it out, even if he didn’t go off to New York with Jim, and marry some little designing dolly-mop of an actress, or some girl he met on the train. Owen’s the sort of dear, big, old, blundering fellow that you have to *protect*, Mother. And it came up so naturally—if you’d been there——”

“I thank Heaven I was not there!” Mrs. Salisbury said feelingly. “Came up naturally! Alexandra, what are you *made* of? Where are your natural feelings? Why, do you realize that your Grandmother Porter kept your grandfather waiting three months for an answer, even? She lived to be an old, old

lady, and she used to say that a woman ought never let her husband know how much she cared for him, and Grandfather Porter *respected* and *admired* your grandmother until the day of her death!"

"A dear, cold-blooded old lady she must have been!" said Alexandra, unimpressed.

"On the contrary," Mrs. Salisbury said quickly. "She was a beautiful and dignified woman. And when your father first began to call upon me," she went on impressively, "and Mattie teased me about him, I was so furious—my feelings were so outraged!—that I went upstairs and cried a whole evening, and wouldn't see him for *days!*"

"Well, dearest," Alexandra said cheerfully, "You may have been a perfect little lady, but it's painfully evident that I take after the other side of the house! As for Owen ever having the nerve to suggest that I gave him a pretty broad hint——" the girl's voice was carried away on a gale of cheerful laughter. "He'd get no dessert for weeks to come!" she threatened gaily. "You know I'm con-

vinced, Mother," Sandy went on more seriously, "that this business of a man's doing all the asking is going out. When women have their own industrial freedom, and their own well-paid work, it'll be a great compliment to suggest to a man that one's willing to give everything up, and keep his house and raise his children for him. And if, for any reason, he *shouldn't* care for that girl, she'll not be embarrassed——"

Mrs. Salisbury shut her eyes, her face and form rigid, one hand spasmodically clutching the couch.

"Alexandra, I *beg*——" she said faintly, "I *entreat* that you will not expect me to listen to such outrageous and indelicate and *coarse*—yes, coarse!—theories! Think what you will, but don't ask your mother——"

"Now, listen, darling," Alexandra said soothingly, kneeling down and gathering her mother affectionately in her arms, "Owen did every bit of this except the very first second and, if you'll just *forget it*, in a few months he'll be thinking he did it all! Wait until you

see him; he's walking on air! He's dazed. My dear"—the strain of happy confidence was running smoothly again—"my dear, we lunched together, and then we went out in the car to Burning Woods, and sat there on the porch, and talked and *talked*. It was perfectly wonderful! Now, he's gone to tell his mother, but he's coming back to take us all to dinner. Is that all right? And, Mother, that reminds me, we are going to live in the new Settlement House, and have a girl like Justine!"

"*What!*" Mrs. Salisbury said, smitten sick with disappointment.

"Or Justine herself, if you'll let us have her," Sandy went on. "You see, living in that big Sargent house——"

"Do you mean that Owen's mother doesn't want to give up that house?" Mrs. Salisbury asked coldly. "I thought it was Owen's?"

"It *is* Owen's, Mother, but fancy living there!" Sandy said vivaciously. "Why, I'd have to keep seven or eight maids, and do

nothing but manage them, and do just as everyone else does!"

"You'd be the richest young matron in town," her mother said bitterly.

"Oh, I know, Mother, but that seems sort of mean to the other girls! Anyway, we'd much rather live in the ducky little Settlement house, and entertain our friends at the Club, do you see? And Justine is to run a little cooking school, do you see? For everyone says that management of food and money is the most important thing to teach the poorer class. Won't that be great?"

"I personally can't agree with you," the mother said lifelessly. "Here I spend all my life since your babyhood trying to make friends for you among the nicest people, trying to establish our family upon an equal basis with much richer people, and you, instead of living as you should, with beautiful things about you, choose to go down to River Street, and drudge among the slums!"

"Oh, come, Mother; River Street is the breeziest, prettiest part of town, with the river

and those fields opposite. Wait until we clean it up, and get some gardens going——”

“As for Justine, I am *done* with her,” continued the older woman dispassionately. “All this has rather put it out of my head, but I meant to tell you at once, she goes out of my house *this week!* Against my express wish, she was the guest of the Forum Club to-day. ‘Miss J. C. Harrison,’ the program said, and I could hardly believe my eyes when I saw Justine! She had on a black charmeuse gown, black velvet about her hair—and I was supposed to sit there and listen to my own maid! I slipped out; it was too much. To-morrow morning,” Mrs. Salisbury ended dramatically, “I dismiss her!”

