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A Woman's Answer to Roosevelt

A STORY ON
RACE SUICIDE



ALICE FREEMAN LUSK

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RACE SUICIDE

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1919



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BY
ALICE FREEMAN LUSK



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The Woman's Side of the Question

Now that the Hon. Theodore Roosevelt has retired to private life, many of the questions which he so earnestly advocated will also be relegated to the rear. There is one question however, which was agitated by the strenuous Ex-President that will never be sent to obscurity because it is so essential to the welfare of the nation, and is a question entirely foreign to politics, while vital to the motherhood and fatherhood of our land.

On the question of race suicide President Roosevelt has been out-spoken and radical, and all know of his views on that question. Undaunted, however, by the "big stick" it has been the mission of a modest little woman to differ with the able statesman and to present her views in the form of a story which has been called "A Woman's Answer to Roosevelt." We all know that a woman will have the last word, and we

have also learned by experience that the "last word" often settles the question—at least it often leaves nothing more to be said: It may be well therefore in this—as we have given attention to the ponderous utterances of the great ex-President, to listen to the "still,—small voice" of a cultured mother, as she endeavors to show us by means of a pathetic story, the other side of the question.

As Mr. Roosevelt's attitude is distinctly strong and masculine, so this presentation of the "woman's side of the question" is as delicately feminine and refined. As the author says in the preface, "A man, great and good though he may be, rarely understands a woman's life and heart." In the garb of a touching story, the argument, if we may call it so—wins its way to the heart of the reader, compelling attention and gaining assent to the many womanly lessons it teaches. Nor can we fail to note the distinction between the two men of the story, the selfish thoughtlessness of the one as compared to the tender helpfulness of the other as related to his wife and family. No husband can read this book without profit, nor can any true woman fail to be benefitted by its teachings.

"I highly commend the story entitled, 'A Woman's Answer to Roosevelt,' to all people. Its literary value is high, its moral tone excellent and is such a story as only a noble-minded and sincere soul could write.

"I would like to see a copy of it in every American home and am glad to speed such a message to the American people."

—Bishop Robert McIntyre, D.D.

"Every man, woman and child should read this book."

—Louis Weber, M.D.

"It will be found to be entertaining, delightful and wholesome reading."

—Los Angeles Times.

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A STORY ON RACE SUICIDE



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Los Angeles Times.

*This little volume
I lovingly
dedicate
to my
Father,
John Freeman.*



AN ANSWER

To Dr. Henry Van Dyke's "*O, Who
will Walk a Mile with Me?*"

Yes, dear, I'll walk a mile with thee,
 Along Life's varied way,
Thy comrade in the battle be,
 Thy mate upon the stormy sea;
A friend to laugh with thee in play,
 A hand to wipe the tears away,
A soul that knows thy God and may,
 Across the shore, greet thine, some day.

—*Alice Freeman Lusk.*

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

The following little story I have written in the name of woman.

The women of America glory in their nation's leader. President Roosevelt is not only the pride of American manhood but of American womanhood as well. Yet a man, great and good though he may be, rarely understands a woman's life and heart.

In the race suicide question, I believe the President has been preaching to the wrong sex. Woman does not wish to slip her shoulder from underneath the wheel of God-given responsibility. Jesus Christ lifted her from the darkness and hopelessness of the dumb brute and crowned her with His recognition of her equality with man. Jesus uplifted the race when he raised woman, and the upward progress of the world to-day is

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marked by the place woman fills. I believe I speak for the majority of womankind when I say that she prizes as her dearest possession the instincts from God which make her the home center, the magnet of husband and children. But in order to satisfy these instincts she must develop mind and soul, she must keep the respect of the home circle. This she cannot do if she is merely house-keeper and nurse rather than help-mate and companion.

Her life necessarily is one of sacrifice and endless detail of labor, yet to the true woman this is sweet for those she loves if she meets with appreciation and thoughtful helpfulness on the part of her husband.

How many look back to "mother" as the little woman in the wrapper, slight and worn, always too busy with household cares for even a talk with her little ones. Only after the years have gone and the sod grows green over the tired, weary body is "mother" appreciated. And then what a rush of guilty, pitying thought—"why did we let her do it."

Author's Preface

Our American mothers are the product of our care-free, independent American girlhood. An American girl enjoys all the freedom of her American brother, and only American character could bear the strain of the change to wifehood and motherhood with the accompanying care and confinement.

This is one reason for our divorce court. Girls, and young men too, do not receive the right education, especially at home. The girl of to-day is shielded from the knowledge and work that will make her a happy wife and mother.

With the *best* of training a wife needs all the sympathy, appreciation and practical help that a husband can give her.

He is her life and the home her world.

America demands not crowded homes but happy, healthy homes whose character shall leave their impress on the nation.

A HEART TO HEART TALK



CHAPTER I

A HEART-TO-HEART TALK.

THREE girls sat before the huge grate fire. The room was one of the largest and cosiest in the Girls' Dormitory of the College at D——. It was the evening of Commencement Day and to-morrow the "triangle" must say good-bye.

Mrs. Stone, the matron, had given the three permission to spend this last night together. The room was Ruth's. Florence and Margaret came each with her easy chair, and now all three sat silently looking into the glowing fire.

Suddenly Margaret slipped down to the rug and laid her head on Ruth's knee. Moved by like impulse Florence moved her chair close to that of Ruth's, her hand dropping caressingly on Margaret's curly head. Ruth alone sat immovable.

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Her hands were clasped under her chin and her head rested forward upon them. Her's was a wonderful face. The dark hair, which showed glints of red and gold in the sun, waved back from the straight white part, and was knotted loosely, Grecian-fashion, at the neck. Just a few escaping ringlets framed the broad white forehead. Her eyes set well under the brow and were Ruth's greatest charm. One look into Ruth's eyes gave one a vision of a soul pure and white, yet not the soul of a trusting child, but that of a loving, thinking woman. The mouth was full and sweet. Not features clear cut, on the contrary, rather irregular, but marked by that indefinable stamp of character. Ruth had won the scholarship, won it from many ambitious hands, her brother and sister classmates—talented, brilliant, made to leave her impress upon the world's thought, so the faculty said.

Yet to-night she was not thinking of her success, for her eyes had a soft, far-away look, and a smile that was half serious, half tender, was on her lips.

Florence surmised her thought from the look on her face.

A Heart to Heart Talk

“Oh Ruth! please do not think of *him* to-night. Give us to-night.”

Margaret's curly head tilted back, until she too could look straight up into Ruth's eyes.

“Oh Ruth! You *are* thinking of him and you'll be with him always now, and who knows when we three shall be together again?”

“Yes, girls, I'll 'fess up,” laughed Ruth. “I hope you, too, will know how it is some day. But girls, this thought comes to me: We have been like sisters these past four years. We have shared everything together. And do you not realize, if the tie is to continue, we must not stop now. The highest proof of my love for you is that I wish to share this new love with you too. You do not wish me to hold back from you the deepest, holiest thing in my life? Oh girls, one week from to-morrow is my wedding day. I have been praying all day for the wisdom—for God knows I have the love—to make our new home all it should be in His sight, praying for strength to overcome within me all that is evil and to bring to him whom I love so well only that which is good. I have seen

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so many unhappy families that I would love to show the world one ideal home, a place of refuge and rest, a quiet, simple home, shut in with love and open to all who suffer and are lonely. Then Tom has never had a real home. I want it to mean so much to him. I want him to hurry to it in the evening and be loath to leave in the morning. Oh, I long for so many, many things, and I'm so afraid." This was a wonderful outburst from Ruth. Ruth was not impulsive, as was Margaret, but always quiet, sweet and dignified. Both the girls were silent for a moment.

Margaret always recovered first. "Now, see here, Ruth, you are taking things too seriously," said she, reaching upward to pull Ruth's hands away from her face.

"Think of the jolly wedding you are to have, of all your swell dresses, of your pretty little home. No more work, no more drudgery, no more worry. Oh, I wish I could find some fine young man foolish enough to care for me. I wouldn't cry over it and wonder if I were good enough, would you Florence?"

A Heart to Heart Talk

The Madonna's face was a study. They called Florence the Madonna, because of her work in the college social settlement, in the metropolis near D———. Every little child loved her. Her large dark eyes would soften and shine with love for the dirty, ragged, neglected little tots of the Eighth Ward. Many a little head had nestled on her shoulder, and many a tiny baby hand had found a resting place in her neck.

