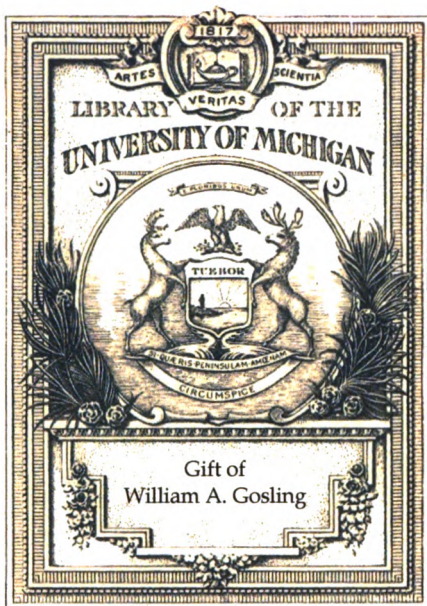




THE
PANSY
BOOKS



BY
"PANSY"



Gift of
William A. Gosling



“BUT THERE! WHAT CAN WE DO?”— *Page 194.*

THE BROWNS AT MT. HERMON

By
PANSY

AUTHOR OF "RUTH ERSKINE'S SON"; "RUTH ERSKINE'S
CROSSES;" "ESTER RIED'S NAMESAKE"; "ESTER RIED
YET SPEAKING"; "DORIS FARRAND'S VOCATION";
"DAVID RANSOM'S WATCH"; ETC., ETC.

*ILLUSTRATED BY
ELIZABETH WITHINGTON*



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THE BROWNS AT MT. HERMON

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I

“ MARY BROWN, CIRCLEVILLE ”

SHE held the open letter in her hand, regarding it with a bewildered yet whimsical look. It was unlike any letter that she had ever before read. She took up the envelope and gave it careful scrutiny. “ Mary Brown, Circleville, Union Co., —— ” That was all. “ It is my name, certainly,” she said aloud, “ though I am used to a middle letter, at least, and some sort of a prefix. Still, how am I to know that some correspondent has not forgotten both? It matches, I am sure, with my present surroundings.” She gave a swift, amused glance at the room as she spoke. A large

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bare room with a dull ingrain carpet on the floor, whose too pronounced pattern was fading out in spots; green paper shades at the windows, pierced by innumerable tiny holes through which the sunshine filtered, revealing dust-filled corners that told of many slovenly sweepings. The bed was spread with a coarse coverlid that had become yellow with careless washings and had been badly patched near the centre. It was characteristic of the present occupant's instinct for observing small details which she would have been glad not to notice, that she knew the patch was laid on crooked and was frayed around its badly sewed edges.

Taken together, bed, carpet, curtains, and furniture, of which there were the fewest possible pieces, were unlike any that Mary Brown had ever before made use of. She had even not realized that there were such rooms. Yet she was evidently a guest of honor in one of the best rooms of the Circleville Hotel, which name, painted in unnecessarily large letters, swung conspicuously over the central

“ MARY BROWN, CIRCLEVILLE ”

door of this long, low house that was sadly in need of paint. It was the only hotel in the village, and its accommodations, such as they were, had proved to be ample. No strangers save those compelled by circumstances stayed overnight in Circleville. Even its name was a misnomer. Why had the thought of “ circle ” ever been suggested by its one long, straggling street? The entire village had the appearance of having been left behind in the world’s march. If Mary Brown had not been too listless to do so, she could have laughed over the strangeness of her being stranded in such a place as this.

The circumstances connected with her coming had apparently been simple enough. Of course it had been quite unnecessary, as her guardian had taken pains to try to convince her. He had even laughed a little over her folly, and said there was no accounting for a woman’s whims; and she had turned from him a trifle vexed, and certain that she would go then, anyway. And she had gone, and come, — a long journey, which

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involved her being a guest for a few hours, at least, at the Circleville Hotel.

It was now the morning of the second day after her arrival, and, so far as the business that had seemed to bring her was concerned, Mary Brown was ready to start on her return trip. But she was miserably conscious all the while that part of the business which had taken her from home was not yet settled, and she was by no means ready to return. This feeling had increased upon her all the while she was eating the very decent breakfast that the Circleville Hotel furnished; albeit she ate for the first time in her life with a plated fork, that had much of its plate washed away, and drank her coffee from a cup so thick that it called her curious attention to itself whenever she touched it. She had gone back to her room and begun in a desultory fashion to repack her bag, all the while asking herself what possible excuse she could frame for remaining longer. And then had come that letter.

“ I took the liberty of bringing it right

“MARY BROWN, CIRCLEVILLE”

over to you, ma'am,” the man from the freight depot had explained. “I was there when Jim Baker was sorting the mail, and I told him I knew the one to whom that letter belonged, and I would bring it over.”

She had thanked him and had checked the temptation to give him a quarter for his trouble, under the feeling that he might be too manly for such return, and had broken the seal of her letter and begun to read, before taking time to wonder what correspondent could have written to her direct in this far-away little village. And then the contents of the letter began to hold her astonished and absorbed attention, she being too much bewildered, at first, to grasp its meaning or realize her mistake.

The letter began abruptly without more ceremony than the envelope had shown, simply “Mary Brown,” and proceeded at once to business.

“I have at last made up my mind to try you for the summer, anyway. It is a

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long way to come for just a summer, I know, but if you don't suit me for any longer than that, there are plenty of places where you can try it again. I haven't any fault to find with what my niece says about you, but your inexperience makes it bad for me; of course your mother's kitchen is very different from mine. Still, I'll venture it; you will certainly be better than nobody. Your uncle looking out for your ticket makes it safer for both of us; of course I couldn't risk any money on an entire stranger. My daughter Ailene thinks I am very foolish to have a perfect stranger come so far. She says, for one thing, you will be so dreadfully lonesome without any of your mates that you can't stand it; but I tell her that a girl who is old enough to earn her living, and to have need for doing it, will have sense enough not to let homesickness hinder. There is no need for you to be especially lonesome, either. The cook is Irish, to be sure, but she is a nice, respectable, good-natured girl, and there is no reason why you and she shouldn't get

“ MARY BROWN, CIRCLEVILLE ”

on together. Besides there will be others; the table waiters are college girls, and of course you understand that that is different from working for wages, but you can make friends, no doubt, if you want to. Cook's name is Mary, too, but we can call her Mary Ann, so that won't bother. I have said that I would never try American help again, because they never know their place, but your letter sounds so sensible that I don't believe you will make any trouble; and I must have somebody as soon as possible. You said you could start on the 10th, and that would bring you here on the 12th. I hope nothing will hinder your being on hand at that time. I shall have to send to the station for you a mile away; and besides, it is a bad beginning for a girl not to do as she said she would. If you are going to earn your living by working out, you don't want to begin in any such way; so I shall certainly expect you by the morning train on Friday, the 12th.

“ I don't know that there is anything more need be said. I told you all about

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wages, and the kind of work, in my other letter; though as to that, I need most of anything a handy girl who is willing to do whatever I tell her. I do hope you will be one of that kind.

“ Oh, one thing more. We live in tents out here, mostly; it is a summer encampment, you know. The dining-room girls have a large tent to themselves, and, besides there not being room for any more, they wouldn't care to have a stranger with them; but Mary has a nice little tent all to herself, and I may as well tell you at the outset that you will have to share it with her. She is just as neat as the rest of us, and you can have a cot to yourself, but I can't manage another tent this year. My daughter Ailene says you won't like that; but whether you do or not, I thought I ought to tell you. I try to be honest and above board with everybody. There's no reason in life why you shouldn't be entirely comfortable with Mary; she has lived with me a long time and is thoroughly respectable. I guess you will find everything as comfortable

“ MARY BROWN, CIRCLEVILLE ”

as a body ought to expect. I'm sure I hope so; and I shall plan to have you met at the station. I guess that is all.

“ MRS. HARRIET H. ROBERTS.”

Mechanically Mary Brown, with the thought of the train in mind, looked at her watch. Then she laughed.

“ It won't do to miss that train,” she said aloud, “ if I am going to earn my living. What an extraordinary letter! The question is, where shall I find the Mary Brown to whom it belongs, and apologize to her for appropriating it? There is need for haste, it is — why, to-day is the ninth! She must start to-morrow without fail! If Mrs. Roberts should send to the station and not find her, I wonder what would happen? I must have a personal interview with her without delay, and explain why I not only opened her letter but was so absorbed with its contents that I read it through without realizing that it did not belong to me. My original idea was that some lunatic had discovered me. Still, Mary Brown,

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I don't think this transaction speaks very well for either your honor or your common sense. If the time were not so short I would shirk the personal interview and leave explanations to that accommodating freight agent, or some one else. Poor Mary Brown! I begin to be sorry for her again, as I have been a thousand times before. I wonder if the girl is used to travelling. She is inexperienced; is she also young? So this is the manner in which help is hired! I have often wondered just how I should set about it, supposing Mrs. Hopkins should ever leave me, which Heaven forbid.

“There was no waste of ink on ceremony. It is simply ‘Mary Brown,’ and no more. It seems not to be the proper thing to address one's help as ‘Miss.’ I wonder why not. And I thought all business letters closed with a ‘Yours truly.’ This one just stops. Mary Brown, you must not waste another minute of precious time; you are to set out at once in search of Mrs. Roberts’ ‘help.’ The very least you can do under the cir-

“ MARY BROWN, CIRCLEVILLE ”

cumstances is to see that she gets off on the morning through train, although I am afraid that will involve another night spent in Circleville. Never mind, ‘ business is business,’ I am sure Mrs. Roberts would say. I wonder what sort of a girl Irish Mary is, and whether the other Mary will relish the situation. Is it to be supposed that Irish Mary is Mary Brown? No, that is not probable, or Mrs. Roberts would have mentioned it. It sometimes seems as though all the Marys in the world were either Brown or Smith.”

She had picked up the envelope and was studying the name. After the fashion of people who spend much time alone, she continued to talk to herself, a discontented look on her face the while.

“ What a hopeless commonplace it is! ‘ Mary Brown.’ Why couldn’t the first name, at least, have had some character? It might have been Jemima, for instance, or Johanna. I rather like that. What if I had been named Bathsheba after my great-great-great-grandmother!

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That would have been distinctive, at least; but just 'Mary Brown.' There must be thousands of us in circulation. I wonder what kind of a scheme a 'Mary Brown party' would be. I might fill the Euston Square house with them and make it look cheery for once. Probably some of the Mary Browns of the world are cheery. It is not at all likely that they are all orphans without sisters or brothers or even a choice cousin. Nothing in their own right but a fortune that all the frauds and freaks in the world are after, without the least care as to what becomes of her, so that they get her money. One thought about this interesting epistle was that it was one of those dreadful chain-letters that must not be broken, and must have five copies made at once to send to five other victims; and I was in haste to get at its contents to destroy them. I have ceased to have even a semblance of a conscience about those chains. I like nothing better than to break them."

She was busy unpacking her bag again, and searching for things that would be

“ MARY BROWN, CIRCLEVILLE ”

needed for her changed plans. She was almost cheerful over the fact that there was work for her to do that was not without its element of personal interest, and that would involve a delay in her return home. Meantime, she let her thoughts rove on in the whimsical direction they had already taken.

“ I am not sure but that house party for the Browns is an interesting idea. I might add the ‘ Johns ’ to it; they must be fully as numerous as the Marys. Think of the John and Mary Browns of the country summoned to Euston Square for a social function! I wonder how one would set about such an affair. I might make it local and send personal invitations to all who appear in the Directory. Wouldn’t it call out a motley crowd? ”

She laughed over her own folly, though there was not much joy in the laughter.

The simple fact was that Mary Thornton Brown, only daughter and sole heir of the late Everett Thornton Brown, of Euston Square fame, was in a dreary and almost cynical mood a good deal of the

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time. Her laugh closed with a sigh so desolate that even a stranger would have pitied her. She was not sure that there was a more lonesome and homesick girl in all the world than her weary self.

The task of finding the other Mary Brown was more complicated and involved more time than this one had deemed possible in so small a village. Jim Baker, at the corner grocery,— who also managed the post-office in one corner of his establishment,— was positive in his statements.

“ There ain’t no Mary Brown about here now, only you. That’s your name, ain’t it? John Jackson was here when I came to it, and he said right off that it belonged to you. There used to be a girl living out about two miles from here on the valley road; but they don’t get their mail this way. They have it come through the other office, and her letters, when she had any,— and that wasn’t often I reckon,— had R. F. D. on them, for the rural delivery, you know; and this one didn’t have it on. Besides, that Mary

“ MARY BROWN, CIRCLEVILLE ”

Brown ain't there any more; she's gone ten miles away to live, down on the Fern-dale road.”

The Mary Brown to whom he continued to pour out this sort of information looked thoughtfully at him without seeing him, too much absorbed with her own thoughts even to laugh, until afterwards, at the curious bit of advice with which he closed.

“ So I reckon that you jest better make up your mind that the letter's meant for you, all right; that will be the easiest way out.”

Her response was to ask many questions about the valley road and the house two miles out where the other Mary Brown used to live. She had decided that she must seek her out and learn whether or not the letter that she had unwittingly delayed was still important.

II

MARY JANE BROWN

AT last the little story-and-a-half house that was supposed to shelter the other Mary Brown was found. It was not early in the afternoon when the searcher, who had numerous obstacles to overcome, was at last rewarded by its sight, but there was no air of afternoon leisure about the stuffy little place. The small, unswept porch on which the sun beat down fiercely was a litter of home-made playthings and of children. The tiny yard was simply doing duty as a place for rubbish of all sorts. A woman who looked overworked and discouraged seemed to be trying to divide her time between a bubbling mixture on the stove, that was bent on boiling over, and the sorting of a box of tomatoes that stood among the play-

MARY JANE BROWN

things, the noisy children about her coming in for their share of attention as necessity demanded.

She owned to being Mrs. Brown, and hastily dusted a chair for her caller with her apron, while she answered questions.

“ ‘Mary Brown?’ You mean Mary Jane? No, she ain’t at home, and what’s more she won’t be for a whole month, maybe longer.”

The sentence closed with a sigh that marked the mother’s opinion of the eternity stretching between her daughter and herself.

“ A letter? For her? You don’t say! And you read it, thinking it was yours? So you are Mary Brown, too! Ain’t that queer now? But I don’t know as it is, either; there’s a sight of Browns in the world, and about half of them seem to be named Mary. Me and Mary Jane was talking about that only the other day. ‘Ma,’ says she, ‘I wisht you had named me Susanna or Roxana or anything else in life except Mary Jane!’ She got so kind of tired of hearing the name over

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and over, you know. Where we used to live there was a dozen of them, I do believe! And so you're another? Stoppin' at the hotel? It was real kind of you to come away out here with that letter. The hotel is a mighty nice place, ain't it? but dreadful expensive. My land! it don't seem as though there could be folks in the world who had money enough to board at a hotel! Set down, do, and rest."

The long-suffering apron was again called into service to make Mrs. Brown's hands fit to grasp the letter, then she went immediately into a struggle with its contents; and her caller, dropping into the dusted chair, studied this new specimen of humanity. So there were people who considered the Circleville Hotel a "mighty nice," and also an expensive, place! Nothing had seemed stranger to her than the ridiculously small amount that had been charged her for room and board. Here was a woman to whom her house party at Euston Square would be a revelation. Heretofore she had given

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almost no thought to the respectable multitude known in general terms as the middle class. Might they not be an interesting class to study? She could begin with the Browns.

She was recalled from her musings by a series of exclamatory phrases.

“ Well, now, ain’t that mean! Well, I do say! If that ain’t for all the world jest Mary Jane’s luck! It does beat all how luck follows some folks! And there ain’t a better girl in the country than my Mary Jane, either. Don’t it seem kind of too bad? ”

There was appeal in the last sentence, and Miss Brown felt a longing desire to be sympathetic.