“Mother!” said Alexandra, aghast. “What reason will you give her?”

“I shall give her no reason,” Mrs. Salisbury said sternly. “I am through with apologies to servants! To-morrow I shall apply at Crosby’s for a good, old-fashioned maid, who doesn’t have to have her daily bath, and doesn’t expect to be entertained at my club!”

"But, listen, darling," Alexandra pleaded. "Don't make a fuss now. Justine was my darling *belle-mère's* guest to-day, don't you see? It'll be so awkward, scrapping right in the face of Owen's news. Couldn't you sort of shelve the Justine question for a while?"

"Dearie, be advised," Mrs. Salisbury said, with solemn warning. "You *don't* want a girl like that, dear. You will be a *somebody*, Sandy. You can't do just what any other girl would do, as Owen Sargent's wife! Don't live with Mrs. Sargent if you don't want to, but take a pretty house, dear. Have two or three little maids, in nice caps and aprons. Why, Alice Snow, whose husband is merely an automobile salesman, has a *lovely* home! It's small, of course, but you could have your choice!"

"Well, nothing's settled!" Alexandra rose to go upstairs, gathered her furs about her. "Only promise me to let Justine's question stand," she begged.

"Well," Mrs. Salisbury consented unwillingly.

“Ah, there’s Dad!” Alexandra cried suddenly, as the front door opened and shut. With a joyous rush, she flew to meet him, and Mrs. Salisbury could imagine, from the sounds she heard, exactly how Sandy and her great news and her furs and her father’s kisses were all mixed up together. “What—what—what—why, what am I going to do for a girl?” “Oh, Dad, darling, say that you’re glad!” “Luckiest fellow this side of the Rocky Mountains, and I’ll tell him so!” “And you and Mother to dine with us every week, promise that, Dad!”

She heard them settle down on the lowest step, Sandy obviously in her father’s lap; heard the steady murmur of confidence and advice.

“Wise girl, wise girl,” she heard the man’s voice say. “That keeps you in touch with life, Sandy; that’s real. And then, if some day you have reasons for wanting a bigger house and a more quiet neighborhood——” Several frantic kisses interrupted the speaker

here, but he presently went on: "Why, you can always move! Meantime, you and Owen are helping less fortunate people, you're building up a lot of wonderful associations——"

Well, it was all probably for the best; it would turn out quite satisfactorily for everyone, thought the mother, sitting in the darkening library, and staring rather drearily before her. Sandy would have children, and children must have big rooms and sunshine, if it can be managed possibly. The young Sargents would fall nicely into line, as householders, as parents, as hospitable members of society.

But it was all so different from her dreams, of a giddy, spoiled Sandy, the petted wife of an adoring rich man; a Sandy despotically and yet generously ruling servants, not consulting Justine as an equal, in a world of working women——

And she was not even to have the satisfaction of discharging Justine! The maid had

her rights, her place in the scheme of things, her pride.

“I declare, times have changed!” Mrs. Salisbury said to herself involuntarily. She mused over the well-worn phrase; she had never used it herself before; its truth struck her forcibly for the first time.

“I remember my mother saying that,” thought she, “and how old-fashioned and conventional we thought her! I remember she said it when Mat and I went to dances, after we were married; it seemed almost wrong to her! Dear me! And I remember Ma’s horror when Mat went to a hospital for her first baby. ‘If there is a thing that belongs at home,’ Ma said, ‘it does seem to me it’s a baby!’ And my asking people to dinner by telephone, and the Fosters having two bathrooms in their house—Ma thought that such a ridiculous affectation! But what *would* she say now? For those things were only trifles, after all,” Mrs. Salisbury sighed, in all honesty. “But *now*, why, the world is simply being turned upside down with these crazy new

notions!" And again she paused, surprised to hear herself using another old, familiar phrase. "Ma used to say that very thing, too," said Mrs. Salisbury to herself. "Poor Ma!"

THE END



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