"Ah, Margaret," said Ruth, with a glance at Florence, "you will find little sympathy there. I am sure she feels as I do about it."

"No, Ruth, not *just* as you do," said the Madonna "I am not afraid. I shall be too gloriously happy. Home should be a little piece of heaven, as mother used to say. I think it must be. Think girls, of a big, honest, noble, masterful man, whose heart is all your own. Think of the happiness of building together your home, of sharing alike its joys and sacrifices. Then, of some day," and her voice was as low and sweet as the summer air, "to hold within your arms his child and yours, a baby all your own, to love, to cherish, to fashion,



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with God's help, into noble manhood, or womanhood. Oh, girls, that's *God's* crown for woman."

Margaret was fidgeting, finally, she burst out:

"Now, girls, look here. I can see you both settled down each with a family and a thousand petty cares, growing old while you are still young. I tell you, I do not expect to do it. The man who marries me must have first of all plenty of money. He must give me a good time. I want nothing to do with house-work. I should like to have a housekeeper, so even the managing might be lifted from me, and as for having a family—no, Madonna mine, I shall not be tied down with a baby. Think of Ruth here, with her brain and talent, doing the drudgery for a family of *fourteen*, say! I'd call it wicked."

"Wait and see, Miss Margaret," laughed Ruth. "You will be envious when you see our good times. Think of Florence and me at our own firesides in the long winter evenings studying, reading, singing, with our very own. It will not be all drudgery. Oh, you will see it our way some day."

Just then the big clock in the lower hall tolled

A Heart to Heart Talk

twelve. At midnight the three must part. Instinctively they drew nearer together. Already it was to-morrow.

Life stretched out before them a shoreless sea; their tiny craft bobbed restlessly up and down on the waves and they clung to one another ere they step in and push out. Somehow in that midnight hour, the girls felt the solemnity of the dawning new life, with its weight of possibilities for joy and sorrow. They were leaving forever the land of girlhood, and were already in the borderland of womanhood.

Their arms went round each other and the tears fell fast.

“May God go with you,” said Ruth softly.

“And with you.”

ONE YEAR LATER IN RUTH'S HOME

CHAPTER II

ONE YEAR LATER IN RUTH'S HOME.

RUTH darted hither and thither in her preparations for dinner. Tom was to bring out an old friend of his. Every once in awhile in her flights from cooking table to stove, back to sink, then back to stove and into the tiny dining-room, she would stop and listen. Once she stole on tiptoe to the bed-room door, listened a moment, then tiptoed back. The little house was a picture of neatness and artistic taste. Everything bespoke the sweet, refined woman, who lived therein. The dining-room was bright with flowers and white napery, everything of the plainest, but in perfect taste.

Ruth forgot her tired back in her exultation. That morning she had washed out table linen,

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napkins, doilies, for their supply was a meagre one, scrubbed floors and washed windows, to say nothing of the extra cooking, and minding baby. Yet Ruth was not a tardy house-wife, but baby had been sick all the week and scarcely out of her arms day or night.

Oh! she was so tired. She stopped and leaned a moment against the sink to rest her back.

When the clock struck six she heard the steps on the gravel walk and ran from her work to welcome Tom and his old friend. She looked sweet and dainty in her blue shirt-waist suit and spotless apron. Her cheeks were flushed and her eyes bright with excitement. Tom's friend, Jim Douglas, looked at her with open admiration and glanced almost enviously about the tidy, attractive home.

Everything passed off beautifully. Never was such coffee, such flaky biscuit, such juicy meat, so Jim said.

The evening passed as pleasantly as the dinner. Ruth left her dishes and visited too. All were surprised when 9:30 struck and Jim must leave for the train.

One Year Later at Ruth's

"I have never passed a more delightful evening, Mrs. Stanley," said Jim, as he said good-night. "You make a fellow hungry for such a little nest of his own."

Tom went with him to the station, and Ruth back to the kitchen to "pick up" the dishes.

She had forgotten how tired she was in her efforts as hostess to entertain Tom's friend, but now the re-action came and she felt barely able to move. But she heroically braced herself to the task, in order to get as much done as possible before Tom returned, and perhaps they would finish together, and a look of hope passed over the tired face.

Ere long, Tom returned. She greeted him with an expectant smile which he did not see.

"Well," said Ruth, "Jim caught his train?"

"Oh yes," said Tom, with a yawn. "And I'm dead tired. I'm going to bed, Ruth, these won't take you long, will they? It's nice, but mighty tiresome, to play host. I tell you I exerted myself to-night and I'm tired. I'll go to bed, and don't be so particular to-night, for it keeps

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me awake when you are moving around so."

With that, off he went and Ruth was left alone. She looked about but saw nothing, for there was a blur before her eyes. Mechanically she went on with her work. A cruel, persistent thought was forcing itself into definite shape in her mind. She tried to push it from her, but no! back it came to mock her. Cup, saucer, plate, spoon, one by one passed through her hands. She worked like an automaton. The minutes ticked by.

Tired? Yes, body tired and soul tired; hope dead. For Ruth, a sad funeral. She watched beside her dead ideal. At last all was done and she stood quietly, her head bowed in her hands. She faced the truth. The man she married, or thought she married, was dead. In his place was a selfish, egotistic lump of mediocrity. Little by little through the past year this thought had gained ground and now she stood face to face with the bald fact.

Her one year of married life passed before her mind. Her face grew hot and her heart heavy, as she recalled one revelation after another of the

One Year Later at Ruth's

character of her husband. They stood out clear-cut from the back-ground of memory, these milestones in the breaking of her heart. Little things? Oh, yes, but of sufficient weight to crush her woman's soul.

Even her wedding day, that day so holy and haloed with glory to a loving woman, he had touched with unshriven hands. She was parting with her parents. They stood a moment in the hall. All the love of the years filled the mother's eyes. Ruth gazed upon the revelation and an answering wave of love rose within her. But she hurried from those clinging, sheltering arms, with scarcely a good-by, because she caught a glimpse of Tom's face in the mirror and saw just how bored and impatient he was.

Then the time they bought their home. How vivid the picture to Ruth. They stood on the sidewalk before the house talking to the agent. She could hear Tom now, say the words:

"Yes, we'll take it."

"But Tom, the kitchen is so dark and there are no conveniences and—" But Tom cut her short.



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"Ruth, I have said we would take it." But still she was not satisfied.

"But Tom, you forget it is I who must spend most of my life in the house we choose and—" But Tom again interrupted.

"You'd better find one to suit *you* and live in it by yourself. I'm going to live here." Oh, the humiliation of it! Yet Ruth was too proud to show her heart. The words were burned upon her soul and she looked upon them when alone and reached out groping hands toward God. And then, those weary, weary days when she, too ill to keep the home, employed a little maid to help her. Oh the endless talk of finances, served with every meal. No thought or anxious care for her. Yet, how she battled. How she prayed. How she hoped for brighter days. Her noble, generous nature struggled to overlook and to forgive. She must make things different. So one night Tom came to find a cheery fire in the grate, a dish of tempting candy near by, two rockers drawn close and on the stand near hers, the books she loved so well.

One Year Later at Ruth's

Tom came home and laughed at all her dainty preparation. She could still feel the sting of that laugh. Stay home? Not he! "Come on, put on your hat and we shall go over to Fred's" (a friend of Tom's, but not of hers), "and you women can talk and gossip together, while Fred and I have a smoke." She had failed then just as she had failed tonight.

And then after baby came—then—oh, God! the pity of it—

But here her thought was interrupted by a cry from the next room. A new light came into Ruth's face. She hurried away and soon returned to the warm kitchen, (for Tom must not hear baby, he must *never* be bothered with baby) with the little white bundle held close. She drew up the low rocker and gazed into the baby face. The deep blue eyes looked up into hers and a smile dimpled the little mouth. One tiny hand reached up to her face. Something snapped in the mother's heart. Hungrily she gathered it up and hid her face in the baby neck.

"Oh, baby! baby! she sobbed. *My* baby, *my* baby! God help me!"

THREE YEARS LATER IN
MARGARET'S HOME

CHAPTER III

THREE YEARS LATER IN MARGARET'S HOME.

THERE was no sound in the room save the ticking of the doctor's watch, and the heavy irregular breathing of the little sufferer. On one side of the bed knelt Margaret, her eyes upon her baby's face. On the other side watched her husband, at once father and physician.