“ I don’t believe I understand the situation,” she said, gently. “ Is the letter unsatisfactory? ”

“ Why, of course you don’t understand; it’s jest like me to run on without any head or tail to what I’m saying. Look here, you children, run out to the pig-pen and play till I get done talking; you make such a racket a body can’t hear

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herself think. Why, no, there ain't anything unsatisfactory about the letter except the time of getting it. Why, it's this way. This letter's from California, did you notice that? It's a good ways off; you have to travel on the cars pretty nigh two days to get to it. It's down where there's some kind of a camp-meeting right in the woods. An awful pretty place, they say; there's mountains, and water, and big trees and everything, and they have a meeting there all summer long. And this woman is down there running a boarding-house and is terrible short of help. She used to live near here before she went to California, and she's got a real smart niece back in the country that she wrote out to, to get her to come and help her this summer and she'd pay her good wages. But the niece is going to be married before the summer is over; and she is a friend of my Mary Jane, so she came over to get her to go in her place. Now, my Mary Jane is kind of wild to take a trip on the cars, and especially to go to California; she always has

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wanted to go there, ever since she began to study about it in the geography. And she kind of liked the notion of the meetings, too; she ain't never had much chance, Mary Jane hasn't; jest stuck at home and helped her mother. But mostly, she wanted to get away for a spell. She's going to get married sometime, if he ever gets forehanded enough to do it. I dunno when it will be; he's had his mother to take care of, and she's been sickly, and there was doctor's bills and medicine, and then there was the funeral expenses. Yes, she died, along in the spring, and he misses her dreadful. Poor fellow! he was as good a son as ever lived, and got her everything he could think of, and he gave her a real nice funeral. But he had to run in debt, of course, and so they don't know when they can get married. She's been engaged to him now for more than three years, and I guess she kind o' thought a change would do her good. 'Ma,' says she to me, 'how do you suppose it would seem for John and I not to see each other for months? We're so

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kind of used to each other now that we think we couldn't manage it apart, but wouldn't it be a good plan to find out?' That was a queer notion, wasn't it? I dunno as I more than half like it in a girl that's engaged to be married. 'Good land!' I says to her, 'if you think you could stan' it apart, why, don't ever get married; that's my way of looking at it. Married life is trying enough anyhow you can fix it, and if you can stan' life apart, it's a first-rate sign that you better keep so.' Ain't that your way of looking at it? And then her uncle he put in and helped. He works for the railroad, and he did some things for them last year that saved them some trouble and some money, and they give him passes on the road, and he fixed it so Mary Jane could go without its costing her much; and that made her bent on going. And she wrote that she would like to come in the other girl's place, and got herself ready and waited and waited, and no answer came. And here, only last Monday, she give up and went off to a family that have been

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kind of coaxing for her all the spring. And now, just as she is fast bound at the other place, comes along this letter. Ain't that luck for you? Serves that Mis' Roberts just right; she needn't have dawdled along that way about writing. And now she thinks my girl can start up at a minute's notice and go. Wants her to start on the tenth, doesn't she? And that's to-morrow, ain't it? Don't it beat all how things work!"

She held out the letter as she spoke, as though it belonged to her caller, who took it mechanically, as she said:

"You mean that you do not think your daughter will go, now?"

Mrs. Brown stared.

"Why, she *can't*," she said. "How could she? The folks where she has gone have been waiting for her for weeks, and they was as pleased as could be when she told them she would come and stay till November; and they sent off the help they had had in her place, and give up the chance they had of another girl; so of course Mary Jane is bound; she's honest,

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my girl is; and help is terrible scarce around here. No, I sha'n't take the trouble to send the letter out to her; it ain't of no use now."

Whereupon Miss Brown realized that she had received a lesson in honor from one of those who were called the common people, and felt a fresh accession of respect for them. She was also sorry for Mary Jane.

"It seems a pity," she said, sympathetically, "that your daughter should be disappointed at last, when the opportunity has come to her."

The mother gave her a penetrative glance, and grew more confidential.

"Well, between you and me, I ain't been laying awake nights wishing for her to go. I wouldn't have put a feather's weight in her way, but seeing I had nothing to do with it, I'm going to own up that I'm mighty glad not to have her go away off there alone among strangers, and no telling how she would be treated. Not but that I wanted her to have an outing, too. The fact is I've been awfully

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mixed in my mind all along. I don't know as she will ever have another chance to go on the cars, or anywhere. He is a nice fellow as ever was, but of course he is far from forehanded; in fact, he's in debt; he couldn't help it, bein' the kind of son he was. And if they can get a place to live in where he can afford to pay the rent, I guess they'll try it together next spring; but land! there'll be no such thing as outings. They'll have to bone down to jest *living*. You know how it is when folks is poor? I dunno as you do, but my land! I do, and so does Mary Jane. Why, they ain't planning even to go to town on a wedding trip! John was talking about it the last time he was here. 'We'll walk from the church,' says he, 'straight over to our house, if we have the good luck to have a house, and be tickled to death at the chance of going to it together.' That's the way he feels, and I'm glad he does. Well, being things are as they are, I can't help being glad that she's only ten miles away from me this last summer, instead

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of hundreds. I call it her last summer, because, in a way, it is. Mothers lose their girls after they get married, you know. Still, I like John first-rate, and he was awfully good to his mother. I guess maybe you know John. Did you have any luggage down at the station? Well, the man that handled it was likely John; he is kind of at the head of it all down there. Was he a big man with blue eyes and kind of reddish whiskers? That's John; John Jackson his name is. 'Ma,' Mary Jane says to me once, 'if his name had been John Brown, wouldn't it have been dreadful! If it had,' says she, 'I wouldn't have married him! I will have a different name, at least.' That is the way she talked, but it's my belief that she'd marry him if his name was Snooks and hers was too. But I'm unfeeling enough not to be sorry that this letter didn't come in time, since I didn't lift my little finger to hinder it."

And then Miss Brown rose up, her decision made. She had heard the mother's

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family history, while at the same time she carried on her own train of thought.

“ I understand your feeling,” she said, gently. “ My mother has been long gone, but I think if she were here she would keep me close to her as long as she could. Would you like to have me reply to this letter for you, and explain the situation? ”

Mrs. Brown’s face beamed her thanks, and her tongue was once more voluble.

“ Well, now, I call that real kind. I won’t deny that I’d rather do a day’s washing any time than to write a letter; and Mary Jane is dreadful busy out there, even if she had the letter, and I don’t see no use in sending it to her and stirring things up again, now that it’s too late. I’m kind of sorry for the woman, and I don’t mind your telling her so; for my Mary Jane is a big loss. She ain’t ever worked out before, but she knows how, and she works with her conscience as well as with her fingers.”

And then Miss Brown was fairly out on the street, and a remarkable resolve

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in her heart. She would answer that letter, but it should be in person! Why not? She was Mary Brown, certainly. Evidently so far as her correspondence with Mrs. Roberts was concerned, the other Mary Brown had ignored her middle name. She had never in her life "worked out," but neither had the other Mary Brown, and she believed herself to be a "capable girl" and "willing to learn," which seemed to be the chief requisites. She also had heard of summer camp-meetings, and never attended one; and she had as weary a longing for something different as ever this Mary could have.

Although she had given the matter much thought, she had not been able to plan any outing for herself that was not utterly distasteful in prospect; and here was Providence, or fate, opening the way in an extraordinary manner for a new sensation. She smiled over her involuntary use of that word "Providence," and then sighed a little. She knew people who seemed to make use of the word as a sort of charm, and she knew a few, a

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very few, who seemed to derive comfort from its use. Such she had envied.

There was in the fashionable world to which she belonged a very large circle of acquaintances, each of whom would have stared in wonder over the idea that Mary Brown, of Euston Square, was a subject for pity. She was young, she had perfect health, she was so distinctly fine-looking that many people called her beautiful, she was the sole heiress of the late Everett Thornton Brown, millionaire, she was the sole mistress of as fine a mansion as any of the especially fine ones on Euston Square, — what more could a reasonable being desire?

Yet the sorrowful fact remains that there were days together when it would have been hard to find a more lonely and desolate person, in all the great city which was her home, than this same Mary Brown.

Sometimes her desolateness so preyed upon her that she walked the streets in sheer despair over the thought of going back to the great dreary house which she

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called home. She wanted a real home, with father and mother, and brothers and sisters, and song and laughter and good cheer. Occasionally she had glimpses of such homes in passing, before the selfish curtains were drawn close; they were always seen through a mist of tears. Sometimes there was a glimpse to be had of a baby, one of those laughing, springing creatures, whose perfect limbs seem to be strung on wires. Once or twice, when a sash was raised, she had caught the gurgle of sweet baby laughter, and had been obliged to hastily shield her face from curious eyes because of the tears that were blinding her.

When she was a girl of sixteen there had been such a baby in their home. She was nearly twenty-six now, and had been alone in the world and desolate for five interminable years.

She wanted a friend. Oh, more than anything else in this world the poor young woman told herself that she needed a real friend.

Friends she had, of course, in plenty.

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Why, she was so used to being sought after and quoted and copied, that there were days when she perversely hated it all. But, go over her long list of acquaintances as carefully as she might, not one could be singled out upon whom to bestow the kind of feeling she meant when she used that word "friend."

She had tried. There had been continuous weeks during which she had earnestly cultivated what she afterwards called a "spasm of intimacy," trying to make herself believe that at last she had found a friend indeed, only to be disappointed and to have instead an embarrassing intimacy on her hands. She grew afraid of intimacies, at least of the solitary sort, and her next venture had been the adoption of an entire family.

III

MARY BROWN'S FRIENDS

THE dwellers on Euston Square, where the beautiful homes were ancestral, at least as much so as homes can be in this new country, were one day treated to a sensation. The house and grounds adjoining the Thornton Brown place were actually sold! To be sure, it was a distant cousin who bought it, but he did not bear the family name, and altogether it was an innovation. It ought to have been resented, and there was a general feeling in the Square that the new family should, in a perfectly well-bred manner of course, be let alone. But it chanced that, very early in their coming, Miss Brown quite by accident came in contact with the new family, and found them charming. There

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was a real mother there, and a father, and there were three pleasant daughters, and some delightful boys for brothers, too young to even suggest embarrassing situations. Moreover, there was a home atmosphere which the lonely young woman next door recognized the first time she breathed it. She was fascinated, and, without in the least intending it, fairly tumbled into an intimacy that was delightful to her.

In her secret soul she knew that the mother was more interesting to her than the daughters, and that she should like to have her for her special friend; but that did not seem reasonable. The oldest daughter, just her age, claimed her as a matter of course, but was unselfish and cheerful in letting the others share, and they were all charming people.

Not the least pleasant feature of the intimacy to Mary Brown was the delightful comradeship that sprang into life between her and the high school and grammar school boys, — a friendship that was exceedingly helpful to her, and too much

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could hardly be said as to its influence over the boys.

Before she had realized what was going on, Miss Brown had accomplished that difficult thing on a city street, in an exclusive circle of which she was the unwilling centre, a next-door intimacy sufficiently pronounced for the "running in" stage, and the next-door people, thanks to her influence, were promptly in the centre of things. Perhaps they would have reached there promptly in any case, for they belonged to the class to whom it would have made little difference, and such seem always to make their way.

Just as Mary Brown, who had tried this time to be extremely careful, was beginning to let go all reserve and enjoy to the full the home she had borrowed, a cloud arose. "The doctor" was a name constantly referred to in the family, and Miss Brown, without asking any questions, had gathered that he was very much at home in their circle when he was on this side the water. She learned that

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he was a professor in the medical college of their own city, and that he was abroad for an indefinite time.

One morning she had "run in" to plan a drive for the afternoon, and had found them all in a state of hilarity over a just received letter, with the announcement that the doctor was coming home.

"Just think, Miss Brown!" Alice, the high school girl, had said, "he expects to sail very soon,—perhaps next week! And the last word we had from him was that he had almost decided to stay another year. I can't think what has made him change his mind, unless it was because I told him what we thought about you and—"

She stopped in utter confusion, and a chorus of laughter greeted her from the other sisters, followed by exclamations.

"You're a nice child, Allie!" "I think as much!" "Always cautioning us not to tell, and then doing it yourself!"

"I haven't told a thing!" said the scarlet-faced Alice.

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"No, but you will have to now, or Miss Brown will think it is something dreadful. I shall tell. It is Alice's first effort at match-making, Miss Brown, and she has smothered Nettie and me in cautions not to mention it for the world."

"Nonsense!" said the girl. "Don't you believe them, Miss Brown; they are just trying to tease me. You can tell her all you want to, girls. I didn't say a word more than you did, either; I shall tell her myself. It isn't anything dreadful, Miss Brown; only we all said that you were just the one person in the world that we had ever seen whom we thought Doctor would like, and I told him about you, how dear you were, and how we all loved you and how we wished he would come home and — and —"

"Love her, too!" exploded Nettie in a fresh burst of laughter. "Oh, Allie! what a goose you are! you've spoiled it all now."

Then Miss Brown had questioned in a puzzled way, letting her impressions come to the surface in doing so. She had

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thought that "the doctor" was at least a middle-aged, gray-haired man with spectacles and a family, and that he lived in "Professors' Row" with the others. There had followed a chorus of exclamations.

"Doctor an old man! the idea!"
"Well, he hasn't a family, by any means, except us; we are his family." "And he doesn't live in any 'Row,' I can assure you; he lives with us."

"Why, Doctor is only thirty; and he is just the same as our brother. His mother died before Nettie was born, when he was a little bit of a fellow; she was mamma's dearest, sweetest sister, and mamma had him come right home to us, and he has lived here ever since."

"He is only thirty, Miss Brown. That is what makes him so remarkable. He has become distinguished for medical research even so early in his career."

"Allie is quoting from the medical journal now," the others said, and laughed. And Miss Brown had gone home, presently, more dismayed than she

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would have cared to have her adopted family understand. Dismayed and disheartened; here was the end of all her newly found pleasant homelike times! With the advent of a young doctor the delightful friendliness expressed by that "run-in-at-any-time" phrase would be over. She would have to be circumspect and dignified and keep constantly in memory not only the friendly neighborhood espionage, but the more careless one of the watching outside world. Even the servants would be on the alert, curious to see what sort of intimacy was established between herself and this other, who, it seemed, was really one of the family. In short, she told herself with a weary sigh, "he has spoiled it all!"

This conviction deepened as the days passed, and the interest in the speedy return of "Doctor" kept his name continually at the front. Especially was that high school girl, Alice, a trial at this time. Having once divulged her eager secret that Doctor and Miss Brown had been created for each other, and that she was

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to be the link in the connecting chain, she worked steadily at her task, ringing his praises until the poor victim for whom they were especially intended grew to fairly hate the sound of his name. She began almost bitterly to resent his connection with this particular family. He had all the world beside, apparently; why could he not have left this one home to her? She laughed, of course, over her own folly, but nevertheless she was miserable.

She spent a wretched night or two trying to plan a satisfactory outing for the summer. It had included a month's sojourn at a very quiet resort in company with the family next door, but that had suddenly lost its charm. She could not include herself in that way, with the new member present, even had she desired to do so.

Matters were in this state when a note from her business agent and former guardian, concerning some of her recently acquired property, suddenly gave her a new suggestion,—she would go and see

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the little six-roomed cottage that had unexpectedly become hers; why not? She could even stay in that vicinity somewhere for a few days, perhaps, and plan what she would do next. At least this would enable her to get away from the disappointments and questionings of that irrepressible Alice, the high school girl. No sooner had the idea occurred to her than she settled upon it at once as a conviction. There was something pathetic about the little possession. A nurse who had served and loved her in childhood, but had been lost sight of through these later years, had recently died, and, being without relatives, had left all her small possession—a tiny furnished cottage—to Mary Brown, sole heiress of the millionaire, Everett Thornton Brown, of Euston Square, and the child of her love and care.

At first the rich man's daughter exclaimed over her legacy in amused dismay. What in the world was she to do with a six-roomed cottage located in a little Western village many hundred

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miles from her home? Later, she had cried over the thought that one whom she had forgotten had remembered her all these years and loved her enough to leave her little all to her. She wished that she could have known about the love and realized it before there was nothing left but a grave. Then came the inspiration. Why should she not visit that grave and see that all outward respect, at least, was paid to the memory of Nurse Borland? Incidentally, she could also visit the six-roomed cottage.

Such was the combination of circumstances that had made Miss Brown a guest at the Circleville House, hundreds of miles away from her usual surroundings, and from all who even knew of her.

No, there was one other phase of the combination; there was something that she must decide. She could not settle it at home; at least it would not stay settled. Perhaps the atmosphere of Circleville, wherever that might be, would help to clear her vision.

There was a certain Richard Wade, a

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friend of her girlhood, of her childhood indeed. He had seemed for years like one of her brothers, and been almost as much at home as they in her father's house. If only he had been content to stay as her brother, how much less lonely her life might be. But Richard, who was just her age and had seemed much younger, had been away for two years and then had returned grown up! Some way he had discovered suddenly that he was not only a man with a man's ideas and feelings, but that those feelings even to his innermost heart were centred on his one-time playmate, Mary Brown. He was very positive and insistent; he not only knew that he loved her with all his soul, but was equally sure that she loved him. Why shouldn't she? Hadn't she always liked him better than any of her friends, — a great deal better? And there was no one else, was there? Well, then, what was the use? No matter if she did not realize that she had the right kind of feeling for him, that was nothing; he was not afraid; he had not realized it

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himself until lately. But he knew now, both for himself and her. Once they were married and the thing was settled for life, she would find out fast enough that he was the only one in the world.

She had felt compelled to laugh at the boyishness of this logic, and had reminded him that once they were married it would be too late to do any finding out. But at that he had shown that he was man enough to suffer, and had convinced her that he, at least, was in solemn earnest. And he had urged a speedy marriage with all the eloquence that he could muster, and had convinced her judgment that, once the decision were made, there would be no reason in delay. She was alone in the world, and so was he, at least comparatively. He had brothers and a sister, but they were married and settled, "and happy without me," he had told her pathetically; and then she had realized that he, too, was lonely.

But she could not decide to marry him. There were nights when she went to sleep at last under the conviction that it was

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settled and she would be married as soon as he wished,—only to awaken in the gray of the very early morning to renew the weary questionings. There were times when she chafed under the restraints of conventionalities. If Richard were her brother they could make a home together, and have as much of each other's society as they chose, and live their separate lives at the same time, as they chose. Why could it not be so with friends? She would like very well to pour Richard's coffee for him, and chat with him, whenever he chose to dine at home, and she had no other engagement; she could imagine an ideal life for them both. But to marry him, give up her name and time and individuality almost, as she was sure that people truly married did and were glad to do, she shivered and shrank from it, and was sure that she and Richard were not for each other. And then he would spend an eager evening with her, tingling to his fingers' ends with assurance and determination, and the arguments would be gone over again. She

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must get away from them, and from him. She must reach a decision that would bear daylight, and stay fixed. It was being cruel to Richard to vacillate so. This, after all, had been the real reason why she caught at the tiny cottage in Circleville and took her sudden flight in that direction, not even hinting to Richard that she was going. He was out of town for a few days, and this helped her in getting away.

She had been gloomy during the journey, over the loss of her adopted family; for the more she thought about them in connection with "the doctor," the more sure she was that her enjoyment was over. And then she had been gloomy for another reason. It seemed strange, but as the separating miles increased between Richard Wade and herself, her inward vision seemed to clear; before she reached Circleville she had become almost certain once more that she was not the woman whom Richard ought to marry, and that she would not marry him. But with that strange inconsistency which sometimes

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harasses the human heart, the decision saddened her. She should in this way lose her friend, her lifelong friend and comrade and almost brother. Richard, at least, knew his own mind, and had not changed and would not, and they could never be again as they had been. She was sorry for him, and at the same time almost vexed with him. Things might have been so pleasant if he had not been foolish. She, it seemed, was not to have a friend of any kind.

It was this dreary loneliness and sense of separation and loss that she had brought with her to Circleville. It was what had made the look on her face which had caused John Jackson to remark to his associate in the freight depot that he never see a young person before look so kind of lonesome and sad. He guessed she had lost friends lately, her mother, maybe; and then he had sighed. John Jackson was the young man who had lately buried his mother, to whom he had always been good, and who wanted to marry the other Mary Brown as soon as

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he could get "forehanded" enough. He told the other freight man that he was that sorry for the young woman that he had gone over with her to the hotel and carried her bag himself away up to her room, so she wouldn't have to wait for that slow-poke of a Tim to do it. All this Mary Brown did not know. She did not even know that she had arrested the attention of John Jackson, and that he had been especially kind to her. But she knew that she was sad; and she believed that she had lost friends.

IV

A NEW MISS BROWN

BEFORE the arrival of that remarkable letter, Miss Brown had spent a number of hours in the six-roomed cottage at Circleville.

She had found, first of all, a little old-fashioned garden aglow with old-fashioned flowers, — larkspurs and sweet-williams and balm and honeysuckle. She had loved them all the moment her eyes rested on them; they were associated with Nurse Borland and happy childhood days. There had been a little old garden in the country where she and Nurse Borland spent some happy weeks the summer that father was ill and mother went abroad with him. Some of those very flowers were blooming in this garden! Mary Brown, as she bent over them with a rush,

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of tender memories dimming her eyes, told herself that at least she would see to it that Nurse Borland's grave should always glow with the flowers she had loved.

She had gone carefully through the tiny house, examining with growing homesickness and wistfulness every article of furniture. What a complete little house it was! What a cunning dining-room, — old-fashioned braided rugs on the floor, old-fashioned high-backed chairs, an old-fashioned deep-leaved table covered with a heavy linen home-woven spread. A tiny corner closet stocked with old-fashioned blue dishes, willow pattern. Could anything be prettier or more complete?

“Dishes enough to serve meals for two, and even to have a guest,” she said, gazing wistfully up at them. “If Nurse Borland could only have understood how much I should have enjoyed sitting with her at this table, drinking tea out of this blue cup! Why must things always come afterwards?”

She had lingered in the little house,

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unable to get away from the homelike place. She assured herself that, for some reason, it looked and felt more like home to her than any place that she had been in for years; and it was hers. If there were only another, sufficiently a kindred spirit, to be summoned to spend a few weeks with her in this little house, among those lovely rollicking flowers, she knew that she should like it better than any outing that could be planned. "Two people," she had said again wistfully, as, having visited all the rooms, she reached the little dining-room again, and sat down by the two-leaved table to consider. She went over her circle of friends one by one, and dismissed them; none of them quite fitted in with the little house. She had locked the door at last, and pocketed the key. She had changed her mind about returning it to the agent; the house was hers and she had a right to the key, and a perfect right to keep the place untenanted if she chose. She had a foolish little feeling that she should like to choose the tenants, and she smiled at her folly,

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and wondered what her business agent and sometime guardian would think of such an idea. He was not to hear of it, that was some comfort. Her folly had already been sufficiently impressed upon him in taking a long journey for the sole purpose of looking up so insignificant a bit of property as this. Of course the guardian was never to know about Richard Wade and the decision that must be reached. No, that was reached. She had clear vision now. Just why, she could not have told, but as she sat before that little dining-table and mentally set the blue willow patterned dishes in order for two, she became absolutely certain that Richard Wade could never, never be the other one. And if not he, then nobody, of course, in that sense. She must be different from other girls. Well, one thing was certain, she should never marry unless she was sure beyond the shadow of a doubt that she could not live without that other one, and also that she could live with him.

“ Always to have him seated opposite

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to one at table, for instance, three times a day," she said to herself, and thought of Richard and shuddered. Certainly she was not like other girls, and could not help it, but could be honest.

But the fancy to find a tenant for that dear little six-roomed house stayed with her and colored her movements for the remainder of the day. Just how she was to accomplish it was by no means clear. It was of no use to run over her list of even nominal acquaintances for this; no maid servant of her employ or within her knowledge fitted into the place. She smiled at her folly and clung to it.

Having spent a somewhat restless night at the Circleville Hotel, she was surprised to find in the morning that her interest in the little house was as keen as ever, and her desire to people it was even stronger. She would certainly withdraw it from the local agent's hands, but there seemed to be nothing else that she could do. And then had come that interesting letter and the interesting interview connected with it, and now the remarkable decision. She

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would go to Mount Hermon, wherever that was, and become Mrs. Roberts's "handy young person," who was willing to do whatever was wanted.

"What a lovely name!" she said, lingering over the words. "'Mount Hermon,'—it makes one think of heaven. What if I should find a new atmosphere there? I have heard of summer meetings where people thought at least that they found something new. You need something new, Mary Brown, entirely new. I approve of your decision to go in search of it. I wish I could settle the little house first. Wait! Why would not the other Mary Brown and my friend John Jackson be the ones to people it? He would do, I am sure, and it would help him to get 'forehanded,' but I must know the other Mary first, and there is not time now to make her acquaintance. It will not do to be later than the twelfth. When my summer experience is over I will return here and give myself to setting up the Jackson family, perhaps."

She laughed at the folly of her own

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thoughts, a more gleeful laugh than was common to her. Already the feeling that she was about to become a new Mary Brown, one with whom she had not even a speaking acquaintance, had awakened her interest and energy.

Visions of the trim "second girl" who did her housekeeper's bidding in her city home, and always looked tastefully dressed in her neatly made, carefully laundered print dresses, roused this new Mary Brown's ambition to emulate her and hastened her departure from Circleville that very afternoon. She determined to take a train at once for the nearest city and spend a few hours in replenishing her wardrobe, with Jessie the table waiter for a pattern.

Moreover, a satisfactory letter must be written to her business agent, remembering always that he had been her guardian and was her father's life-long friend, and that therefore explanations not strictly connected with business were his due. It took time and skill to write a satisfactory letter. How much could she tell without

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really telling anything? When the task was accomplished the letter read as follows:

“MY DEAR GUARDIAN:—I had no trouble in finding the place or the cottage. It is in very good condition and needs no present attention of any kind. There is not, however, much opportunity for renting it at present; this is a very quiet little village where the people, I fancy, rarely move. I should like to find some one who would like to live in it as a caretaker, and keep it in its present order in memory of my dear old nurse. I may be able to do something of that sort later.

“Meantime I have met friends who have changed all my summer plans. Instead of coming home at once, as I had arranged, you will be surprised to hear that I am going to California. I am to be with a Mrs. Roberts, whom I do not think you have met. She summers at a charming place called Mount Hermon, in honor, I suppose, of the place of sacred memory bearing that name. It is said to

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be a delightful place for a summer home, the people chiefly living in tents, which, you will remember, is a hitherto ungratified ambition of mine. I shall be able to tell you in the fall whether or not it is as delightful as I have imagined. Kindly forward my mail to the address which I shall enclose, and have the goodness not to mention my whereabouts too particularly to any of my acquaintances who are planning to cross the continent. Being in camp, I shall not be in condition to entertain them, and it might save my hostess some embarrassment if passing acquaintances do not find me too readily. You will understand the situation, I am sure."

"I am sure you won't!" she told herself gleefully as she signed and addressed the letter. "What I mean is, that you will think you do."

She felt jubilant. The entirely new departure she had planned took hold of her imagination and enthusiasm.

"I am actually running away!" she

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said, gaily. Not one of the people whom she dreaded would be likely to find her after that hint to her guardian. He knew very well that there were some from whom she would not even care to receive letters. As for Richard Wade, business called him to London for the summer, and he had wanted her to go with him! She drew a long, relieved breath over the thought that he could not follow her to California; then she looked serious over the letter she must write him. It was hard that she could not keep him for a friend, but she was afraid that she could not. Still, who could tell what this strange new summer might have in store for her? She might find a real friend.

“If I do,” she told herself, “I will bring her back to Nurse Borland’s cottage for October, and we two will drink tea together from Nurse Borland’s blue teacups.”

The journey started out in an auspicious manner. The young woman who had run away made herself ready for it so as to look as commonplace and uncon-

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spicuous as possible. At least she thought so. She had carried out her proposed programme to the letter, leaving Circleville by the late train and stopping at a little Western city two or three hours distant, where she found the shops brilliantly lighted ready to catch the tourist trade.

This shopper had never realized, and did not at that time, how much her careful street toilet, with every garment of the richest yet most appropriate kind, had to do with the deference shown her by discerning salesmen and women. She did not at first understand the almost persistent determination of the bewildered clerks to show her only the richest and finest of their goods. At last she smiled on a bright-looking girl behind the notion counter and took her into semi-confidence.

“ I am trying to fit out a young woman, a friend of mine who is going to work in a boarding-house this summer. It is at an outing camp in Northern California, and she has nothing whatever that is suitable for such a place. She is just about

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my size, and whatever will fit me would do nicely for her; I wonder if you would help me."

Yes, indeed, she would; she would like nothing better. After that, work went on swiftly. The young saleswoman brought her keen, well-trained wits to bear upon the subject, and became a most efficient ally. She fitted from counter to counter and from one department to another in eager desire to have this unknown and fortunate girl secure as complete an outfit as possible.

At first she was anxious.

"Oh, dear, yes," she said. "That dress would be lovely for her for afternoons when she had a chance to dress up; but isn't it too expensive? It is quite fine, you see. And she could get along without it, of course; because that pale blue one is a good afternoon dress, and it doesn't cost half so much as this."

"Oh, I think she will need this, too," said the shopper, flushing over her ignorance. The price of the dress in question seemed to her ridiculously low. "There

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will be a good many people where she is going, and she will need to look neat all the time. It will take a number of dresses. Besides, she may have opportunity to attend some of the lectures." Then, seeing the puzzled, almost troubled look on her helper's face, she had advanced a step in her confidences.

"I am fitting her out myself; she doesn't have to pay any of the bills, and I want her to be neatly and appropriately dressed all the time. I shall be glad to have you make any suggestions that occur to you."

The troubled face had cleared, and the response had been eager. "Oh, all right, ma'am; I shall just love to help fit her out. Isn't she a lucky girl, though?"

"Forward, Miss Brown," a voice had called from the lower counter, and the helper had made prompt answer:

"Miss Brown can't! She's awfully busy."

The shopper regarded her with added interest. Here was another "Miss Brown." "And still another develop-



"OH, I THINK SHE WILL NEED THIS, TOO," SAID THE SHOPPER.
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ment of us, I think," she told herself as she watched the movements of the alert, eager girl.

"If I should ever have that house party I am planning, I should like to have her come. I believe she could be made to fit in wherever she might be wanted. I wonder if her name is Mary."

But no, a girl at that moment caught at her dress with a hurried half-whisper: "Say, Jennie, where's the pattern counter? I can't find it." She was Jennie Brown, then,—Jane. "It might be Mary Jane," the shopper told herself, and laughed. The girl laughed, too, in sympathy. She was having a good time.

Later, while Miss Brown was studying over a suitable travelling wrap, the new Miss Brown gave an undertone account of her unique experience to the girl at the rubber counter.

"I'm having an awfully jolly time! She is fitting out a girl to do summer work in a boarding-house at some swell camp, and the way she is piling on the clothes is a caution! I'd like to have her

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fit me out to get married! There will be an awful bill! but I don't believe she will care; she looks as though she belonged to the kind that is used to them. I just wish I was the girl who was going to get the things, I know that! Do you suppose she is any relation to her, or just some one she is interested in? Say, don't you wish she was interested in us?"

"Where is this camp?" the girl ventured to inquire at last, when she had given wise advice as to shoes and a sun hat and a sun umbrella. On being told, she dimpled with delighted surprise.

"Well, now, isn't that the greatest! I'm going out there myself in September. I'm to have my three weeks' vacation then, and a cousin of mine who is waiting on table up there for her room and board has got me the chance for September, because she is going back to college; my cousin is a college girl. I thought of her when you were talking about fitting out your friend for a summer camp; but land! I never dreamed that it was the same place. Don't things happen queer

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sometimes? Perhaps I shall see your friend out there.”

“Perhaps so,” Miss Brown had said, but she had felt a trifle startled, and had offered no more confidences. The world was smaller than she had realized.

V

FARMER BROWN

ON the morning of her second day of travel there came to occupy the seat beside her a fragile woman with a sweet face that at once awakened interest. She dropped into her place with a little sigh of relief.

“It is a comfort to me to find a seat with a lady,” she explained. “The cars are crowded this morning, and I am so unaccustomed to taking care of myself that I am almost a coward alone. It makes a woman timid to be always cared for, don’t you think?”

Miss Brown smiled on her and admitted that it must be very pleasant to travel with those whose right and pleasure it was to take care of one.

“Yes, indeed!” the lady said. She

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was almost sure to have husband or son along.

“My son,” she added, “has taken care of his mother ever since he could talk; but I am separated from him now for the first time. It is a critical time in a mother’s life when her boy goes to college.”

Miss Brown smiled again, still sympathetically, as she owned she had always supposed that the critical time was for the son. The mother laughed.

“Yes,” she said. “That is true; I feel it for him, of course. We both do, his father more than I, I think. It is harder for fathers to trust their boys than it is for mothers. I wonder if that is because they understand the world better than we women do? I find I have the utmost confidence in my Kendall’s ultimate future, even though the intermediate steps are not all that we could wish. You are right in calling it a critical time in a boy’s life. At home, Kendall never gave us an hour’s uneasiness. I beg your pardon for beginning to talk about him; it is a foolish way we mothers have.