In another hour the battle would be won or lost. Unconsciously the mother's lips moved in prayer, "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus," was all she breathed. Yet the Lover of little children understood the petition. He, too, was watching the little Flower and the Reaper whose name is Death, and lovingly He stayed the hand that would have transplanted the bud to bloom in heaven. The doctor

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bent toward the flushed cheek and tangled curls.

"Thank God! Margaret, she is safe. Sound asleep and moist and cool."

Silently he motioned the nurse to fill his place at the bedside and very tenderly gathered the over-wrought mother in his arms and carried her away.

Down to the cool, quiet living-room he bore her, and in spite of all her protests deposited her on the couch amid the pillows and after darkening the room and kissing her, left her with the instruction to go to sleep and not to stir until his return.

"But what are you going to do?" she protested, "You are as tired as I."

"I must make a few calls before night, and now don't worry over me, just rest and be quiet."

With that off he went, and Margaret, ere she knew, was sleeping as sweetly as her baby.

She awoke with a start, jumped up and ran to the window. Lifting the shade she looked out to see the shadows lengthening.

"My! Burnett will soon be home. How fresh and rested I feel!"

Three Years Later at Margaret's

There was a glad, sweet song in her heart. "Baby, baby, baby," ran the melody in all the cadences dear to mother heart. Softly she opened the door and in a twinkling was upstairs and leaning over the little bed.

"Still fast asleep!" smiled the nurse. Margaret leaned lower and touched the curly head with her lips, then, after a few whispered instructions to the nurse, she hurried away.

"I'll tidy up a bit for Burnett," she thought as she ran to her room, took down her prettiest tea-gown and with deft fingers caught up her hair.

"Now to get some supper for his return." She laughed as she looked through the cupboard.

"Dear baby! we haven't had much to eat since you've been sick."

"I know," she soliloquized, "I'll make him one of his favorite omelets and a nice cup of coffee. A few preserves and cookies with some of mother's home-made bread will make a nice little lunch."

In less time than it takes to tell it the white cover was laid and when half an hour later she heard his step all was ready. She took one mo-

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ment to pluck a rose from the climber by the window to lay by his plate, and then ran to the door.

How his tired eyes brightened as he looked at the fresh dress and sunshiny smile. Margaret's heart filled as she noted the lines in his face and felt glad for the lunch.

"Come out to the kitchen and wash up a bit, dearie, and then come eat; I have lunch all ready for you!"

They went down the hall together, his arm about her and her head thrown back on his shoulder.

"I tell you, Margaret, you're a jewel," said Burnett as his eyes rested upon the dainty lunch with the rose beside his plate.

Their eyes met with the same love-lit smile of courtship days. Burnett always appreciated things, so it was a pleasure to work for him. Margaret drew up her chair to talk while he ate.

Naturally their conversation drifted to the little one upstairs. All the history of that dread disease, scarlet fever, was gone over, Dr. Hill explaining and Margaret questioning.

Three Years Later at Margaret's

"Her life hung by a thread and a very slender one at that. But we saved her!" and in his eyes was a light in which love for baby and love for his profession were strangely blended.

"Did you pray?" whispered Margaret.

"With all my soul," he answered as his hand closed over hers. There was silence for a moment.

"Have you thanked Him, Margaret?"

"No, I haven't, and I am ashamed."

"Let us do it together," said her husband, and there kneeling in the half darkness they thanked God, who alone has power to give and to take away.

Three and a half years ago, when they entered together for the first time their humble home, they had kept up the old custom of father and mother and established a family altar. Ah! America's homes need altars to God. It is not easy, as Margaret often said, to be impatient, fretful and complaining after looking together into the face of the Master. It is the right of every child to first meet God in the home, and a mother knows no greater glory when she looks out upon the sunset

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of life than to hear the words of son or daughter—
‘I learned to know God through *you*, mother, not only by what you told me of Him, but by your patient, sacrificing, trusting life.’ Oh! America’s motherhood needs to sit long and quietly at the feet of the Savior. Do your part. Your life, your thought, your inclination give the impulse to the lives of those with whom God blesses you. Demand justice for the new generation.

Man has too long been asleep and the insidious, venomous insects have been at work. Cobwebs of dollar-fame, social-fame, political-fame, hinder his vision. Motherhood is holy and its care and responsibility should rest upon two pairs of shoulders—father’s, as well as mother’s.

Margaret and Burnett had not much of this world’s goods, and to-night they must figure up their accounts, for the expense of baby’s illness had been heavy.

Margaret went for the common check book and Burnett took paper and pencil and one by one the items were gone over.

The furrows between Burnett’s eyes grew deep-

Three Years Later at Margaret's

er. Margaret watched over his shoulder with greater interest than usual, for she was counting on a new dress for Mrs. Merritt's reception. The Merritts lived on the hill in grand style and only lately had taken up the young physician and his wife. This social prestige meant much to the doctor in his profession, and Margaret was anxious to appear at her best.

"We can make it," said Burnett with a laugh.

"Oh, but Burnett, you haven't the coal bill, nor the nurse's wages down," said Margaret.

"No sir! I haven't. Twenty dollars more. Where's your dress, Margaret?" They sat in silent consternation.

"I'll get credit at Smith & Overton's for it, girlie."

He would not have thought of it for himself, but for his wife—that was different.

"But, Burnett, we said we would never run in debt," said Margaret half hesitating.

"Yes, I know," said her husband, "but you have anticipated this so much and it means a great deal to me just now to have you appear prosperous,

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perhaps—" But his thought died away in silence.

Margaret sat with her head on her hand. Every woman from Eve down to the present leader of fashion likes to look well. She just can't help it. Moreover, Margaret had planned her dress, she knew every ruffle and ribbon on it. But she knew Burnett would not have considered for a moment any outlay on his own account, though he needed it sadly. The struggle waged. "I-suppose-I-could-make-my-wedding-dress-do-but oh, if it were only silk, instead of dimity!"

Burnett's heart swelled. What is so hard for a strong, virile, loving man as to weigh dollars and cents when his wife is concerned.

He could almost have stolen had he listened to the tempter, but iron principle was part of his character and never had he owed any man. Margaret, who knew him well, understood what it would cost him to ask for credit.

Burnett opened his lips to speak, but Margaret had gained the day.

"I've decided Burnett, I shall wear the wedding dress. With a little work I can freshen

Three Years Later at Margaret's

it and you will think me handsome anyway."

"It's a shame, Margaret. If the Thompsons had paid me I could have managed it. But there it is, you see—they owe me; that is my inconvenience, and their galling chain. We want no chains, eh, Margaret?—and after all dearie, if the women you meet there would only follow your lead and wear simple gowns they would be much more attractive in the eyes of most men, and in the eyes of most women, for that matter. It has always seemed to me a cheap sort of thing to make an appeal to the consideration of others because of our "real lace" collar, or "inherited pearl necklace." Wear your little dress, sweetheart, and you will win out too—You see, we shall appear what we are, no more, no less, and we shall gain the respect and confidence of our fellows, if nothing more."

But a greater problem presented itself. There was no prospect of continued wages for the nurse. Burnett's strong face worked. After the strain of the past weeks, how could Margaret care for a sick baby in addition to housework, cooking, an-

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swering telephone and office calls, to say nothing of church and social duties.

But there must be no debt! Margaret's face in the lamp-light looked drawn and pale.

"Margie, you see, if you had accepted that fellow with the dollars these little hands would have known no labor."

Margaret shook her head and smiled. "I'll manage somehow, Burnett."

"But you will not manage alone, dear. Before I go we shall get breakfast and wash the dishes and I'll try to be with you while you are getting the dinner to take care of baby. And I can always do the sweeping."

Margaret's heart warmed and she never loved him as she did in the days to come while she watched his strenuous housekeeping.

Margaret shared the economic responsibility and Burnett the domestic care and the yoke was easy and the burden light.

Not only easy, but gladsome. Happy days of sacrifice and toil cemented with love and tender thoughtfulness. Sweet to look back upon in the

Three Years Later at Margaret's

after glow of well-earned prosperity. God, for love of man, plucked Heaven's most beautiful, most fragrant flower and planted it on earth. He put the seed in two loving hearts and they grew and blossomed into that most precious possession a happy home.

Margaret and Burnett stood long that night beside the bed of their year-old baby, mind and soul at peace in the happy home nest.