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Still, I do not often mention him to a stranger. I could not help having a fancy as soon as I looked at you that you were a good friend to the boys; truly good, I mean. Don't you think that is about as important work as young women can find to do, to be true friends to boys away from home? "

Mary Brown was strangely moved. When a girl of twenty she had had a boy brother to whom she had been "good." He had gone away from her like all the others of her family, and her voice had trembled as she said:

"I am sure of it. I had a dear brother once, and I know."

"And he is gone? Dear friend, forgive me."

"It is five years since he died," Miss Brown said, amazed at herself for her lack of self-control before this stranger. She knew that her eyes had filled with tears, and some explanation seemed necessary. "I am all alone in the world," she said tremulously, "and I am sometimes very lonely."

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“ Poor child! ” it was the mother-tone, soft and tender. Then a delicately gloved hand was laid on her arm.

“ I'll tell you, dear, it is given to you, perhaps, to help other young brothers. They need the impress of a good woman's friendship upon their lives. All boys need it, and sensitive, highly organized, manly boys, full of life and fun, need it most of all. If I were a young woman I would try hard to help them to an intimate friendship with the Lord Christ. They are lonely, too, these boys away from home, and often homesick; it is what leads them into all kinds of follies mis-named 'fun.' If they had a special friend always with them, one who was superior to folly and whose respect they coveted, think how it would shield them! And Christian girls could help them to realize that the man Jesus would be just such a friend. If our Kendall could only be led to feel that, his father would be at ease about him.”

Then came the conductor and a conversation about tickets and changes and con-

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nections. When he had passed, the lady laid that delicate hand on Miss Brown's arm again.

"My dear, strange things happen in this world of ours; we call them chance, but the older we grow, and the more intimately we know our Father, the more sure we are that nothing ever chances. Do you know I had a feeling, from the first moment of seeing you, that you were to be one of the influences to touch my boy's life? I don't know how, but God does. When you gave the conductor your ticket I saw the name, and you are going to within a few miles of Carmen College, where my boy is! If you meet him I know you will be good to him. His name is Browning, Kendall Browning. This next station is mine. Good-by, dear, God bless you."

In a moment, with a bright little smile and a parting bow, she was gone, leaving Mary Brown with the feeling that she had met and parted from a dear friend; leaving her also with a new and grave sense of responsibility.

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When she stepped, a few hours later, from the platform of the train and looked about her at the station indicated on her ticket, it was with a vivid remembrance that she was now to become a new person in every sense of the word. She was to enter upon an untried life and assume duties that were utterly strange to her. But her interest in the experiment had by no means waned; on the contrary, she courted, rather than shrank from the new experiences. First, she must give herself to the business of finding Mrs. Harriet Roberts.

“Mrs. Roberts,” repeated an elderly man who seemed to be standing about for the purpose of giving information. “Oh, she is up on the hill where the meetings are. You going up on the hill? They mostly do; but it’s pretty all around here.”

The latter part of this sentence was evidently called forth by the look on the young woman’s face as her beauty-loving eyes caught glimpses of wooded hill and

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deep ravine and winding river, and flashed her appreciation of them.

“Is that Mount Hermon?” she asked, indicating a peak that glowed in the sunlight.

“Well, it’s all Mount Hermon, ma’am, all about here. That’s the name the new folks gave it. They’ve got a fine place, and no mistake. Four hundred acres of as pretty country as can be found in the State; and if you are acquainted with the State of California, you know that is saying a good deal. The beauty of this place is the water. Spring water, ma’am, everywhere; four of the finest springs to be found anywhere; and that witch of a Zayante River acts as though it was alive! I never saw the beat of the way it scurries around.”

Miss Brown laughed amusedly.

“You make a very good advertising agent,” she said, pleasantly. “And you certainly seem to have a good subject; it looks very lovely everywhere.”

The man echoed her laugh. “Well, I ain’t employed to advertise it,” he said,

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good-naturedly, "and I don't own a foot of land about here and don't expect to, — though I should like mighty well to buy a lot for my little girl, while they are cheap; it stands to reason that they won't stay so long; but I know a good thing when I see it, and I can't help admiring the folks that have taken hold here, and liking the thing they are trying to do. I live back here a ways on a little farm; I've lived there all my life and I've seen lots of tourists and things about here, admiring the beauty and drinking the water, and all that, but I never see one of them who cared to take any trouble to do things for other folks, till these came along."

"And you think these are really doing it for other folks?"

"Looks like it, ma'am. I've looked on a good deal since this thing begun, and I drive over here to the meetings every chance I can get, and I don't know what other motive they could have for the things they are doing; and whether that's the object or not, they are doing it all

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right. I've got a lot of help from it, already, and so has my wife and my little girl. I've got an extra good little girl; Libby, her name is, Libby Brown. I'm going to bring her over to the meetings all I can. You're waiting for a carriage out to Mrs. Roberts's place, I suppose? It will be along pretty soon, I reckon; they're late this morning. Things are new here, you know, and they ain't as they will be in another year or two. There's the rig now, coming around the curve. It's a mighty nice fellow who is driving it; his name is Brown, too, but he isn't any relation of mine; he is one of Mrs. Roberts's boarders."

The historian paused to gaze meditatively at his audience and mildly wonder what he had said to call forth such an outburst of laughter. In truth, Mary Brown felt almost hysterical over this rapid increase of the Brown family. She tried to check her mirth lest the feelings of the kind old farmer might be hurt; but he was continuing his introductions.

"I dunno as he is exactly a boarder,

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either. I guess he is paying his way doing work. They do that kind of thing a good deal here; students, you know. It's a great place for students; you see it ain't a regular camp-meeting at all, though there are meetings enough, and grand ones, too; but they study a good deal, and have Bible classes, and other kinds of classes, and everything is up to date and scholarly. I heard Doctor Weldon say myself that there were as scholarly a set of men as we have in the country up here at work at Mount Hermon; and he is the president of Carmen College.

“ This Mr. Brown ain't a student, though, he is a carpenter. I thought he came out here to get work, but he stayed right on after he found that he would have to wait awhile; there will be lots of work for carpenters when the meetings close, but they don't allow hammering and sawing and things of that kind much now, for fear of disturbing the meetings. I guess he is going to wait, and get a chance at some of the new houses that

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will go up this fall; he shows good sense, too, for there's a lot of them. So I guess he is part paying his way by working, and going to the meetings between times. He looks like a real forehanded man, too, and I don't quite make him out. But then, a thrifty man might have ways of spending his money that he liked better than paying his board with it, when he could earn it as well as not. I see him working around at Mrs. Roberts's sometimes, when I go there; and I guess she is mighty glad to have him; help is terrible scarce about here. Anyhow, whatever he is, he is a grand good man, and folks like him first-rate.

“Hello, Mr. Brown! you are late this morning. The train has been gone as much as ten minutes.”

The young man thus addressed brought his horses around the curve with skilful hand, and alighted before he made answer.

“Late, am I? I told Jonas that we should be; he was late with the horses.

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Have you seen any passengers waiting for me, Mr. Brown?"

The passenger thought that he surveyed her with a doubtful, not to say disappointed, air.

"Only one?" he said, looking up and down the road. "That is very trying. We were expecting a Miss Brown at our house this morning."

"Miss Brown, eh? Relation of yours, Mr. Brown? Not your wife now!"

"No, my wife didn't come this summer; but I am very sorry that the young woman didn't, she is needed. Hurst," raising his voice and addressing the station agent, "when is the next through train from the South due? The passenger we are looking for comes through from Circleville."

Thus reinforced, the waiting passenger decided to speak. "I am from Circleville, and I am expected at Mrs. Roberts's to-day."

The driver turned and surveyed her in evident bewilderment.

"I beg your pardon. You are ex-

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pected, did you say? Your name is not — ”

“ My name is Mary Brown,” she said with dignity. “ Can you take my trunk? ”

“ I beg your pardon,” said the driver again; but he did not say for what. Instead, he gave business-like attention to the neat trunk containing the new wardrobe, and in an incredibly short space of time they were making excellent speed around the valley road toward the mountain drive. The farmer, left to himself and speechless with surprise, gazed after them in silence until the winding road led them out of sight. Then he found his voice again.

“ I’ll be swamped if she ain’t another Brown! What a lot of us! and how mighty different we all are! ”

The drive was a pleasant one. Miss Brown, after due consideration, decided not to be too dignified. Had she not the old gentleman’s word for it that this was a “ grand good man? ” Besides, wasn’t his name Brown, and wouldn’t he have to be included among the guests when she

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made that house party at Euston Square? She had nearly laughed over the thought of what an acquisition the old farmer would be to the house party; but she remembered in time. A certain amount of dignity was indispensable for Mrs. Roberts's maid. Perhaps she ought not to converse with this man at all, being a maid. She felt that she was not posted as to the rules of etiquette governing the conduct of a housemaid with a carpenter. Still, he ought to know, "and he began it," she assured herself with a little inward laugh.

His manner was entirely respectful and at the same time friendly. He pointed out objects of interest along the way, and told her just what she wanted to know.

"That is the trail to the Sulphur Springs; it is a charming walk on a warm day; winds about in the most romantic fashion possible, and brings up at last in a charming spot for a picnic."

"And the spring, is it really sulphur?"

"Very much so. If you are not absolutely sure of it before tasting, you will

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have no need to question after the first mouthful. Most people are very fond of it, but my tastes do not happen to lie in that direction. Look yonder at the view we get! This is typical California scenery all about here, but the views that spring themselves upon us as we round the curves are what one by no means finds every day."

Miss Brown was gazing at the trees.

"What are those lovely graceful ones sprinkled in among the others?" she asked. "The young lithe one with tender leaves and a look of having been freshly made for us. I know the redwoods, simply from reading of them, but these are new."

"They are the madrones," he said, giving her a look under the cover of her absorption that expressed surprise as well as curiosity. This was not the way in which he had supposed that Mrs. Roberts's maid would express herself.

"They are favorite trees here," he said, "and the management proposes to guard them carefully from vandal hands

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and let them grow in their own wild beauty without too much cultivation. They have a regularly organized Board of Forestry, one object of which, I fancy, is to keep down any rising tendencies toward the artificial. Madame Nature may safely be trusted here, at least, to manage her own affairs."

He was trying to draw her out; but Mary Brown had already remembered the supposed proprieties. The madrones had caught her off guard for a moment, but they should not again, let them wave their graceful branches ever so luringly.

VI

MR. BROWN

MRS. ROBERTS was puzzled, and also troubled. She spread her perplexities before Mr. Brown, who shelled peas for her on the back porch, and listened.

She had but a short time before explained to Miss Helen Lawrence, who was not only a summer but a winter boarder of hers, and therefore entitled to confidences, that it was just five weeks to a day since she first laid eyes on Mr. Brown, and yet he seemed like an old and tried friend.

“I don’t know why it is,” she said, meditatively. “Seems queer. I’m not one that makes friends so very easy. Why, you know that I’ve had men with me right through the year that I would no more think of speaking to, except to

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ask what they would have and how they would like it, and things of that kind, than I would of flying! but Mr. Brown has got a way with him, somehow, that makes you feel different. He is just as respectful as he can be, and yet he is so kind of interested in your work and your ways and everything, and so ready to help you out in a perplexity, that before you know it you have told him all about it. I never saw quite such a man in my life. If I had a boy like him, or if Ailene should ever marry a man anything like him I should be tickled to death."

"Which is the very last thing that Ailene will ever do!" the permanent boarder said, but she had the grace to say it to herself, while aloud she admitted that Mr. Brown was certainly very "nice," and for a mechanic really remarkable.

"I don't know what to make of the girl, and that's the truth!" Mrs. Roberts confided to the sheller of peas. "To tell the downright truth I'm half scared over her, and have been from the first minute

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that I laid eyes on her. You see, she doesn't look nor act as I thought she would, not the least mite in the world. Sometimes, instead of telling her to set the table, I feel as though I ought to ask her whether she likes her roast rare, or well done, and if her room is comfortable. She looks like a lady, and that's the truth! and what I needed was a good, capable working girl."

"Doesn't she do her work well, Mrs. Roberts?" The questioner's face was grave, and his tone had almost a note of anxiety.

"Yes, she does." Mrs. Roberts stayed her busy fingers for a moment, and gazed perplexedly at him while she talked.

"She does it first-rate, everything I give her, every identical thing, no matter how dirty the work may be. She is as neat as a pin, too, and quick-motioned and good-natured. She doesn't find a bit of fault, and she doesn't slam around and look like a thunder-cloud as some of the silent ones do; there isn't a single, solitary thing on which I can lay my finger

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and say: 'That isn't right.' And yet, for all that, I'm puzzled and troubled. There is something queer about her.

"There's some things I can't set her at. I can't tell her to wash down the back stairs and scrub up the kitchen floor any more than I could tell the President's wife! and that's the truth."

The sheller of peas laughed appreciatively.

"I shall have to do such things for you, Mrs. Roberts," he said.

"You!" she gave him a swift admiring glance. Then, after a moment, "I'd about as soon ask you as that girl! She ain't used to working out any more than my Ailene is. Well, for that matter, she said she wasn't; she doesn't make any pretence of knowing how to do some things. But what I mean is, she ain't used to working. Her hands—did you ever notice her hands, Mr. Brown? Why, they are as soft as a baby's, and white and plump! As pretty hands as ever I saw. They have never done any hard work in her mother's kitchen, nor any-

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where else. And yet, she doesn't look like the kind of girl that sits in the parlor and thumps on one of those tin-pan-pianos, while her mother does the work; now does she? "

Mr. Brown seemed to have no reply ready, and after a moment's waiting Mrs. Roberts, with a depressed sigh, closed as she had begun, with: "I don't know what to make of her, and that's the truth."

There was silence on the back porch for several minutes, and the business of pea-shelling went on briskly. Then Mr. Brown came to the rescue.

"Would you like to hear my theory, Mrs. Roberts? I think your new maid may be one of those young women who are becoming more and more common in our country, who have managed to secure a fair amount of education, owing to our public school system and our excellent normal schools and State colleges, and have become teachers in country schools. My namesake may have wanted to travel a little, and see portions of the country

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she has read of and taught others about. This place affords an unusual opportunity, you know, not only for enjoying California climate and scenery, but for hearing good music and fine lectures. For people interested in Bible study its advantages are peculiarly rich. I fancy that your Miss Brown, being a sensible young woman, decided to enjoy the advantages here and pay for them in part with work that she felt sure she could do, saying nothing about her personal affairs."

Mrs. Roberts's hands paused again for a moment while she regarded her helper with admiration and respect.

"You do beat all for straightening things out!" she said. "That sounds real common sense and probable. She isn't any of the common sort; I knew that as soon as I laid eyes on her; and I told Ailene last night that she had proved already that I was right. She has a real good education, I guess; anyhow the books she has brought with her look

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like it; and your explanation of it all just fits.

“ But still, Mr. Brown, education doesn't always work that way. Don't you think it is apt to set people up above doing housework, or associating with those that do it, out of their own houses? There's my Ailene, as smart as a whip; she was the best scholar in high school and had all the honors when she graduated. And she is as good a girl as ever breathed, and kind-hearted, and all that; but still, when I was puzzling what to do with Mary, nights,—I had it all fixed before she came, but as soon as I set eyes on her it seemed kind of too bad, some way, to put her into the same little tent with Irish Mary, and I hinted to Ailene that perhaps she might have a cot in her little tent; you know she has that scrap of a tent next to the big one all to herself. Well, you ought to have heard the child! ‘ Mother!’ she said, ‘ *mother!*’ just like that.” And Mrs. Roberts's voice was the embodiment of astonished expostulation. “ ‘ Our servant girl room

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with me! I don't see how you could bear to say such a thing.' ”

The listener was conscious of a distinct pause in his thoughts, and a general feeling of dismay. This was a phase of the strenuous life he believed the new young woman to be leading, that had not before occurred to him. Miss Brown a roommate of Irish Mary! But when he spoke his voice was the voice of a casual listener.

“ What did you do about it, Mrs. Roberts? ”

“ Oh, there wasn't but one thing I could do; I had to put her in there with Maryann. I gave her a cot to herself, though, and it took a lot of fussing and contriving to do even that. I did it after she got here. But she has been just as nice about the sleeping as she has about everything else. All she asked for was a sheet that she could hang up across the corner and make a little privacy, she said; so I gave her some red curtains that I brought out with me and hadn't needed to use, and she has rigged up the cutest lit-

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tle room behind those curtains! It is a dreadful pity that you can't have a peek at it. She has fastened some pictures to the sides of the tent, and even over the top; and hung up some fancy bags, and pinned up wall-pockets for all sorts of things, and — well, I tell Ailene that it has got an air about it that she couldn't put into her room to save her life. I'm dreadfully sorry for her, though, to think that it's the best I can do. Maryann is real neat, and she's kind, and is tickled to pieces to have the girl there; but still, when I see her starting out to her tent with Maryann, I feel as though I ought to have a parlor bedroom, with lace curtains and things, to offer her. I don't know why I feel that way, either. She doesn't dress a bit nicer than Maryann, in fact she is not so fine when Maryann gets fixed up of an afternoon, but yet there is a dreadful difference between them. I suppose you know what I mean, Mr. Brown, though I can't put it into words. I've often noticed that you didn't seem to need words all the time.

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“What is it makes the difference in people, anyway? There, for instance, is Silas Potter and you. Both of you are builders, and you both understand your business, I suppose. Silas does; there isn't a better workman in town, they say. But you and Si are about as much alike as Miss Brown and our Maryann, and no more! So it isn't the kind of work people do that makes the difference. I don't know what it is, but I can feel it. You know there are a good many things that you can feel, but you can't explain them. Still, I'll own that you never seem to me just like a builder. Not but what it is splendid business; and master builders, as they call them, almost always get rich. I suppose you are a master builder?”

His reply was quick and emphatic.

“Oh, no, no, indeed; I make no claim to be a *master* in anything; I am just a common workman.”

Mrs. Roberts gave him another swift admiring glance.

“That will do for you to say,” with a sage nod of her head, “but all the same

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I shouldn't be afraid to set you at a big house, and when my ship comes in and I build the kind of house that my Ailene wants, I shall send for you."

He thanked her merrily, and assured her that he should try to live up to the high opinion she had of him.

"But about this young woman," he broke off from his laugh to say. "I have been wondering if she is not perhaps one of those opportunities of which you and I were speaking a few mornings ago. May it not be that she has come out here to find her Master, and may he not see that you are the one to help her?"

The face of the middle-aged woman changed suddenly, and expressed a yearning wistfulness. This busy, tired woman, who had so little time for her spiritual needs that, while she ministered daily to the physical wants of her boarders, she felt sometimes that her soul was starving; it was so rare a thing to come in contact with a boarder who seemed to know that she had a soul. In truth, this peculiar young carpenter was the only one she

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could remember through the years who had spoken to her naturally and simply of the inner life. Yet she knew and loved the Lord Christ; and there were times when she yearned after closer fellowship with and definite service for him. She did not remember how this boarder had found it out; he had seemed to take it for granted.

“ You mean that perhaps she isn’t a Christian? I don’t suppose she is. Help isn’t, generally. I don’t know why, I am sure; but I don’t believe I ever had a girl in the kitchen who was. Do you suppose she would like to go to the day meetings some? I calculate to plan to let her go nights if she wants to, and once in awhile of afternoons, when there are extra doings, but mornings—I don’t know—” The shrewd and somewhat hard look of the professional boarding-house keeper flashed into the expressive face and she spoke quickly.

“ You see, Mr. Brown, it ain’t play-time with me, summers, as it is with the rest of you, not by a long sight! For that matter, I’ve never found out yet when my

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playtime came. I've not only got to earn enough to support three of us and educate Ailene, but there is the interest on my everlasting mortgage to keep up. I couldn't help thinking of it yesterday, when Doctor Brandon was talking so beautifully about the 'things that remain,' I said to myself: 'I guess I've got one thing that will stick to me to the end of time, *my* time, anyhow, and that's my mortgage.' "

Her listener laughed appreciatively, and asked one or two questions about the town house and the mortgage, then drew her back to the subject in hand.

"Of course, Mrs. Roberts, your work must be done; I fully realize that; you may not be able to spare the young woman often, perhaps not at all, in the morning; I am only thinking that if you could, at any time, bring her with you to that morning meeting, it might appear that the Master had planned through such a service to bring a joy into your life that would remain after time is done with."

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The hard look passed, and the wistful one returned and deepened.

“That’s true, Mr. Brown. You have a way of making a body remember that there’s something besides planning breakfasts and dinners and suppers year in and year out. I’ll try for it. There isn’t much that I can plan even to try to do, but I’ll plan for this, see if I don’t. I can’t *bring* her to the morning meetings, because we couldn’t both get away once in an age, but I could spare her to go for an hour ’most every morning, if I tried; because breakfast would be well over, and the rush for dinner wouldn’t be commenced, and so, if she could be got to go, why, there’s the chance. I’ll do it.”

Mrs. Roberts had not only tried to plan, but had planned. But the wistful look deepened and the tone melted into tender anxiety.

“Mr. Brown, I was thinking if we could, if anybody could manage to coax my Ailene to go to some of those meetings — ”

“Yes,” said Mr. Brown, heartily. “I

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understand; we must try for that, Mrs. Roberts, and keep trying.”

But as he dropped the last popped pod into its basket and went his way, he gave a sympathetic sigh over the mother's plea.

The butterflies, at that moment flitting gaily among the vines, seemed to him almost as likely to elect to attend those morning meetings for Bible study and prayer as was the pretty eighteen-year-old daughter of his hostess, whose bright head was crowded with aims and hopes that were utterly foreign to such environment. He had said that they must try, and keep trying, and it had been no idle word. This man was no idler in his Master's vineyard; he felt that he had made the mother a pledge, he would be sure to keep it; and though no way opened to his mind toward accomplishment, it might be that the Master had ways that would be made clear to him.

Of one thing he was sure; Mrs. Roberts would try to help Mary Brown.

VII

MARY BROWN AS A PROBLEM

MEANTIME Mary Brown was having what, in its earlier stages, she had named the frolic of her life. Even her small tent-room shared with Irish Mary had not seriously troubled her. It was to be for such a very little while, she told herself, and thought of the suite of rooms waiting for her at Euston Square. After a day or two she became wonderfully interested in that tent-room. The red curtains sacrificed by Mrs. Roberts served for purposes of decoration, as well as walls, and the possibilities of a few empty cracker boxes, a roll of fancy paper, and some bright cord were revelations, and fascinated the city-bred girl accustomed to having all the modern conveniences at hand without giving them a thought. She

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became skilful in contriving ways and means by which she could live comfortably in her contracted quarters. She even found herself lying awake at night planning some new form of towel-rack or clothes closet, and gave all her leisure to the business of getting settled, with such success as to astonish and delight not only her room-mate, Maryann, but Mrs. Roberts as well.

The room-mate herself proved not to be such an impossibility as she had at first seemed. To be sure, she was hardly a room-mate, with those ample red curtains dividing them, but of course she was always within hearing, and one had a sense of never being utterly alone. Still, she was cleanly and good-natured and, what was better, genuinely good-hearted. She was even disposed to be respectful toward this "regular hired help," as Miss Brown overheard her explaining to the errand boy that the newcomer was. From the first she had recognized a certain something in the new help which made her say instinctively "Miss Mary"

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as readily as she said "Miss Ailene." So even Irish Mary became a subject for study, and steadily increasing interest.

As for the life about her, outside her tent, each day's experience was fraught with new surprises and interests. The company of pretty girls, gathered to serve, was as unique, she told herself, as were everything and everybody connected with this new world. Were they an entirely different class of beings from any that she had before known, or was it simply the point of view?

She had not for a long time held intimate relations with college girls. She had been graduated five years before, and since that time had only hovered around the outside edges of college life, being pointed out to the freshmen as "Everett Thornton Brown's daughter." "She lives on Euston Square, you know, where the swellest people in town are," was the bit of slang used to describe and dismiss her from their world.

Oh, she was called upon for "advice," for suggestions, for subscriptions. She

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was constantly being referred to as one of the "patrons" of this and that function, and she was used to being deferred to as one whose lightest hints were freighted with power; but she understood only too well that this was because she was the sole representative now of her father's wealth; and the inner circle of college life, when the girls sat on the sides of their beds and couches, and curled in the window-seats, and dropped in carelessly graceful heaps of bloom and color about the floor, and chatted and laughed, and threw couch pillows at one another on occasion for emphasis, and sometimes, as the shadows deepened, grew tender and confidential,—from all such circles she had been long shut out.

At first the situation in Mrs. Roberts's dining-room puzzled the newcomer. They were a bright, merry, winsome set, those college or high school girls who were serving as table waiters; her heart went out to them at once, but their attitude toward her she distinctly recognized as peculiar.

She was older than they, yet not so

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much older that it defined a marked difference between them, but she felt, rather than saw, that they realized a difference. Not that one of them was rude to her, — they were very far from that, — they distinctly welcomed her. When they gathered at the rustic bridge, or under one of the great trees, or on the beautifully shaded dining-room porch for a few minutes' chat before their table duties began, if she chanced to appear, they carefully made a place for her, not only in the circle but the conversation. Setting aside college, or at least school themes which in one form or other were often on their tongues, they made haste to introduce some topic in which human beings in general might be supposed to take interest.

This was certainly kind, but it was very unlike any attention that she had ever before received. Veiled under all the kindness, which was steady and uniform, there was a touch, or just a hint, rather, of condescension, of patronage, and Thornton Everett Brown's daughter had never in her life before been patronized.

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It was not that they meant to patronize, or realized that they were doing so, it was rather that they distinctly made the effort to place her, instead of taking her, as they did the others, as a matter of course.

When the explanation of all this dawned upon Mary Brown, she was alone on her couch at night, and she caught her breath with a little exclamatory sound, and then laughed so hard that she shook the couch; and Maryann on the other side of the red curtains laughed softly in sympathy, and wondered what the fun was. She would not for the world have laughed aloud, because of a certain delicacy of heart that Irish Mary possessed, which kept her from intruding on the other woman's privacy even by laughter.

“They are being good to me!” said Mary Brown to her astonished self. “Those *dear* girls! they are trying to make me feel at home among them; they will not talk about the social functions of college life, or even about class work and study, lest I feel left out! And by

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the same token they cease talking about the parties they have attended, or the great singers and speakers they have heard or hope to hear, whenever I appear in sight! I understand them now, the darlings! That explains the whole matter, and it is too good! Did we girls at Wells ever think of such things, I wonder? such delicate and delicious bits of unselfishness, ever in our lives? Would we have done it if we had? To the utmost of their ability, or, rather, what they suppose to be my ability, they have taken me in! They are darlings, every one of them! Oh, Mary Brown, are you sure that you deserve such friendship as this? How many people that environment seemed to have arranged should be your inferiors have you gone out of your way to make feel at home and happy?

“What an extraordinary world it is! What really makes society distinctions, after all? Not money, certainly. It is hardly presumable that girls who give faithful and really hard service for certain hours each day of their vacation, in

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return for board and lodging, have much money to spare. Moreover, their pretty things, though really pretty and in excellent taste, are very inexpensive and show marks of home talent. Oh, no, it isn't money. Let us be thankful for so much; that would really be too humiliating! And yet, after all, in a dim, not understood way, isn't money at the root of it, I wonder? These schoolgirls on vacation, helping for a few weeks to meet expenses by the labor of their hands, and I, supposedly, a girl who has to earn her living all the time in these ways. I give more hours than they, and have wages counted out to me in hard silver dollars such as they use in this country, with perhaps a gleam of gold, if I stay long enough,— I wonder how it will feel in my hand, the first money I ever earned! But the fact that I receive it, and expect to do so, and am supposed to continue doing so, settles my society status, apparently. What a remarkable distinction! Is it presumably caused because it is not conceivable by the average person that hired help can

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be other than uncultured and ignorant? I wonder how it is with carpenters; do they also belong to the masses?" And she thought of Mr. Brown; but this time she did not laugh. The strange unfairness of social distinctions was just beginning to dawn upon her. True, she had read and studied them before, but it chanced that they had never in any way touched her so that she stopped to apply them to individual cases. In this democratic country, where work was universally recognized as a blessing, why should foolish distinctions be made between work and *work*? Some employments must of necessity be more interesting and more important than others. A teacher, for instance, ought perhaps to be more carefully selected than a cook; though one must eat in order to teach, and it was becoming increasingly understood that what both teacher and pupil ate was very important; still, making all the concessions necessary to the relative importance of the two occupations, why should that have anything whatever to do with one's

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social position? Were not present distinctions false and degrading?

“Perhaps it is a question of brains versus hands,” she told herself, and laughed. “But that will not do, either; for since I came here to make use of my hands I am sure that I have exercised the gray matter of my brain more continuously than I have for years!”

Although in her thought she was being half-whimsical, there was a complacent side to it; she knew that she had conquered.

When she had first undertaken the setting of those innocent little tables scattered over Mrs. Roberts’s large dining-room, it had seemed to her that, so far as learning the art was concerned, it would be mere child’s play; any one could set a table. But she soon learned that the marshalling into place of knives and forks and spoons and salts and salads and salad plates and bread-and-butter plates and soup plates and dessert plates and all the other kinds of plates, and the whole bewildering array that went to make

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the sum total of a single well-appointed dinner-table, required not only deft fingers but well-disciplined brains, trained not only to rapid thinking in consecutive lines, but in multitudinous cross-lines.

After the second day's effort she was almost in despair. Try as she would to make a single table perfect, there were either table mats or salad forks or individual butters or some other equally important trifles that were missing.

But following swiftly on the heels of despair came a firm resolve to conquer; and bringing the same resolute will to bear upon it that had carried the college girl triumphantly through difficult problems in Euclid, of course she succeeded. The day came when those confusing little tables were solved problems to her. She could not only set her own number swiftly and faultlessly, but she could detect with one swift glance the defects in those next to hers and offer a friendly hint to the hurried and puzzled fellow worker. Mrs. Roberts looked on well pleased, but even more puzzled than she had been at first.

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This new girl, without other experience in housework than her mother's kitchen had afforded, was becoming practically her head waiter, the one of all others to be depended upon; and the college girls had discovered it and asked her advice and deferred to her judgment. Indeed Mrs. Roberts discovered in herself, with her forty years of experience, a tendency toward finding out what Mary thought of a new plan before adopting it.

She confided her perplexities to her one confidential boarder, Mr. Brown, while he hulled berries for her on the side porch.

“That new girl of mine does beat all! I'm more and more puzzled to make her out every day of my life, and that's the truth.

“She's got more conveniences and contrivances behind those red curtains of mine than I could think of in a lifetime. If I can only hang on to her for next winter I'll get her to fix up some of my rooms in town. I 'most believe I should like to have her kind of go in with me and take hold and look after things generally. I

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believe I could pay off that everlasting mortgage, if she would. I mean to make her a real good offer in the fall, if she holds out, and I know she will."

Mr. Brown dropped his berries into the dish with a thoughtful air. "Have you said anything to her about her winter plans?" he asked, at last.

"No, I haven't; and to tell the truth I'm kind of scared to begin it. I feel in my bones, somehow, that she will say she can't stay; and yet I don't know why. I could do better by her than teaching, I believe. You see she works with her brains, and so I could afford to pay her more than I could any other help. And she likely has to pay her board. She told me her father and mother were dead and she was alone in the world; and so I should think she would rather go in with me than not. She seems to like me real well, and Ailene is growing fond of her in spite of herself. She didn't mean to have anything to do with her because she was a servant; but I guess she can't help it, there can't any of us. So I believe I

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will try it as soon as I can get my courage up. But there! if she was to tell me that she had made up her mind to go over to London and spend the winter with her friend the queen, I don't know as I would be astonished. She's got such an air about her, somehow, that—I can't describe it, and I can't account for it."

Mr. Brown had no answer ready. He perfectly understood the good woman, and had puzzled over the very problems which were bewildering her.

VIII

MISS BROWN'S BEWILDERMENTS

ON the second morning after the plans for the morning meeting had been made, Mr. Brown, who was watching for late comers, to provide them with seats and hymn-books, handed an open book to Mary Brown and indicated a vacant chair. When his duties were over he took the chair next to hers.

She sat beside him during the hour, dignified and decorous. She found the hymns announced and followed the words with her eyes, and bowed her head at prayer time, and apparently listened intently to the Bible lesson. Neither by word nor glance did she betray the fact that she was in a new world.

To people not familiar with society life in great cities it might seem almost incredible that this young woman of twenty-

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six, belonging to a nominally Christian family, had never in her life before attended a social prayer-meeting that was conducted somewhat after the manner of a family gathering. The truth was that Mary Brown had rarely been to a religious meeting of any kind on a week day. The Lenten services had never appealed to her when the gay and worldly family were together, and since she had been alone no force of early habit had drawn her there.