FOUR YEARS LATER IN
FLORENCE'S HOME

CHAPTER IV

FOUR YEARS LATER IN FLORENCE'S HOME.

“FLORENCE! it is half past eight o'clock now! Are you ready?”

No answer.

“Florence!! I am going alone! I get tired of this eternal waiting. The carriage has been at the door an hour!”

Still no answer.

“Florence!!!” With that into the luxurious dressing-room strode her irate spouse to find his wife, mirror in hand, calmly placing a last hair-pin.

“Why couldn't you answer me?”

“Why should I? I thought perhaps the yelling

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was amusing you as it was certainly amusing our neighbors."

"You're the very devil! Don't you know the Maxwells are to be our guests to-night and for us to be late is not decent!" and D. Lewellyn Van Sant strode nervously from window to door.

At the mention of the Maxwells, Florence straightened. Ruth and Margaret would scarcely have recognized the haughty carriage of the head and the curl of the red lip. Florence was queenly in her beauty. She was gowned in some soft, clinging stuff which gave a charm to every move of her graceful figure. Leisurely she finished her toilet, and then with a smile turned to her fuming lord.

"I am ready." He answered with a grunt.

Together they left the elegant apartment house and he very gallantly handed her into the carriage. But once inside, this show of courtesy vanished and their drive was taken in silence. When they arrived at the theater there was the same courteous treatment for the outside world which Florence scorned in her heart but which she tolerated for the sake of appearances.

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The play was in progress and they entered the box quietly, to find the Maxwells not yet arrived.

Many eyes turned from the stage to rest upon beautiful Mrs. Van Sant, and in many a woman's heart was a twinge of envy as she noted the elegance and taste of her toilet.

"That woman," said one to her husband, "has everything mortal could wish for. Nothing in this world to do but to dress and look beautiful and have a grand time."

But ah, if she could have held in her breast the cold lifeless thing which Florence called a heart, she would have changed her opinion.

In a few moments the Maxwells came. Mr. Van Sant's face softened as he welcomed them. Mrs. Maxwell, of course, took the vacant chair by his side toward the back of the box, Mr. Maxwell and his cousin taking their places opposite Florence. Mrs. Maxwell was blonde, blue-eyed and petite, with a childish pout to her full lips. Her voice had the half-appealing, half-questioning intonation of a child. A few stray ringlets, which she made a show of trying to keep in place, framed

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the doll face. The only thing one missed was character, and after all that was quite a miss.

She leaned confidently toward D. Lewellyn Van Sant and in her low, cooing voice said:

"I did not see you all day yesterday."

"I regretted the pleasure more than you know," he replied, letting his eyes tell how much.

She looked down and toyed with her fan.

"May I come to-morrow?" he went on.

"To-morrow is your wife's day at home."

Just a shadow of a frown passed over his face, then a smile as he said,

"You come to see me then."

She opened her eyes to their widest and pushed him back with her hand.

"Do I dare?"

"Of course. I shall be there to protect you." Just then the curtain lifted, much to Florence's relief, who though smiling and chatting with the two men opposite had not for a moment lost the low hum of voices beside her, and she felt she could endure the strain no longer.

In the next interval she must make an effort to

Four Years Later at Florence's

take a part in their conversation, but just as she turned to do so an usher entered and cleverly slipped into her husband's hand a small, white, scented note. At the first opportunity, Florence on the alert, saw him glance over its contents and then, rising, excuse himself to his wife and friends.

His wife determined to watch the stage. In a few moments her husband returned, and Florence's quick eyes caught a look of understanding between her husband and the brunette understudy.

Poor Florence! She turned to Mr. Maxwell's cousin, a fine-looking young man, who might on first sight be taken for Florence's younger brother. "I need air," she said. Her pain was almost physical. With superhuman effort she crushed back the storm of emotion that threatened to overwhelm her.

Her husband heard her speak and rose.

"Thank you, Lorraine. I shall see my wife to her carriage, she is not well."

"No, I am not well," said Florence. "I am sorry but you must excuse me. Stay and enjoy the play, there is no reason why Mr. Van Sant may not return."

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Mrs. Maxwell bubbled her regrets. Florence scarcely glanced in her direction as she passed out on the arm of her husband. Yet her face gave no token of the conflict which raged within her. It was true to its society discipline. Her lips acknowledged her husband's courtesy and graciously refused his escort home. She sat cold and still during the home drive and even in her despair did not forget her kind "good-night" to Peter, the coachman, and her gentle inquiry after his sick child.

"Dear lady," said Peter, to himself, "shure and she's unhappy and the Almighty made her for better things."

Not until her own door closed behind her did she give way. The masque worn for the glitter and comment of the world fell back and Florence stood revealed in all her bitter misery.

A thousand impulses within her were striving for the mastery. To kill her husband; to rush back and strangle the wanton creatures who called themselves women; to plead for the old love so pure and holy; to end her own life; to go far, far

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away in some lonely spot where she might give way to all the tumult within; to find God, if there was a God; to trace her weary way to the little green mound in the city cemetery and wrest from death the one who called her mother; or to lie down beside her to rest—to rest—to rest—oh God—to rest—

She lifted her eyes and they rested upon the life-size portrait of a baby girl. The child was standing, arms outstretched, and the deep laughing eyes looked straight into those of the stricken woman.

Florence staggered toward it and reached forth her answering arms. "Oh, my little one! My pure baby! Can't you help mother?" and still with her eyes on the picture she dropped to her knees before it.

So absorbed was she that she did not hear a step behind her and was not conscious of a presence in the room until two loving arms were folded about her.

"Florence, child, what is it?"

"Oh, Aunt Laura, Aunt Laura, is it you! Oh, I am so unhappy!"

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Gently the older woman led her to the couch and took the tired girl in her arms, crooning over her like a mother.

There was no question asked as to how Aunt Laura, whom Florence had not seen since her wedding-day three years ago, happened to appear just at this time. It only seemed right that she was there. Little by little in broken sentences came the whole pitiful story interspersed with the ejaculation,

“Oh never tell mother, Aunt Laura! It would kill mother, she thinks me so happy!”

You have heard the story perhaps from other lips. The story born in the rosy glory of the wedding-day. A glory which promised as the shining dawn a clear, bright day of life. The story of that first year, the morning of life, so unspeakably joyous, so holy in its memories; then of the coming of that tiny cloud, no larger than a hand, just above the horizon, which had spread and deepened, until now it overshadowed all the sky and the day was black.

“It started in this way,” she began, “We were

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looking forward to baby coming and I could not go with him as before, and though I longed for him, yet I felt I could not ask him to stay at home with me, so I urged him to go. He demurred at first but at last gave in. Not often, but soon more frequently he left me, and toward the last was gone every night. Oh, those long, long days Aunt Laura, shut in with myself, yet pushing unhappiness from me for the sake of my unborn baby. Whispers came to me about this Mrs. Maxwell, she was younger than I, only twenty, I think. She had been a chorus girl on the stage and Mr. Maxwell married her when her reputation was not of the best. I grew rebellious. When he did stay at home I was cold and distant. Too proud to complain, hoping that some day he would ask the reason why, confess, if confession there was, and put an end to all our misery and bring the old love back again. But the day never came. We both grew fretful and sarcastic and impatient the moment we came in contact with each other. One night I accused him of his neglect and unfaithfulness and he flew into a passion. He said

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that Mrs. Maxwell was only an old friend and that I was mad with jealousy. He told me that I had become cold and morbid. But even so, there grew a great hope in my heart that baby would bring about a change. But baby came and although he was fond and proud of her in a way, yet she irritated him. He thought more of his pleasure than of her comfort and of one hour in the society of that vile woman than a pure, sweet kiss from his baby's lips.

“Then dear old Mrs. Lane, mother's friend, called on me, and talked to me as she said mother would if she knew. She told me it was my duty to win back my husband and to save his soul. She talked to me so sweetly, she gave me new courage. So I tried to do as she said. I prayed each morning for God's guidance. I wore the gowns he liked. I tried to forget all his neglect and to remember the old love in all its tenderness. I went everywhere with him. I humbled myself. I pretended not to notice his familiarity with this woman. I put him first and baby second. Oh, Aunt Laura, so many times I have loosened those

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little clinging arms from my neck and kissed the wet cheek to go with him. And then one night—baby was sick—her cheek was flushed—her lips dry and broken—all day she had been in my arms—nurse said it was her teeth and nothing to worry over—that night she would not let me go. Oh, Aunt Laura, I hear her yet as I hurried down the stairs calling, 'mama, mama,' yet I went—I thought God meant me to go."