Once a day on pleasant Sabbaths, when nothing occurred to prevent, it had been her custom to attend the church service; and certain solemn words and phrases were as familiar to her as the roll of the great organ, and meant about the same thing.

As she sat outwardly quiet in that strange Mount Hermon meeting, she recollected that the words: "Have mercy on us miserable sinners," had been often on her lips, but it had never occurred to her that she was praying. The people about her seemed to be having an interview

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with God! As for the singing, she had never given heed to the words that the vested choir poured forth in a volume of exquisite harmony. They said words, of course, but they might have been in an unknown tongue for all that she had heard or tried to hear of them. But the hymn that these people were singing as she entered the room sounded almost irreverent in its directness and plain-spokenness. Was it quite right, she wondered, to be so familiar with the Deity? She turned to the page and read again the refrain that had first met her ears:

“Saved and kept, O the glorious word!
Saved and kept by a wonderful Lord!
He who was dead, and is risen from the grave,
Lives, and is able to keep and to save.”

These people rang out the words exultantly; it was not possible to believe that they did not feel what they were singing, and yet — what extraordinary claims they made!

“Saved and kept by the power divine,
Saved to the uttermost, Jesus is mine!
He is redemption and righteousness too,
Trusting in him all my life is made new.”

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She stole curious glances now and again at the people about her; they had sung as though they were sure of its truth. "Life made new," Mary Brown in the loneliness of her room had used those very words. "I need to have my life made all over new!" she had said aloud to herself in dreariness. "This life I am living is worn threadbare." Yet she had not for a moment thought that such making over could ever be.

"It was good to be there, was it not?"

It was Mr. Brown who said these words, simply, as though they expressed a commonplace with which she would of course agree. They were going from the meeting; he had glanced back to see who was coming, and had waited for her. She regarded him curiously and made an unexpected reply:

"I don't know. Was it?"

"To me, yes," he said, smiling. "I hoped it was to every one present."

She had not meant to talk, but a desire to understand became imperative.

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“What was there about it that was good?” she asked, almost brusquely.

“Everything; the Lord was there.”

She made an impatient movement. “I don't know what you mean,” she said.

“Isn't he everywhere?”

“Ah, but I mean in the sense of fellowship, of course, and communion. ‘Where two or three are gathered,’ is the promise, you know.”

She did not know; Bible promises, even such a frequently quoted one as this, were not familiar to her. But she made no reply. She had already told this man that she did not know what he meant; if he chose to insist that she did, there was nothing more to be said. She turned at the intersecting street, and made her way to the little department store, intent on Mrs. Roberts's errands. But as she hurried over the trail, for once her eyes were blind to the beauties of fern and lichen and dainty wild flowers spread with lavish hand. She was making the trying discovery that by taking a leap from her known world, she had by no means left

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behind her dissatisfaction and unrest. Never had she been more thoroughly dissatisfied with herself than at this moment. The morning meeting which she had attended solely to please Mrs. Roberts, who wanted to be kind to her, had emphasized the thought which had been growing on her for several days that these people among whom she had come spoke and prayed a language that she did not understand. They referred in an entirely matter-of-course way to experiences that she had not supposed sane people in these days believed in as possible. They seemed also to have a motive for living and a companionship in living that was not only altogether unknown to her, but seemed to her almost like sacrilege! yet it gave them glad, quiet faces and they were living strong, glad lives. Mary Thornton Brown of Euston Square knew no such living and was jealous over it. Take that morning meeting, of which Mr. Brown thought so highly, as an example. She felt almost impatient over the praying; it had given her a feeling more akin to homesickness

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than any she had felt since she left the great Eastern city. Not homesick for Euston Square and the conventional life she lived there, oh, no, indeed! but that deep and desolate unrest which had haunted her ever since graves had closed over all that meant home to her, had seemed to be accentuated by the atmosphere of prayer she had breathed that morning. She would not go again, she told herself impatiently, not if Mrs. Roberts went down on her knees to her; she could not afford to have this experiment of hers spoiled by the strange talk of a company of visionary enthusiasts. She would send Mrs. Roberts in her place, perhaps she was one of them and could understand their flights. She laughed at her own folly as she made this decision. Mrs. Roberts visionary! the most practical and matter-of-fact business woman with whom she had ever come in contact. Still, it was Mrs. Roberts who had assured her that those morning meetings gave her a "lift, somehow," for all day.

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Very well, then, she should get her "lift," Mary Brown had no use for it.

Yet the next morning she was in her seat near the door, open hymn-book in hand. Mrs. Roberts had been so earnest in her appeal that the young woman could not get the consent of herself to disappoint her.

But she was sorry that she came. It was even worse than it had been the day before. The hymn they were singing offended her; the refrain seemed impertinent.

"No one can help you but Jesus,
For no one but Jesus knows how;
He sees all the past, and the future,
And just what the trouble is now."

"Mere doggerel!" she told herself angrily; both words and tune calculated to put poetry and harmony to the blush. It was incredible that such stuff could move people! Then what was moving her? For as the refrain was repeated softly, tenderly:

"He sees all the past, and the future,
And just what is troubling you now,"

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there came such a sense of desolation, of longing as almost overwhelmed her. Oh, to be for a single hour with One who knew "all the past and the future," and could tell her how to order her life! Did they have such fellowship, these people? Why should they? It was absurd to suppose it; had she not been with religious people all her life? yet she had never heard anything like this. It must be the familiarity of ignorance. But that was folly. Men and women about her by the score were of the class that to think of as ignorant or uncultured was not only an impertinence but arrant nonsense. And the leaders among them were men upon whom the stamp of scholarship was unmistakable.

She went home in a turmoil and told herself that Mrs. Roberts need do no more sacrificing for her. To this resolution she held stoutly for a week, and then was touched by the unmistakable earnestness of the plea that she would go just once more and see how it would hearten her up.

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“ Did you ever hear Mr. Brown pray? ” the good woman said, beaming on her unwilling maid as she slowly removed the great work-apron that had completely covered her neat dress. “ If you haven’t you’ve missed a good deal. I just hope he will pray this morning. There is something kind of strange about that man’s prayers. I don’t know as I can describe them; it isn’t the words, exactly,— it isn’t anything that can be described, but— well, you just wait till you hear him and you will understand.”

And Mr. Brown prayed, but Mrs. Roberts’s maid had not understood and had felt more bewildered than before.

“ You spoke just as though you were a son having an interview with his father! ”

This was the sentence which greeted his ears as he joined her at the door. There was disapproval in her tones, and Mr. Brown, taken by surprise, did not at first understand.

“ When? ” he asked.

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“ Just now, a moment ago, when you spoke.”

“ Oh, when I prayed, do you mean? Well, wasn't that precisely the situation? ”

“ No,” she could not help speaking almost irritably. “ That is sentiment, of course, or poetry; I don't know what you name it. I like real things.”

“ I beg your pardon, my friend. I have no thought of being poetical. There is nothing more real in life to me than personal communion with my Father in heaven. If I could not be certain of this, prayer, to me, would degenerate into mere form, and phrases in common use would be only solemn mockery.”

“ That is what they seem to me to be much of the time.”

“ But that is because you do not know your Father in the way that it is your privilege to know him. At least — am I wrong in inferring that you are not a Christian? ”

“ I am a church-member, if that is what you mean.”

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“It is not, precisely. It is true the terms ought to be synonymous, but I fear they are not. I have known church-members who seemed to have no more idea of what communion with God as a Father, or companionship with Jesus Christ as a present Saviour, meant, than if they had never heard the terms; but a religion of that kind would not satisfy me.”

Nor had it ever satisfied Mary Brown. She discovered that she had a feeling of almost resentment toward those who seemed to have found something satisfying which she had not. She told herself that she was glad of an interruption, as some one came up just then to claim Mr. Brown for a business matter. She wished she had not said what she did. It would give him an excuse to talk some more of his bewildering fanaticism. That is just what these people were, fanatics. But, oh, was not fanaticism worth while if it satisfied?

All her life, or at least all her grown-up life, Mary Brown knew that she had been dissatisfied with life as it shaped itself

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for her. Its frivolities and parades and insincerities had repelled her from the first. Although her mother had been a fashionable woman, she had also been home-loving, and mother and daughter together had escaped from the fashionable whirl as often as they could, and hid themselves in the family circle. When that circle was broken suddenly, ruthlessly, and one after another of its members were snatched away with appalling swiftness, leaving her, presently, alone, the desolation that at first seemed to engulf her like a flood had been fearful.

When at last she struggled back to something like a shore, and took up life again, naturally it had a greater distaste for her than ever before, and the aversion grew with her years. She knew that one strong, pushing motive in suddenly planning this strange holiday had been the hope that in simpler surroundings, among quiet people who lived for something besides society, she might find relief.

But she resented the air of mystery about her. These people, the plainest as

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well as the most cultivated, seemed to breathe an atmosphere which she did not understand and could not assimilate. Even Mrs. Roberts, that hard-worked woman, who had evidently spent her life in a daily struggle with ways and means, and who had a spectre of pecuniary failure ever at her elbow, had nevertheless hours when she closed her eyes to the spectre, laid aside her perplexities, forgot her annoyances and breathed in peace of soul and strength for future effort from these very meetings which so bewildered her maid servant.

Still, she need not have said: "even Mrs. Roberts." The truth was that that good woman was one of her daily puzzles. She had never before come in contact with a character like hers. A woman shrewd by nature and by education; quick to see a bargain and eager to take advantage of any turn in market values. Her keen brain penetrated through disguises and shams of every kind, and her vigilant eyes and ready tongue were the terror of all crooked tradesmen, whether they dealt

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in large ripe berries on top and half-grown ones underneath, or tried to sell her fresh vegetables three or four days old. She was herself scrupulously honest and just, and she required honesty and justice from those with whom she dealt. But she was much more than that. She had daily petty frets and annoyances. What with delays and broken promises and careless workers and troublesome boarders, and the inevitable breakages and spillings and forgettings that belong especially to a country boarding-house, where many of the ordinary conveniences have to be represented by clumsy substitutes or done without altogether, she had enough on any single day, in the language of Irish Mary, to "provoke the tongue of the blisssed Virgin herself."

Yet this woman, with whose quick brain and ready tongue went naturally a quick temper and sharp, stabbing words, controlled herself even under strong provocation and spoke not only without sharpness but with actual pity for the culprits; and made constant patient effort to order

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her house so that life would be pleasanter for them.

Clearly there was no ordinary solution to the mystery which surrounded her.

IX

MISS BROWN AT A SOCIAL FUNCTION

LIDA BROWNSON was standing on the porch steps of the dining-hall, waiting for Mary Brown to appear from her tent.

Lida was a leading spirit among the dining-room girls, and one who had made very cordial advances toward the outsider.

She ran down the steps to meet her, calling out merrily:

“Are you all prinked, ready for the fray?” Then, as she gave a swift glance at the trim figure in a fresh white apron and with hair and hands in exquisite order, she added:

“You look as though you might be going to a party, instead. How do you contrive to make a white apron so effective? Yours isn’t a bit more furbelowed

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than mine, but the air it takes on is something to envy. I've been waiting for you," she added, linking her arm in Mary's and sauntering with her down the long piazza with an air of comradeship.

"We are going to have a meeting all our own this afternoon, we girls, right here on the porch. Won't that be unique? And we want you to come. We are planning for a lovely time."

"What kind of a meeting?" Mary Brown asked in an interested tone, trying not to show that she was also amused. Nothing connected with her very unique experiences interested this young woman more than the hearty way in which these girls worked at making her one with themselves. They were being continually handicapped, she knew, because of her supposed ignorance of all things connected with their world, yet they struggled bravely.

"Oh, just a talking meeting; very informal, of course, being here on the porch it would have to be informal. After it is over we are going to serve refresh-

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ments. Won't that be an original conclusion to a religious meeting? "

" Oh, is it a religious meeting? "

" Well, I suppose it might be called so. At least I hope we shall not be irreligious! " with a winsome little laugh. " You know we girls don't get a chance to attend the eleven o'clock meetings, nor the earlier ones very often, and we thought we would like one of our very own. Some of the older ladies are coming to help us. Mrs. Rhyse, for one. Have you met her? She is charming; just home from Japan and other interesting places where she went to visit mission fields; she is a delightful talker; knows all about those far-away places, and a good many other matters. I am sure you will enjoy her. Then there are to be several others, and our own Faye Willis, of course, who is always a host in herself. Don't you think she is lovely? You will come, won't you? "

Mary Brown's first impulse was to plead letters to write; she was disposed to shrink from any more religious meet-

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ings; but the evident anxiety in Lida Brownson's eyes made her hesitate. After all, why should she stay in her tent to write a letter to Richard Wade, a trying letter, which would exhaust all her nervous energy, instead of meeting half-way this interesting girl's evident effort to do her good? She gave the coveted promise, and laughed over it in her tent that afternoon, while she exchanged her plain collar for a more dressy one, and made one or two little additions to her toilet.

"This is only a semi-religious meeting," she told herself, "sandwiched with refreshments! I ought to go to discover how they manage things of this sort."

The scene was new and strange to her. The bright-faced young women in pretty summer attire fluttering about on the long leaf-shaded porch with the ever-present sunshine filtering in among the branches. It was a very cheerful—she had almost said merry—company, with nothing about them in voice or speech to suggest what Mary Brown had been in

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the habit of calling reverence; yet they certainly did not suggest irreverence; they were simply glad, with a gladness that ever and anon bubbled over into laughter.

“Is this a good time, or a religious meeting?” queried one of the younger girls, just after having indulged in an appreciative giggle over some bright retort. Lida Brownson answered her quickly: “It is a good time *and* a religious meeting, my dear; I object to the ‘or’ in your question. Don’t disconnect good times and religion, please; neither is worth much if they are of such a nature that they can’t be put together.”

Over this remark Mary Brown pondered; it, also, was new to her.

Yet it undoubtedly was a religious meeting, though not of the stereotyped kind; the young people talked as informally and with as little embarrassment as though it were simply a social function. But the topics which they introduced were as surprising to her as all the rest.

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“ Mrs. Rhyse,” said one, turning to the missionary traveller, “ Alice Upton accuses you of saying that Japanese Christians are more satisfactory than those at home. Did you say so? And if you did, tell us why, please. Isn’t it a reflection upon our great and glorious country? ”

“ Perhaps it is, dear,” said the genial and much-travelled lady, “ but the truth has to be spoken sometimes, you know, even though it jars. As to the ‘ Why,’ I think one reason is because they have a way of taking things for granted that we puzzle over. They believe, you see, just what the Bible says, and act accordingly.”

“ Oh, Mrs. Rhyse! Don’t we? ”

“ Not always, I am afraid. We fuss a great deal over matters that with them are foregone conclusions, because, as they read the Bible, it has left no room for discussion.”

“ Perhaps,” said one of the girl with a sigh, “ it is because we have so many unsettling things to think about that do not disturb them. I don’t suppose, for

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instance, that the amusement question is forever popping up there to be considered, as it is with us. I'm sure I think it is the most perplexing of all our questions."

This remark caused Mary Brown's mental vision to be more distinctly on the alert. What had the amusement question—if it had a question—to do with religion? What did the next speaker mean?

She was a tall fair girl with soft full eyes that had possibilities of trouble hidden behind their depths.

"Why need we keep questioning?" she asked. "Why can't we just float along with the current and let things go?"

Lida Brownson was sitting beside her, and at this word she laid a cool, firm hand over the girl's as she said gently:

"You know, Allie dear, what the boats do when they float with the current; they keep going down-stream all the while. Would you like that, in your Christian life?"

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The girl sitting opposite answered for her, speaking with energy:

“ I don't, I know; but it exactly expresses my experience. I am floating down-stream. Mrs. Rhyse, what is the matter when one is distinctly conscious of losing ground and doesn't want to do it? ”

“ A general diagnosis hardly answers for this disease, my dear; individual cases have to be studied. Suppose we see how many present can give us hints, either from experience or observation? Who will give the first word? ”

It was Lida Brownson again.

“ I think we float down-stream rather fast when we keep doing something that we more than half believe is doubtful, but we don't want to take time to settle it once for all.”

“ So do I,” said another with emphasis. “ I have done just that thing, and I know.”

“ Well, but, — there are so many sides to a subject to be considered.” It was the tall fair girl again. “ There, for in-

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stance, is one's influence over others. Suppose one had a brother, or a friend," — the flush on her cheek deepened as she hesitatingly spoke the word, — "who was fond of the theatre, and wanted you to go with him to perfectly unobjectionable plays, and felt that you were narrow and selfish and all that, if you wouldn't go, and you knew that you were likely to lose what influence you had by refusing him. Isn't that a difficult side to consider?"