She stopped and clung to her aunt and moaned. Aunt Laura's tears were falling fast. "Poor child! my poor little girl," and there was comfort in the words for Florence.

After a while she went on. "When I came home she did not know me. Oh, baby! baby! I asked God to give me just one word from her and He did not hear me. She died in my arms two hours later. I died, too, Aunt Laura. Yet I tried to forgive him even that, and have done my duty till to-night. Oh Aunt Laura, to-night, I am glad that my little girl is dead, for she is his child as well as mine. I blush to tell even you." And then between sobs and tears came the whole bitter

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truth. "He is low and vile and wicked and must I still live on and endure it?"

Now Aunt Laura was a woman of the world. Not only a factor but a leader in the social life of a great metropolis. She was an acknowledged authority on social propriety. During Florence's recital the tenor of her thought was, "How fortunate that I came to-night."

She waited now until Florence's sobs were spent, tenderly pushing back from the wet face the masses of soft, dark hair. Then she said quietly:

"Yes, child, you must endure it. You must live on and bear it. Do you know that in almost every apartment of this house, and, yes, of all institutions like it, women are bearing burdens like unto yours? The light for them is out and happy are they if they bear their burdens alone. Never, Florence, let your sorrow be borne by another, if that other be a man. I say it plainly to you, little girl, your days will be so lonely and your heart so hungry that you will cry out for human sympathy. But never let that cry echo

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without your own breast, or your burden will be heavy indeed. There is no human help."

Ah! only one step more to divine help! In the rocking of the tempest, this woman of the world cast indefinitely about for an anchor. A gleam from her shriveled soul told her that every ship which sails Life's sea carries an anchor, but her jeweled hands could not find it and poor Florence was cast adrift, turned from dependence upon God and the purpose of her husband's eternal redemption to listen to the following hollow philosophy which was the best Aunt Laura knew.

The quiet, even voice went on.

"Fill your life with other things. Learn to enjoy your pretty clothes, social events, your friends. Crowd your days full and lose yourself in the whirl of things around you. Soon you will find that you do not care so much. The old love will die and your husband will be simply one who shares the same roof and gives to you the protection of his name. Above all things do not have a scandal. Learn to carry a bright face and bye and bye things will not be so bad."



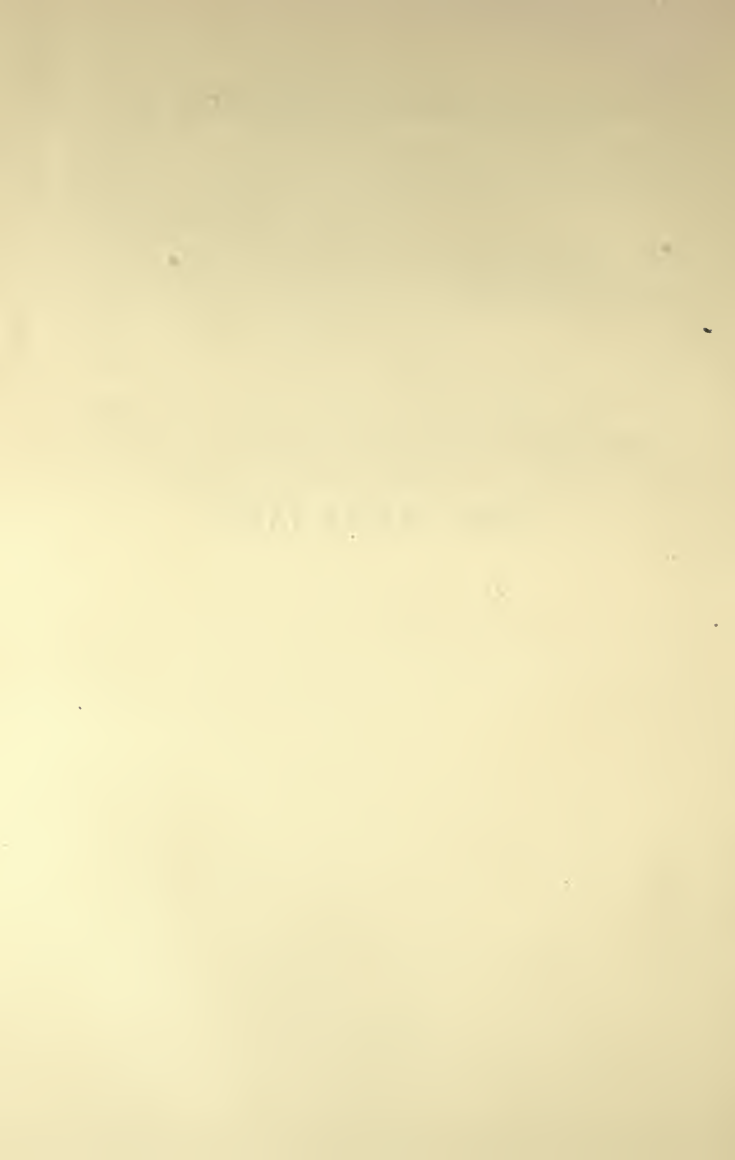
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Florence turned her head away. She made no answer. She dared not look forth to the dreary days shorn of all purpose.

The minutes ticked by; both were silent. The silence at last was broken by Florence's regular breathing interspersed with sighs.

"I shall let her sleep," said Aunt Laura. "Poor child, she is exhausted. I was hard but I was kind too. She will get over it." Then with a catch of the breath, "we all get over it."

AFTER TWENTY YEARS



CHAPTER V

AFTER TWENTY YEARS.

THE Stanley family were at supper. At one end sat Mr. Stanley—bald-headed, fat, self-satisfied. At the other end a frail, grey-haired, tired little woman. At both sides the children, five on one and five on the other, and beside the mother a little tot in a high-chair.

Ruth, for it was she, though you, perhaps would not have recognized her, had not yet tasted her meal, for the younger children were seated near her, and she must look after their needs first. She wore a faded wrapper, spotless, however, and carefully mended. The children, too, although their clothes were plain, were clean and well-behaved. Maud, a tall, fine-looking girl of twenty, full of life and spirit. She had her

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mother's clear, intelligent eye and upright carriage.

Next came Tom, just nineteen. Not Maud's sunny disposition there. Tom's was a rebellious spirit; always wanting the thing he could not have. Neither had he Maud's physique.

Next came Dick, seventeen-year-old Dick. "Not very bright," was what the neighbors said of him. They were all gentle with Dick, even to little three-year-old Mary, and Ruth's touch was never so tender as it was for her afflicted son.

Then Sarah—only fifteen, but such a fine cook and housekeeper. But Sarah had a weak heart, so the doctor said, and Ruth's hands slipped under many a heavy task which her thoughtful dark-eyed girl would undertake for mother.

Then thirteen-year-old Nellie. Nellie was a bundle of nerves, never quiet, never still. Not an ounce of fat on her skinny little body. "Full of electric wires," Tom said fretfully.

Next William. Ten years old. Everybody loved Willie. Such a clear, ringing laugh, such a roguish eye, such a loving, tender heart. Bright too. At school the teachers held him back rather

After Twenty Years

than urge him forward. William was born in the Southland. Before his birth Ruth's life was despaired of, and she was sent away for a year with only Sarah to keep her company, returning when William was four months old. It was at this time, too, that Ruth learned to know God in a deeper, holier life and the nobility of her thought shone in little William's face. He was not at all a strong child, for Ruth was far too weak to impart strength to him, but a child of wonderful mind and spiritual insight. A mind and soul fitted to lead the world had his body been able to keep pace with his head.

Next down the line, was Fred. Fred was his father over again—looks, actions, disposition.

Then the twins, Roy and Rae. Mr. Stanley wanted the boy named Theodore, but Ruth said, "No!" The twins were five years old and mischievous enough to keep two nurse girls busy, but alas! there was no income for nurse girls. Then three-year-old Mary, and last of all eight-months-old Felix.

Mr. Stanley was reading the evening paper between mouthfuls—a habit of his at the table.

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The largest plate of berries was for him; the tenderest as well as the largest piece of steak was on his plate. *He* worked hard; in fact, *he* worked all day, and when *he* came home, *he* came home to rest. *He* must have quiet and the children must be tidy and the house straight. Of course the dainties were for him—he accepted them without question. Did *he* not support the family? The inside cut of the watermelon, the brown piece of pie, the delicate part of the fish, the fresh hot pancakes, the hot Sunday dinner which Ruth stayed at home to cook were for him. Of course, if the allowance was small *he* must not be neglected. The fresh new business suit was for him, for contact with other men required it, the old faded wrapper for her, for she came in contact with no one.

She a fool to bear it? Yes, but let her assert her rights and what happens? Long silences, gruff answers, off to business with no good-by. children cuffed and scolded.

Why did she start it? Love prompted it. She thought he would do the same for her. She was

After Twenty Years

glad to give, but he never saw the little things to do. But she loved and hoped on.

Years passed, habits formed—Ruth became a drudge and a subject. Sub-consciously was the sickening thought that it was love of her body and not of her soul that prompted the man beside her to marry her.

God pity the trusting, loving girl who awakens to this certainty, and the angels envy the woman who finds her soul-mate before she crosses yonder.

Finally supper was over and Mr. Stanley pushed back his chair, took the rocker and settled himself behind his paper. The children scattered. The older girls cleared the table and Ruth sat down to her mending.

Mr. Stanley's large laugh rang out.

"Listen to this, mother," said he. "A family of ten has sent the family portrait to the President. I didn't tell you, but I sent our flock to him yesterday. The one I took on the front steps."

A vivid blush dyed Ruth's face and neck.

"You sent our picture to Washington?" The tired eyes snapped. "Have you any respect for me?"

A Woman's Answer to Roosevelt

Am I not human! What is my life! God knows I love my children, but neither they nor I have had a chance. You are the only one of importance in this household. I am a slave, a drudge. You are selfish to the core. If it were not for the children, how glad, oh, how glad I should be to rest, to leave it all. Do you ever see me with a book or a paper? No! I have a basket of darning, that is my leisure. I am resting when I am mending. Washing, ironing, sweeping, cleaning, cooking, sewing, are my round of recreation. You try it for a while, for one day, try it and see then if you will send the family group to Washington. You might mail with it my picture as I was when I married you. Let him compare the two. *You love me!* Do you think I believe it? I have not believed it for long years. If you do, I can't love you. I despise you."

Mr. Stanley fidgeted. All his aldermanic puffiness and complacency vanished before this storm which had been gathering with the years. "There! there! mother," said he, "wait until my investment turns out and then see what I shall do for you."

After Twenty Years

"Yes, I'll wait, wait in my grave. I am tired waiting."

This was all very ruffling to the master of the house. With a sigh he crossed the room to where his wife sat. He patted her shoulder. She shrank from his touch, but endured it as she had endured before. "Now you don't hate me, you know you don't," he said in his coddling voice. "Just wait a bit. Things will not be so hard. I had a good report from the mines yesterday. Now don't act this way. Be patient a little longer. Here, take this dollar, go buy yourself something with it. Now! what have I done?" as Ruth rose and he saw the look of cold scorn and contempt in her face. "You won't have the dollar? I can't please you, Ruth. I do all I can; it isn't my fault," and half whimpering, he went back to his chair.

Just then William came running in. "Here is a letter for *mother!*"

The other children trooped after him.

"A letter for *mother,*" they chorused, "how funny!"

A Woman's Answer to Roosevelt

They all gathered round her as she read it.

This is what she read:

“Dear old Ruth:—I am planning a reunion of ‘the triangle.’ Burnett and I and the children are staying at B——— for a few weeks for a little rest. I learned that Florence expected to pass through here next Friday, so I wrote her and she has promised to spend the day with me. I want you to come too. Now, do not say no, but come for the sake of auld lang syne. We may never be so near each other again. You must come. How much I long to see you both. Take the 8:50 car and I shall meet you at the station. I shall expect you, so good-by until then.

Your loving,

Margaret.”

Maud was on her knees beside her mother's rocker, her head on her shoulder, reading too. “When is it, mother? Day after to-morrow! You must go!”

“How can I, Maud? We have not ironed yet

After Twenty Years

this week and I must make a new pair of trousers for Roy before Sunday."

"Oh, Sarah will help me and we'll manage somehow, won't we children? We want mother to go, don't we?"

"Where, where?" said they, and Mr. Stanley laid down his newspaper.

"Give your father the letter, Maud," said Ruth.

"Yes, father, read it aloud so they can all hear."

Mr. Stanley read the letter and there was a moment's silence.

"Yes, you must go, Ruth," said he, softened to magnanimity by the recent outburst.

"Well, we'll see about it," said Ruth. "Now, let us get the children to bed."

After the house was quiet and the little ones asleep, Ruth and Maud talked the situation over.

Maud left her mother a few moments to slip up stairs to her father.

"Father, I must have two dollars tomorrow to help to get mother ready," she said.

"Two dollars! I can't let you have it. Can't she wear what she has?"

A Woman's Answer to Roosevelt

"What she has, father! Mother hasn't had a new thing for five years that I remember. How much can you give me?"

"Well, will a dollar do?" he asked in a half-abused voice.

"Yes, I can make it do."

She didn't stop to thank him, but went away muttering that she wished she was a man!

Her face was bright and happy as she rejoined her mother dragging after her a large cretonne bag. The "emergency bag" Maud called it, for it contained odds and ends of every description, good for making over and retrimming.

"Mother, I have a plan," she said brightly. "Tonight I shall rip up the waist of your black dress, take out the old vest and put in this piece of lace that was your mother's. I'll turn the sleeves upside down so they will be in style and the skirt, you know, is really good and quite in the fashion. You can wear my black underskirt and my gloves. Then your hat, mother. I have a dollar to buy a new frame and see this net—I shall cover it and re-curl that old black plume of yours and it will

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look dainty and pretty. But, oh, mother, your shoes!" she exclaimed, as Ruth, with a smile, pointed to them. "Oh, mother, what shall we do? What shall we do?"

"Never mind, my dear little girl. Mother doesn't care. I shall stay home," said Ruth.

Just then the door was pushed open and ten-year-old William stood revealed just as he had left his bed. Unknown to Ruth and Maud the door of his room had been left ajar and there he stood, his face all aglow with eagerness, his bank in his hand. He ran to his mother and put his arms around her neck.

"Here mother. I have four dollars. My own money that I earned, you know, running errands for Mr. Stone. Would four dollars buy your shoes, mother?"

Ruth gathered the little fellow in her arms. That money as she knew had been hoarded nickel by nickel for a pair of roller skates.

"No, mother's little man must have his skates."

"And you won't use it, mother?" His lips trembled and the tears shone in his dark eyes.

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There was so much of disappointment in his face that Ruth hesitated.

She caught a look from Maud. "Perhaps mother, we could manage to pay William back after a little, enough anyway so that he could get his skates."

"Perhaps we could. Anyway I think I'll accept your money and mother thanks you with all her heart. Come now, sweetheart, come back to bed," and mother and boy walked off together with their arms around each other, he looking up with worshipful eyes, she smiling back with all a mother's love.

When she came back Maud was busy ripping. She looked up and smiled. "Go to bed, mother, and sleep."

"You come, too, dear."

"In just a moment, mother."

Ruth stood a moment. "It seems almost like too much of an undertaking," she said with a sigh.

Maud laughed. "Not a bit of it, mother. Go to bed and we shall see tomorrow."

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Maud raised her lips and Ruth stooped to kiss her. "There is not another girl like mine in all the world," said she proudly.

"Nor another mother like mine. Goodnight."

"Good-night."

On the morrow, Maud was up with the grey dawn. When Ruth came down the re-modeled dress was ready to fit.

Sarah dressed the younger children and Ruth prepared the breakfast. There was a subdued excitement in everything. Mother was going away.

But while Ruth stopped a moment to consult with Maud the mush scorched, and, of course, had to be made over. When breakfast was finally ready, during an absence of Ruth's in the kitchen, the twins seized the molasses jug before any one could interfere and upset it in their laps and on the floor. Such a muss! No one but mother could oversee such a cleaning-up.