Mrs. Rhyse smiled. "At least it is a side that is always being considered," she said. "I am wondering how many there are here who have already been called upon to give it more or less thought and experiment."

To Mary Brown's surprise more than a score of hands answered her.

"May I ask two more questions?" she said. "First, who has a word of encouragement for us in a story of one who seemed to have been helped by the sort of compromise which Miss Alice's question suggests?"

Not a hand responded; instead, there

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were grave shakings of one or two heads, and several of the girls exchanged meaning smiles.

“ This is significant,” said Mrs. Rhyse. “ Think what it tells us. Here are at least twenty-five young women who report that they have given thought to this matter, and it is fair to infer that they have experimented more or less, yet no one has a triumph to record, nor, apparently, an encouraging word. Now for the other question: How many of you have conversed with young men and young women who were not Christians themselves, but who were very sure that Christians who indulge in the popular amusements of the day are inconsistent with their religious professions? ”

“ Oh! ” said Faye Willis, “ shall we put up both hands to stand for a multitude of experiences? It is simply startling to find out how sure they all are of that, — when one gets down to real opinions, — even those who at first try to make you change your base and not allow yourself to be ‘ narrow.’ ” As she spoke,

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she lifted both hands, and a number of others, half laughing, followed her lead.

“It is a very unanimous vote,” said Faye, looking down the line. “I wonder if it answers your question, Allie?”

“At least I cannot bring any testimony against the verdict,” the girl said, trying to smile, but she looked troubled, and her admission seemed to be made reluctantly.

And then, to Mary Brown's disappointment, the talk flowed into other channels. She had been more than interested; her astonishment was great. These girls with their extraordinary experiences were bewildering. Why should they not attend the theatre as often as they chose? Of course there were plays that no self-respecting woman wanted to hear or see, — and being an honest young woman, she frankly admitted to herself that there were many such, — she even, on thinking further, added that among most of the favorites there were portions that might well be omitted, but such wholesale condemnation as these people were giving was ridiculous.

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When she again gave attention to the circle, the topic was the social dance. But here Miss Brown was in sympathy with the most advanced "narrowness." She had not lived in the fashionable world for a dozen years or more, without discovering the offensive side of this popular amusement, and without having to do with young girls, the bloom of whose maidenhood had been sullied by its influence. "If this can be said of girls," she had asked herself early in her experience, "what must one familiar with fashionable society admit with regard to men?" It is true that she had never thought of this subject in connection with religion, and she told herself now that she did not understand what that word had to do with it; there was certainly enough to be said on the score of refinement and morality.

"But the square dances are only promenades," one girl was saying, defensively, when she began again to give heed.

"But the waltzes are something more," added Lida Brownson, quickly.

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“ Oh, I don't waltz,” said the girl, “ and I think a certain kind of dancing tolerated in our set is simply disgusting, but still, to condemn them all — ”

“ We were speaking of our influence, my dear,” said Mrs. Rhyse, gently. “ If you confine yourself to the unexceptionable dances, and to the perfectly unexceptionable persons for your associates, where will your influence be quoted when the subject is up for discussion in other circles than yours? Is the line between the kinds so distinctly drawn and so well understood that even the young and thoughtless will make no mistake as to your position? ”

“ Oh, dear! ” said the girl in a serio-comic tone. “ I know what you think, and I almost know that I am wrong; but isn't it a dreadful bore to have to be always thinking about those silly weak-minded other people, who cannot stand on their own principles, but are always toppling over, to be propped up by mine? ”

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She was only half in earnest, but the reply was tender and grave.

“ Shall the weak brother perish for whom Christ died? ”

The question had an instant, and to the one who realized herself as an outsider, an amazing effect.

“ No,” said the girl who had been only half serious, with an earnestness that carried conviction with it. “ Not if any word or act or influence of mine can help prevent it.” Her voice broke with the last word. And some of the girls were brushing away tears.

Faye Willis spoke impulsively:

“ Oh, girls! if we could only remember that. When I think of Jesus Christ, of who he is, and what he sacrificed, and how he lived, and how he *died* for the sake of others, my own life seems so small and selfish and mean that I hate myself! What we need, after all, is the constant companionship of Christ; it would settle these, and all other questions, to be so near to him all the while that we should not have to stop and re-

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call the fact that he is here, because we dwelt in the same atmosphere. I am just beginning to get a hint, a faint glimpse, of the meaning of that verse: 'He that *dwelleth* in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.' Don't we content ourselves with visiting the Lord Jesus at stated intervals, instead of dwelling with him? I do so want to *abide*."

And Lida Brownson said quickly:

"I know what you mean. I was wondering last night if I could not almost claim the 'blessed' of those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. I think I never wanted abiding fellowship with the Master so much as I have since I came on these grounds."

Then a girl who had not heretofore spoken said simply:

"I want to pray," and bowed her head on her hand.

The words she spoke were simplicity itself, as were the words of others who followed in quick succession. Yet one, listening, who understood the analysis of

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prayer, would have been sure that the Lord was once more verifying his promise that where two or three were gathered because of him, he would be in their midst.

X

MISS BROWN A BIBLE STUDENT

It was all very bewildering and yet strangely fascinating. Mary Brown was conscious that she had come to that afternoon gathering partly as a critic, but the spirit which had been roused in her was not one of criticism. She had watched in vain for the incongruities; when the more distinctly social part of the hour was reached, the girls made the transition easily and quite as a matter of course.

As they ate cake and cream together, they chatted pleasantly on any topic that happened to be mentioned, and expressed their opinions of the latest fad in sleeves, or the last college function, or the Bible lesson that some of them had heard that morning, without any thought of incongruity.

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The outsider, as she walked quickly back to her tent to make ready for dining-room duties, went carefully over the enigma which the scene had suggested.

“ They do not patch the religious and the secular together; instead of that, religion seems to be their life, and the secular, whether represented by work or pleasure, merely incidental, a means to an end. Yet they are just plain American girls like hundreds of others that I have known, and at the same time as unlike them as possible. Can this strange thing that they name religion make the difference? I don't think I am in a critical mood, but I wonder if I am not envious? That last prayer was unlike any that it would be possible for me to offer in sincerity, and the girl was sincere; they all are; and they have something that I have not. What is it? Mrs. Roberts calls it ‘ being converted; ’ one would like to know just what she means by that. I know it is what she covets for Ailene. Ailene and I are the ones who are not getting from this summer's outing what

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the others are. In her case it seems to be chiefly clothes that hinder. What can it be with me? ”

Her half-whimsical, half-tender thought lingered for a few minutes about Ailene, the pretty, winsome girl who was at once her mother's pride and anxiety. For the mother's sake, if not for her own, Mary Brown felt that she would like to help the child if she could. She needed help. Her ambitions for herself were almost as great as her mother's for her; yet she had utterly false ideas of values and absurdly erroneous notions of the great outside world in which she longed to find a place. But Mary Brown felt her limitations as never before. There were many ways in which Miss Brown of Euston Square could have helped her. That interesting question of dress, for instance, could have been disposed of so easily. She had smiled and sighed over the situation on the afternoon when Ailene was making ready to join some of her mates for a birthday drive and picnic, and her only available white dress was found to

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be disfigured with a zigzag tear. Her mother had darned it skilfully and dampened and pressed with such care that the result was surprising to Mary Brown, but Ailene had been disdainful and had shed some tears over the poverty of her wardrobe, and Mary Brown had thought of a tray full of unused pretty white things in her suit-case, any one of which would have covered blemishes and filled Ailene's heart with joy. But she had also discovered that, because she was Mrs. Roberts's "help," she must not offer to lend. And there were other ways in which she had shut herself off from helpfulness by this adventure of hers. Miss Brown was used to having girls of seventeen look up to her, and delight in following her advice. Mary Brown, who daily set tables and waited on them in Mrs. Roberts's dining-room, knew that Ailene would esteem it an impertinence to be advised by her.

But the dining-room girl, as she put off her lace collar and put on her large white apron, admitted to herself that the

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sort of help which a girl like Ailene needed most would have been as much beyond Miss Brown of Euston Square as it was beyond the girl she was simulating. "She needs to be made over, and so do I. We haven't IT, whatever it is, and we do not know how to set about getting it; at least I do not. But I would give, oh, what would I not give to be able to talk to God as those girls did this afternoon, with the assurance which they evidently had that he heard and cared!"

This mood, instead of passing in a few hours, as Miss Brown had expected, lingered with her and deepened with the days, until her unrest and dissatisfaction became so great that only her positive promise to Mrs. Roberts to remain during the season held her in such an atmosphere. She assured herself repeatedly that she would go no more to their meetings, yet she continued to go.

Suddenly one morning she resolved to avail herself of Mrs. Roberts's often repeated invitations to join the Bible class.

"Ailene won't go," said the much-

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troubled mother. "I've tried every way I can think of to get her interested. I told her that if she was going to be a scholar she would have to know a great deal about the Bible, for I heard one of the biggest men in town say one night that no one could call himself educated who did not give a good deal of time to that book; those were his very words; and I've read the same thing often; and they say that the man who teaches here can't be beat. Doctor Hatton says — you know Doctor Hatton, don't you? He is the great astronomy man — he says that it is worth a half-year's work in college in the literary study of the Bible to be in this man's class for three weeks."

Mrs. Roberts was an unconscious imitator, and as she got off what were evidently the exact words of the great authority, she was for the moment not herself, but the great educator. Miss Brown was amused, but she was also impressed. Why would not this be a good opportunity for her? She had often thought of looking up a Bible class where the teacher

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was sane and scholarly, for the sake of refreshing her knowledge of Bible history. She had heard some talk among the boarders of this teacher; he was evidently a man of note, and not emotional in his style she felt certain, for she had heard him speak for a few minutes on two occasions. Perhaps the best thing she could do for herself to recover her mental poise would be to join this class and give really hard study to the lessons.

“I will take it instead of those devotional meetings,” she told herself. “They are so peculiar, so unlike any other meetings that I ever heard of, that they demoralize me. I never was intended for a fanatic; but a sane and reasonable study of Old Testament history I should really enjoy.”

Mrs. Roberts received her decision with joy, but objected to the giving up of the devotional hour.

“You can have them both as well as not,” she urged. “The fact is, you do so much more work, while you are at it, than I expected you could, that you are

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always ahead; and then I've got my work so planned, anyway, that it doesn't hurry me as it used to. I guess you are at the bottom of that, too; you've got a head for business and management, I can see that. I do hope you will make up your mind to stay with me this winter. But you go to the prayer-meeting, too; it will hearten you up for the day as nothing else will. I'll go sometimes; Ailene will help with the work and give me a chance; she says she would rather than not, and I'd like you to enjoy the meetings as much as you can. Maybe you don't have just such where you live."

That was true, and Miss Brown had to admit it; but for two days she was firm. She worked steadily, through the devotional hour, and went Bible in hand to the later class.

And the class was, in its way, as much of an astonishment as the prayer-meeting had been. It was scholarly, her studies in college had prepared her to appreciate this. It was critical in a very close and unanswerable way; and there were mem-

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bers of the class who saw to it that there should be abundant opportunity for criticism. They boldly challenged the leader's opinions and demanded the differing ones and his reasons for pressing his. In every instance he was prepared for them, being able to give author and book and page, and to reply to his statements with the statements of other scholars who differed. But it was much more than that; the teacher succeeded from the first in making it plain that the object of the class was not to tear down the views of others, but to learn as much truth as could be packed into a given time. History, biography, prophecy were carefully mapped out to be gone over, not in detail, but so as to get a large view of the whole and to get it for a purpose. Miss Brown, listening with the critical attention that her student habits had cultivated, discovered, and discovered it to her intense surprise, that from the first chapter of Genesis on through the last prophetic book, the theme was redemption for a fallen world. Nor did she by any means in this

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critical study of history get away for an hour from what she had chosen to call an emotional view of the historic person named Jesus. The first words she had heard from the teacher as she came, a few minutes late, into the class had been a quotation which for some reason had taken strange hold of her.

“Thirty years alone I trod
Galilee’s sequestered sod,
Yet I was the Son of God.”

These were the lines, and they continued echoing as a refrain to her thoughts while the lesson progressed. The thought of Christ’s sacrifice for a sinful world was being emphasized, as a rapid review was given of the wonderful life that began in the helplessness of babyhood and moved unflinchingly through the sorrows, the trials, the indignities, the humiliations, the awful sufferings that were thrust upon him, down to the very end. Unknown by those who should have been watching for him, disowned by those who should have been ready to die for him, doubted by those who had every reason

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to trust him, what had his thirty years of life to show but self-abnegation of the most startling kind? "Yet he was the Son of God!"

The wonder of it, the awe of it, the unutterable anguish of it took hold of this young learner's heart as never before. And when the teacher, rising suddenly to one of those pregnant phrases with which he sometimes emphasized his lesson, said in a ringing voice, "Jesus Christ is a walking, living, breathing expression of God," her intellect took hold of the thought and held it before her conscience in a way that almost overwhelmed her. Clearly, if she was to avoid the emotional in religion, the study of Jesus Christ was not for her.

Yet to be at Mount Hermon and not study him grew daily more of an impossibility. She made strenuous efforts in this very direction, eager to get away from what she told herself was evidently a local fad,—but what she afterwards came to recognize as an awakened conscience, she studied the programme with a

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view to finding intellectual treats. She selected a name well-known to her in the East, a celebrated scholar, and one whom she was quite sure would be clear and calm and unbiassed. She made known her wish to hear him, and Mrs. Roberts, who grew every day more eager to give her pleasure, was prompt and cordial in her response.

The man's theme, "What is Christianity?" was interesting to this supposed seeker after truth. She wanted to have a clear and unprejudiced answer to that question, such an answer as she felt sure the speaker could give.

His first full paragraph gave her a curious twinge. "The question," he said, "that an unprejudiced and sincere seeker after truth would ask himself in relation to this study: 'How far does what that book or that man teaches accord—not with me—but with Christianity?'" Judged by this definition, had she been unprejudiced and sincere? Had she not been annoyed with the atmosphere of the place because it did not accord with her

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ideas? She gave some thought to that, then listened again and heard:

“ I am not called upon to create Christianity, it is here. It has a history. I ought to be able to describe it as completely as I would be able, after study, to describe any definite historic fact so that students could recognize it. I need not necessarily describe it as I would like to have it, or as I might have had it if I had made it; or as I personally live with regard to it, but simply as it is, as a historical fact, a well-known fact.”

After that, she listened for his description, trying, meantime, to formulate one for herself. How would she describe religion, and how far would her view agree with his?

“ Christianity as a historical religion,” said the speaker, “ is a life of conscious reconciliation with God, through faith in the historic person known as Jesus Christ.”

And then there was no more real listening for Mary Brown. She found that her intellect not only accepted this definition,

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so far as it went, but added to it and believed in the logical conclusions that followed. What she was confronted with, curiously enough for the first time in her life, was the fact that her daily habit of living did not accord with these definitions. With her intellect, then, she subscribed to certain well-defined and exceedingly important beliefs, and then let them pass for the merest trivialities so far as practical application of them was concerned! But this was not a sane, calm way of living, it was the action of a fool!

“ I am a church-member,” said Mary Brown, “ and have been for years, but I do not live ‘ a life of conscious reconciliation with God.’ It might more properly be said of me that I do not think of God at all.” Her thoughts reverted to Mr. Brown and the plain words he had spoken: “ I have known church-members who had no more knowledge, apparently, of what it was to have companionship with Jesus Christ than though they had never heard his name.” And that description, she told herself, fitted her.

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She went away from the lecture more out of harmony with life than ever before. Religion, it seemed, was not only something that she had not, but could not get. How was one to get into "conscious reconciliation with God?" How could she expect him ever to be satisfied with her? She was utterly dissatisfied with herself. She stayed away from one Bible class, but on the third morning she went again; simply to gratify Mrs. Roberts, she assured herself. She went late, and the leader was telling the class an incident in his life.

"It was years and years ago," he said. "I had known the Lord, theoretically, for a long time, and was satisfied enough, because I thought little or nothing about him. I had no theory of the atonement, and had I been questioned, should have said that one theory was as good as another. But there came a time when I was distinctly conscious of sin. I was in extremity; nothing, in myself or out of myself brought relief until I thought of Christ as a substitute. 'O Lord,' my

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soul cried out in its agony, 'let me see *the blood!*' And friends, I found that the cross is a necessity to the awakened conscience. There is a righteousness before God in the personal work of Christ which satisfies."