This morning Mr. Stanley was in a particular hurry, he had a business engagement before office hours concerning the mines. He had made a sketch the day before and put it, as he thought,

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in his vest pocket. But now it was not to be found. Maud put by her sewing, (she had not stopped except for just a bite of breakfast) and ran upstairs to go through her father's clothes and find the missing sheet if possible. Ruth looked in drawers, on tables, book-shelves, but to no avail. All the family joined the search, Mr. Stanley standing in the middle of the floor thrusting first one hand and then the other into his several pockets. This went on for half an hour or more and finally when all were about to the giving-up place Mr. Stanley called out—

“Oh, I remember now. I let Davis have it last night and he will have it there this morning. Good-bye, I must hurry off.”

Ruth drew a long breath and looked at the clock.

“Come, children. Time for school!” But Nellie just then caught her dress in the swinging door and tore a great rent in it.

“Oh, mother, see!” she cried, holding up the torn dress, “and I can't wear my blue one, because it has all the buttons off.”

After Twenty Years

"Maud, you must stop to mend this for I must look after the baby."

At last baby was bathed and asleep in his crib and the children off to school. Little Mary played on the floor at Maud's feet and Ruth went about her other work.

Suddenly they were both startled by a gasp from Mary. She had been playing with the button-box and had gotten a button into her throat. Both women grew white as they seized the strangling child. They could barely feel the sharp edge. "Do not push it down, Maud! Wait!" And the mother lifted the little one clear of the floor by the heels and shook her till out came the button.

Both sank down too weak to stand. Mary started to scream and that wakened the baby.

"Oh Maud! there is no use. You must help me and I'll not try to go."

"Never mind, mother," said the brave young girl, "I'll stop for a few minutes. We shall get through all right."

So the day went. Baby was hushed again to

A Woman's Answer to Roosevelt

sleep and Maud made a hurried trip to town to buy the hat frame and her mother's shoes.

"While you are gone I shall get the work done," said her mother.

But no sooner was Maud well away than the doorbell rang and there stood the man to repair the plumbing.

Ruth must stop and explain it all to him, and before he was gone the children were home for lunch, Sarah with a sick headache. Oh, such a day! After they were off, Ruth and Maud sat down in despair.

"Oh, I would so much rather not go than to have all this hurry. I feel weak and faint."

But she did go because of Maud's brave young heart. Unknown to her mother she stayed up almost all night "getting a start" for the morrow so that mother might go off quietly in the morning. And well repaid she felt when she looked into her mother's face, bright with excitement as she stood at the door bidding them good-by.

The children patted the dress and looked at her admiringly. Even her husband said:

After Twenty Years

“Ruth, you do look nice.”

And Maud throwing her arms around her, whispered, “Oh, I wish we could see you this way oftener.”

THE REUNION

CHAPTER VI

THE REUNION.

MARGARET, true to her word, met Ruth at the station.

Ruth knew Margaret in a moment but Margaret was not at all sure of Ruth, until she had had a good look into her eyes.

"Hello, Ruth!" cried Margaret, using the old salutation.

"Hello, Margaret," laughed Ruth, and the women kissed each other.

"Come along. I have the carriage hitched back of the station," said Margaret.

There, seated in the low wicker surrey, was Florence. She was dressed in a plain tailored suit which fitted to every curve of her beautiful form. A broad-brimmed hat with a drooping plume

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shaded her face and gave an added depth to the dark eyes. She leaned forward to hold out both hands to Ruth. Ruth hurried to her and their lips met.

"Come, get in, Ruth," said Margaret, "sit in the back seat with Florence. I'll be driver."

The horses started at a brisk pace. After an absence of so many years words did not come easily. Each face gave a hint of its story and "the triangle" felt its way with one another. Ruth was making this mental note:

"Margaret was never so handsome as now. She has soul in her face and happiness too. All the good has grown in Margaret, but in Florence—she is beautiful, but—what is it that has gone from her face?" Ruth could not answer.

Florence's thought was: "How Ruth has aged! More than aged, she is broken. She makes me think of pictures I have seen of suffering saints. Yes, she has suffered but not as I have. I guess," with a sigh, "Margaret is the only happy one."

Margaret, too, was busy with her thought,

The Reunion

“Well, well, how they have changed, both of them. Ruth has had a hard life and Florence an empty one.”

Ruth felt her shabbiness compared with Florence’s elegance and Margaret’s smart suit, and a feeling that was half envy, half pride, took possession of her. But she tried to hide her embarrassment and appear gay and happy.

Florence felt her unsuitableness to the occasion. Her life passed before her. Her load was heavy. Margaret’s and Ruth’s lives were so different they could not understand her trouble. “They cannot know and they shall not know,” she said to herself. Margaret, sympathetically sensitive to the condition of those around her read something of the attitude of each, and feeling the loneliness of one life, and the limitations of the other, she determined to hide her happiness lest it should be an added sting to the others.

So the three chatted about everything, about nothing, each thinking herself wonderfully clever.

They were met at the gate by Dr. Hill and the children.

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Six hearty rollicking young people, quick of mind, and sound of body.

Margaret's face unconsciously changed as they came in view and Florence and Ruth noted the change.

"What beautiful children," exclaimed Florence.

Margaret's head lifted a little, "Yes, I am proud of my children. Burnett and I thought nothing of so much importance as the advent of a human soul, and we have done our best for them both before and after their birth. My vitality was conserved for my children. Burnett's broad shoulders have been under all my care, and I tell you it was hard at first, for we had very little."

When they drove up Ruth and Florence saw the look exchanged between husband and wife and their own hearts went heavy.

Margaret was proud of her husband, every inch a gentleman, quiet, strong, alive. You felt his power in the touch of his firm hand and in the glance of his penetrating eye.

They stood a moment while Margaret made the introductions.

The Reunion

“We are off, the children and I,” said Dr. Hill, “for the day. We shall leave mother the day and the house.”

Father and children made a handsome group. Grace stood tall and straight by her father. She had her mother's golden hair and her father's deep blue eyes. She had been having a morning game of tennis with her brother and the rolled-up sleeve showed an arm well developed. There was strength and poise in her carriage.

Grace, although just nineteen, knew every detail of housekeeping and could manage as well as her mother. Margaret did not say, with many mothers: “Let her have a good time now. She must settle down and give up her fun soon enough.”

Dr. Hill and his wife believed they insured to their girls good times in the future, as well as in the present, in equipping them to be wives and mothers.

Next came Robert. Robert had the light of a poet in his eyes. It was such a pleasure to talk to the boy. Usually there was a copy of Burns, or Riley bulging out one pocket and one often

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found him stretched out by the brook which rippled at the end of the lot back of the house, gazing up into the blue sky utterly lost, except to the creatures of his imagination.

John's head had the bulging forehead of a statesman. He was already president of the boys' debating club and nothing pleased him better than to talk over the questions of the day with his father.

Then came Katherine, the sweet singer, the lark of the family, and so it was with them all. Even to little two-year-old David.

Florence might well say "beautiful children;" on each cheek was the glow of health and in each eye the gleam of intelligence and the earnest of the future.

Goodbyes were said and the three women entered the large attractive home.

Margaret was an ideal hostess.

Naturally each was busy answering the questions of the others.

Florence raised her hands in protest over Ruth's eleven children, but Ruth, true to her woman's

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heart, painted everything in rosy colors. Florence, too, lauded the convenience and attractiveness of hotel life, and all questioned and listened and drew their own conclusions.

Ere long the lunch bell rang and the three entered the dining-room. Conversation drifted to every-day topics. Ruth felt that her feet were on slippery ground.

Florence was saying:

“What do you think of ‘The Jungle,’ Ruth?”

“‘The Jungle?’ ” said Ruth gropingly.

“Yes Sinclair’s book,” explained Margaret quickly

“Oh, I haven’t read it,” said Ruth with heightened color. “What is it about?”

Both women gasped. Ruth, the book-lover, not to know “The Jungle.”

Margaret told her in a few words of the advent of the wonderful story and changed the conversation.

Ruth felt vaguely uneasy. But when the conversation drifted to children’s diseases she felt more comfortable. Margaret was telling of a

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sick time of little David's. She was saying, "He had three convulsions, just think of it. You know what that means, Ruth, but you can't understand, Florence," said she, turning to Florence.

Florence's face went white. "Yes, my baby died in convulsions," she said with dry lips.

"Your baby! Oh, forgive me, Florence."

Somehow conversation was not so easy after that although their hearts were more open and tender toward one another.

Margaret was glad when the time came to rise.

"Now for my surprise," said she, as she threw an arm around each of the others and led the way down the hall to a closed door to the right. This she opened and pushed the others in ahead of her.

Florence and Ruth looked around bewildered. Behold! Ruth's old college room even to the slightest detail. The curtains were drawn and the lamps lighted and by the grate fire three chairs were drawn just as they stood on that last night together.

Somehow the guarded doors of their hearts

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swung open and the confiding spirit of girlhood took possession of them.

It was too much for all three.

“Oh, Margaret!” came from Florence and Ruth simultaneously, and then Florence began to cry, and finally the whole three were crying with their arms around one another. And then Margaret led the way to the chairs and each one took the old place and silence fell, for the three were thinking.

Florence was the first to speak.

“Oh, girls! I’d give all the world to be as I was twenty years ago. Oh, I am so miserable! I am only one of the women I used so to detest, one of the silken-skirted women who came to the settlement to do the ‘charity act,’ as we called it. But I made my fight girls! My husband was not true. My baby died. Even the comfort of the belief in a pitying God was taken from me. I have grown cold and hard, and perhaps you have heard it—my name has been coupled with a man’s who is not my husband. He was such a friend. He saw and understood all my misery. He tried to

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help me and I was grateful. But the world would not allow me even the solace of his friendship and perhaps the world was right. I feel forsaken and cast aside. Oh, to go back twenty years to my pure, innocent, happy girlhood! But I must live on and wait for the end. What do you think of the Madonna now?"

She was pacing restlessly up and down, but stopped and faced the other two as she asked the question.

Ruth, with characteristic unselfishness, forgot her own trouble in listening to Florence's. She felt a thrill of sympathy when Florence spoke of the unfaithfulness of her husband.

"Florence dear," she said, in the quiet, sweet voice she used to comfort her children, "I have trouble, too, heavy trouble. But I know there is a God—a loving, tender Father and He should have been your refuge and your strength."

Florence came and knelt at Ruth's feet and buried her head in her lap as she used to do in the days so long gone by.

"You have trouble, Ruth, *you*—with your

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children and your home and your husband?"

Ruth stroked the brown head.

"You would scarcely understand my trouble, dearie—it may do you good to hear it—I have been a slave, a drudge. You know my old love for books, but I have scarcely looked into a book or magazine since my marriage. This is the first day I have spent away from home for ten years. We have had hard times and I have had no clothes. It took my daughter and me one day and night to make me decent to come. I do not go to church, for my husband has little sympathy with religion and it means a scene for me to go. But the saddest of all," the voice broke a little and the hand on the bowed head paused, "the saddest of all, Florence, is my little ones. They have had no chance either before their birth or after it. I looked at Margaret's group and thought of mine as I left them looking up so eagerly into my face—faces white and drawn, thin little bodies, clothes patched and mended. Oh, my heart is heavy. My husband has not been untrue, as has yours, Florence, but just as surely he has betrayed his trust. And

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when I think that perhaps I may not always be near to shelter them—Florence, do you know, can you know, the ache, the awful ache and the black misery of it all? Your little one is safe in heaven, but I must leave—I must leave my little ones—to perhaps unloving hands I—”

Here the voice broke utterly, and Florence's arms reached up about her. Margaret's face was bowed in her hands and the tears were stealing through her fingers. In her heart she was saying, “Oh, God! forgive me for not thanking thee more for Burnett!”

She stole quietly to the little stand near by and took from it her little old Testament. She drew her chair close to Ruth's.

“Girls! listen,” she said—and with a voice often breaking, she read,

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.”

THE DEATH OF RUTH

CHAPTER VII

THE DEATH OF RUTH

MOTHER was ill; a bad bilious attack, the doctor said. She had kept about, although her head was dizzy and her feet heavy, until she could no longer stand, and then Maud had put her to bed and they had sent for the doctor.

This was ten days ago but still Ruth was not better—in fact, she was worse, often frightening the children in her delirium. Another physician was called and he immediately pronounced it typhoid fever in an advanced stage.

The battle was on, but already the enemy had the advantage.

Maud, with anxious heart and flushed cheek, worked and nursed with the strength of two. Sarah was a good second and the boys never

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grumbled in their share. Maud knew from the concern on the faces of the physicians that her mother was in danger. Her father laughed at the idea. "Just a light attack and she will be around again," he said.

He came into the sick room night and morning to inquire after his wife. Somehow he didn't fit in there very well and things were coming to a crisis in his mining speculation and his time was required at important meetings.

One morning he came into the darkened room in his usual hurry.

"Tom," said Ruth, "wait a bit. There are things I must say to you."

"Wait until to-night, Ruth. I have a directors' meeting early and I must go now. To-day we shall have definite news and I may be a rich man, so hurry and get well to wear your silk dress." He laughed his big laugh and stooped to kiss the white face on the pillow.

"Good-bye, I'll be in to-night."

"Good-bye," replied Ruth and turned her face to the wall.

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That night he came in, eager and impatient, with Tom at his heels.

Maud held up a warning finger, but her father did not see it.

"Well, mother," he said, "we are worth a cool million if a cent. They have struck gold, struck it rich." He pushed his way to the bed, looked at his wife and then quickly at Maud.

"Oh, hush, father, mother is not so well. She does not know you and cannot understand what you say. Go into the other room and I'll call you when she can talk to you."

He went out, asking Maud on the way what she thought of the mines now!

"Oh father, I can't think of anything but mother," she said.

Little William crouched at the foot of the bed watching his mother's face. Maud watched, too. Suddenly she sprang up and hurried to the next room. "Oh, father! get the doctor, quick, quick, mother is dying."

Just then the doctor happened in. He foresaw the crisis in the morning and came that he

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might help the afflicted girl. One by one they all gathered round the bed. In their midst was a mysterious presence which chilled and awed them. Maud pressed close in her arms baby Felix.

"Mother, Mother!" she sobbed. William, with dry eyes, was on the other side, his little hand closed around one of his mother's cold ones.

"She's not dying, doctor?" said Mr. Stanley.

"Yes, she can last but a very few minutes now," came in the voice of the physician tuned to the stillness of the death-chamber.

Suddenly a light broke over the mother's face. Her eyes swept the circle around the bed, she reached out her arms, struggled to speak, and was gone.

Mother gone! The hand which steadied the first step, the lips which kissed away the first tear, the heart which first was raised to the Father heart for her darlings.

A conception of her loss froze the tears in Maud's eyes. Mother gone!

The hand that tucked you into bed. Can't you

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remember how she listened and how she comforted when the boys fought you, or the girls swung their skirts when you came near. The days when you were sick—why, it was not all pain because mother was there. Mother, who fashioned the dolly out of gingerbread, who saved for you the little dainty. Mother! who so often stood between you and father. Can you forget!

Mother gone! sweet, patient, loving mother.

Maud looked wildly around for the doctor. "Oh is she gone, is mother gone?"

"Yes, my child," he said gently, the tears in his own eyes.

She thrust the baby into his arms and threw her own about the cold form and pressed her cheek to the face upon the pillow. "Little mother," she crooned, "dear little mother."

There was a touch on her shoulder. She looked up into the doctor's eyes.

"Mother has left something for you to do. If she were here she would ask you to look after these little ones."

"Oh, yes, yes, I will, doctor, I will." She

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turned back once more. Leaning low she whispered, "I will, mother, I will."

* * * * *

You would not know the old house, for it had been painted outside and inside—it had been frescoed, varnished, carpeted, curtained, draped, lawn planted, shrubberies set out, everything made beautiful and inviting. Mr. Stanley had struck it rich and pompously received the homage of his satellites.

One morning the house was in an unusual stir of preparation. Flowers were everywhere, servants darted hither and thither; the snowiest linen was on the table; the most sparkling silver and cut-glass glittered upon the buffet and side-board; the most tempting odors came from the kitchen; something unusual certainly was about to happen.

In the parlor a little group had just gathered when a carriage drove up to the front door. From it alighted Mr. Stanley and a showily attired woman, whom he introduced to the footman as "my wife." They ascended the stairs and Mr.

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Stanley opened the front door with his latch key. A shiver passed through the little group, the members of which drew nearer together. They arose as the two arrivals entered the parlor.

"Maud," said Mr. Stanley, "this is your mother."

Maud took a stumbling step forward holding close in one arm her baby brother, while the other rested protectingly on Dick's shoulder. Little Mary and the twins peeped out shyly from her skirts and William and Nellie pressed close on the other side.

She was cold and stony. Her heart was bleeding and crying out in its bitter loneliness,

"Little mother! Oh, little mother."



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