The poor, soul-hungry girl had to hastily cover her face for a moment with a sheltering hand because of a sudden rush of tears, and her heart cried out with a great longing: "Oh, to be *satisfied!*"

XI

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“ WELL, here I am, it seems.”

The young man muttered the words as he settled himself in one of the seats of the well-filled train and drew his hat over his face with an instinct of concealment.

It was a handsome face, with clear-cut regular features, keen, far-seeing eyes and a resolute mouth and chin. It was also a face that was used to being bright, though just now it was overspread with gloom.

The train the young man had boarded was an accommodation, stopping at all way stations. It had been chosen by Kendall Browning, not because it was an agreeable train on which to travel, especially with an all-day journey before him, but because it was the first out-going train for the day and he was in haste to get away.

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Not that he wanted to get home quickly; in fact that was the last place in the world where he desired to be. It occurred to him as a curious feature of this strange day that for the first time in his life he felt no impatience to reach the journey's end, would have been glad indeed if the four or five hundred miles separating him from his home could be stretched indefinitely.

As often as he thought of that small, pale mother of his, whose frail life might be almost said to be bound up in her son's, instead of the usual quickening of his pulses with the eager desire to clasp her in his arms, he felt a strange new sense of shrinking from her, and a great lump came into his throat. Once or twice as the train rattled on its way, covering all minor sounds, something very like a groan escaped him.

“Poor mother!” he muttered, “it's awfully hard on her.”

The circumstances were peculiar. Always before this, Kendall Browning's home-comings had been joyful occasions

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thought about and planned for, for weeks beforehand, and heralded by mail, sometimes by telegram, that the precise moment when he could be expected might be well understood. It had been hard to secure his mother's consent to his remaining at college through its summer session.

“The regular season is quite enough, Kendall; only think! nine long months without seeing you except for a few days at Christmas.”

“I know, mother, and I don't like the separation part any better than you do; but just think what an opportunity! there is but one Dr. Bondell in the world, you know, and he is to be there only for the summer session. He takes up my specialty, too, and fellows who do good work through the summer term come out on top of the heap the next year.”

She had yielded, of course; had even been made to admit that it was a rare opportunity for him; but it had been hard for her. And now, instead of entering upon a new college year with glowing colors, he had been informed, while the sum-

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mer term was still in session, that the best thing he could do was to get home as soon as possible.

It had fallen upon his ears like a thunderbolt only the day before, and they were still unused to its sound, though the boy had lain awake most of the night thinking about it. He believed that he should never get used to it. Why, he had been practically expelled! He, Kendall Browning! His wildest outbursts of fun had never suggested to him such possibilities. He belonged to a family who were accustomed to being so eminently above reproach that it did not seem possible that the shadow of a disgrace could have fallen upon them.

It is true he had realized — and at times quite keenly — that he was not doing in college what had been expected of him. Over some of the reports his father had looked very grave indeed, and his mother had shed slow, silent tears such as wrung his heart. But there had always been explanations, plenty of them, and the earnest assurance on his part that no such experience should ever again be theirs.

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Things had been a little mixed with him this term; some new fellows had come who were friends of his friend Halsey, and needed special attention, and had proved, after all, not to be of the right sort; or, his chum's brother had been getting married, and there had been no end of fuss and fun and a wasting of time with it all; he had let his work slip more than he ought, and had spent more money than he meant to, and had been a trifle gay, perhaps, all around; but that was over. Such doings were over forever so far as he was concerned. Wait another year, and he would come home fairly bristling with honors, ready to make them both so proud of him that the house wouldn't contain them. "Oh, jinks! wouldn't that be a lark?" And he had taken his mother quite out of her chair and carried her, protesting but laughing, across the room and dropped himself with her in his arms among the cushions of the couch; and his grave-faced father had smiled, and they had all been happy. Up to the mid-year holidays he had done better; at least he

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had done no worse; and his father was patient and his mother hopeful. The hope had made them yield to the summer session plan.

“ If the boy really is thoroughly interested in Dr. Bondell’s work,” the father said, “ it may be the turning-point in his life; it is true, as he says, that there is but one Dr. Bondell.”

Yet here he was, not at the close but right in the midst of the summer term, on his way home! ”

“ The truth is, Browning,” Professor Fallows had said, and his voice had grown gentle as he looked at the young man’s stricken face, “ the simple truth is that we believe the very best that can be done for you is to send you home right now, before this sort of thing goes any farther. You are witness to the fact that you have been expostulated with, and warned, and given another trial, and in short dealt with more leniently than we ever did with any other student, and it has all been to no purpose; now we feel that the end has come. The excuse you have

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given that this is a summer term and that therefore the usual regulations do not apply, seems to us to increase the gravity of the situation. Summer students are as a rule in thorough earnest: they are given special opportunities which they appreciate, and we do not expect that they will need watching and admonition. You have required both, and have perplexed and disappointed us."

He had waited a moment to give the astonished young man a chance to speak if he had aught to say, and then had added:

"It is not that in any one line your sins have been so glaring as to make pardon impossible; it is simply that in every line you have failed us. You know, Browning, as well as I do that you have practically wasted your summer. You will not study, and you will frolic. Your influence among the boys easily led is distinctly bad. You were born to be a leader, you see, and some whom you do not care to lead have, nevertheless, followed your example and developed your ideas along lines that you

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would not have planned, and will not like to father. All these matters have been gone over carefully by our Advisory Committee, and we have reached, I cannot tell you how reluctantly, the conclusion that your best place for the present is your father's house.

“ At the same time, I want to remind you that this is not a dismissal in the regular way; you may go as quietly as you choose, and the curious, even among your friends, need know only what you choose to tell them. We have had regard to your mother's state of health in this matter, as well as to your own feelings. One or two members of the Advisory Committee thought that you might be permitted to remain until the close of the summer session. But President Weldon felt that in justice to the other students we must not overlook that last escapade in which you were so distinctly the leader. It is new business to have to deal with follies during a summer session; heretofore, as I said, our students have remained for work. Also, some of us thought that it would be

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less embarrassing for you to go at once than to remain until the students would be coming in for another year; it was really for this reason at last that we voted to have you leave at this time.

“ All this hurts me personally, Browning, in a way that I presume you will not understand. I have known your father and mother all my life, and I have been proud of their son. I was proud of the record you made when you first came to us. Besides, you were named, you know, for my boy who is gone; and, in short, I — ”

The professor's voice had broken and he had stopped abruptly. But Browning's indignant amazement had hardened his heart, and he spoke haughtily.

“ I suppose I am expected to be grateful to you for your interest in me, sir, but I hope you will pardon my saying that I think you have taken a very strange way of showing it.”

He had been ashamed of the words as soon as they were spoken; he had known all the time that no boy in college ever had a better friend than Professor Fallows

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had been to him; but there had been no time to soften the effect of his reply, for the professor had turned quickly away in hurt silence, and made it only too plain that the interview was closed.

The train stopped at a way station but a short ride from the college town and was making an unusually long wait, even for an accommodation.

“Hot box,” Browning heard a fellow traveller explain. He told himself gloomily that he did not care how many hot boxes there were nor how long they delayed the train; anything to put off the home-getting.

“Hello!” said a voice at his elbow. Browning pushed back his hat and turned quickly at the sound of the familiar voice. Behold! there was Dennison, his roommate, and, as regarded this sudden exit from college, his sole confidant.

“What in thunder!” he began.

“Yes, just so,” said Dennison calmly. “I’ve followed you, you see.”

“But how? There isn’t another train until — ”

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“Auto,” said Dennison succinctly. “Pendleton brought me. He has started on his trip and this was only a few miles out of his way, so he didn’t mind. I came on account of a telegram.”

“For me?” Browning’s face grew visibly pale as he held out an eager and unsteady hand. He was used to telegrams, but his nerves were unsteady and the frail mother came first to his thought.

Dennison, as he handed out the yellow envelope, went on with comforting commonplaces. “I thought it might be some business matter needing prompt attention; and Pendleton said he would rather come this way than not, for the sake of having company. He is quite a convenience with that machine of his.”

He was watching his friend and breathed more freely. The telegram was being devoured and was not apparently appalling.

“Here’s a go!” said Browning at last, “read that.” And he thrust the despatch into Dennison’s hand. It read thus:

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“Grandmother ill. Must take your mother to her. Expecting important word from Ventnor; ordered letter forwarded to you by special delivery. Should reach you Saturday. Wire me contents.

“FATHER.”

“Now you’ll have to go back,” said Dennison, returning the telegram. Browning frowned.

“I won’t go back!” he said, gloomily. “How could I? It would be awful!”

“That’s so; and yet — Well, let’s see. Say! I’ll tell you, hang around here somewhere until afternoon; there’s a camp-meeting, or a summer gathering of some sort up here at Mount Hermon, only a few miles from this very station. A lot of our boys have cousins and other friends there, and they are going up there this evening for a sort of moonlight frolic. I was invited to go, and said I couldn’t, but if you like, I can change my mind and accept. They are going to take refreshments and have a bonfire and no end of fun; I sha’n’t mind accepting. And I can bring

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the special delivery letter out to you, see? You can go down there by this train and wait for me; or, no, I guess you better stay right here where we can reach the telegraph-office without delay; it might save time, and this business of your father's is important, of course. You stay here, and I'll come out on the 5:13 with the letter, which will come on the 3:18 of course, if it comes at all to-day."

"All aboard!" yelled a brakeman, and Browning rose up and shook himself.

"Well," he said slowly, like one bewildered with the rapid turn of events, "I could do that, I suppose. There must be some place about here where a fellow could stay. It's awfully good of you, Dennison, to think all this out for me; I don't believe I should have known what to do; I'm dazed, somehow; but I couldn't go back, you know, and besides —"

"Hustle out!" interrupted Dennison, "or they'll carry you off, and there's the train that I must get back on if we carry out our programme. You can find lots of places to stay, of course, until the 5:13.

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Then you can come up there with the fellows and end the day with a first-class frolic; that will put you in good spirits again. Look alive, my boy! this train is moving! ”

He had seized Browning's bag while he talked and made a dash for the door, his friend stumbling after him, still half dazed over these rapid changes in his career. As they swung themselves from the moving train, the one on which Dennison must make his return trip was giving its warning shriek. He had just time to drop Browning's grip in the middle of the walk, and run for his car, shouting as he ran:

“ Watch for the 5:13; I'll be on hand.”

And then both trains had thundered away, leaving the young man stranded at a country station, where he had never been before.

“ Well! ” he said, looking about him curiously, “ I live an eventful life just now, certainly. What next, I wonder? ”

“ Poor Grandmother! Still, it may be that she is not so very sick; old people get scared, I guess, over trifles. But of

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course mother had to go to her, and equally of course father would go to take care of her. It is a long journey for Mamma in warm weather. Poor Mamma!" The sigh that closed this thought had to do with other than the grandmother's illness; yet there was in it a little sense of relief. Events, without any planning upon his part, had so shaped themselves that this disgraceful home-coming of his was at least delayed. He began to wonder what the Ventnor business could be that was ordered to him for attention; his heart swelled a little with pride in the thought that his father trusted him with matters of importance. He told himself that he would like to show the telegram to Professor Fallows, and let him see that there was somebody yet who believed in him; and they had reason to, he added, and drew himself up proudly. He had been a fool, it is true, in some respects; but he would show them all that there was something to him besides nonsense. See if he didn't. It was awfully good in Denison to take all that trouble for him.

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Poor Dennison! he hadn't been as good a friend to him as he might have been. Professor Fallows was right; Den was the kind of a boy, somehow, who never knew when to stop; and he had been the fellow who had started him more than once. Ah, well, they would have one more frolic together to-night, at that Mount Hermon, wherever that was, he and Den, and then he should not be there any more to lead the poor boy astray. But the cheerful whistle that he had almost begun ended after all in the coming back of that choking sensation in his throat. How could it be possible that his college career was so suddenly closed?

XII

BROWNING AND THE BROWNS

“ You from Carmen College? ”

Browning turned suddenly at the sound of the questioning voice, and came face to face with a middle-aged, clean-shaven man who had kindly eyes and a friendly smile. His dress and general appearance suggested that he might be a small farmer belonging to the neighborhood. He had that curious air of deference about him which men who have a high respect for education instinctively assume whenever they come in contact with what they conceive to be educated people. It was inexpressibly soothing to the young man's ruffled feelings; but he replied in a grim and significant tone:

“ Yes, sir, I'm *from* Carmen College and no mistake.”

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“ Then,” said the other, cheerfully, “ I reckon you are the man I’m looking for, though I didn’t much expect you before the 5:13. I had to drive in this morning, and I told mother I’d just wait for the train if you had happened to take a notion to come in the morning. My rig is just the other side of the depot. Dolly is more used to the plough than she is to the cars, though she ain’t a mite afraid of ’em, either; but you can’t ever tell what notion dumb critters may take. This is yours, I suppose? ”

Saying which, he caught up the grip from the spot where Dennison had dropped it, and moved forward, still talking.

“ You’re to stay at our house, you know. Your room is all ready for you.”

Browning was laughing now. This sudden and entirely unexpected addition to his bewilderments was quite too much for his fun-loving nature to resist. He followed his grip as he laughed, because there seemed nothing else for him to do, and said with great heartiness that he was

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very glad to get such a piece of news as that.

The farmer looked curious, but pleased.

“ Yes,” he said; “ mother and Libby got the room ready first thing this morning. Libby put the finishing touches on it, and the posies; she never forgets them; she said she didn’t know as you would care for ’em, Mr. Sutton never seemed to notice them, but you might be different, and she’d risk it, anyhow.”

“ Mr. Sutton!” ejaculated Browning, as following the motion of the other’s hand he vaulted into the spring wagon and seated himself. Since accommodations were waiting for him, he might as well avail himself of them, temporarily at least, while he studied into the mystery.

“ Yes,” said the farmer climbing in slowly and giving Dolly a hint to start. “ Mr. Sutton always stops with us. He has been coming every Sunday for quite a spell now. But he couldn’t come this week, and he agreed to send down a friend of his to take his place; he said he could

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likely find one who would want to go up to Mount Hermon this evening to the meeting; and I said then that maybe it would be somebody who would like to come in the morning, and tend the afternoon meeting, too. But he wasn't over and above sure that he could get anybody, and so it was all kind of uncertain. I guess there aren't many of the Carmen College folks that care to preach, are there?

“ Mr. Sutton said if he couldn't get anybody that I'd better drive up to the camp and see if I couldn't coax one of the Assembly ministers to come out; but the minute I see you I says to myself: 'There's my man! and I'm mighty glad of it.' I didn't relish going after the Assembly folks, — that's what they call their meeting, the Assembly, — they don't like to leave their own meetings, and I don't blame 'em a mite, for they are very interesting, and it's the ministers' vacation, you may say; so I'm more than usually glad to see you.”

During this elaborate statement, Browning's face was a study. Astonishment, be-

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wilderment, dismay, and doubt as to how to begin an explanation, struggled with his rising sense of the ludicrous.

“Look here!” he interrupted at last, with a desperate feeling that something must be said at once. “You are making a big mistake; I’m no preacher!”

His companion seemed in no wise disturbed or surprised.

“Oh, that’s all right,” he said in a tone of cheery encouragement. “We understand that you are just college boys kind of practising on us, as you may say; but if we can stand it, you ought to, and we get along with it first rate.”

There was fun as well as tolerance in his voice, and Browning laughed in spite of himself, and listened.

“You see there’s only just a very few of us this time of year. In winter, now, we pretty near fill our little house, when the day is fine, as it mostly is; beats all how many pretty Sundays we have in this part of the world; ever notice it? It will rain great guns most all the week and clear up the last thing Saturday night and be

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regular garden of Eden weather for Sunday. But summers, the folks scatter. Some go to the logging-camps, and some go fishing, and them that are left, if they've got two good legs, want to walk over to the Assembly. It ain't much more than a smart two mile by the short cut through the woods; but there's some that can't walk it, and that ain't got any ways to ride, so there's a few of us that think it's better to keep the meetings up right along, and not get out of the habit.

“ Mr. Sutton does first rate; I guess he'll make quite a minister by the time he gets through school; though the young folks don't take to him much, and that's queer, too, for he is young himself; but you look as though you could talk some if you once got a-going.”

Fun had the right of way now, and young Browning threw back his head and laughed as he had thought a few hours before that he should never laugh again. He to be riding to an appointment to fill Sutton's place! *Sutton*, who was as thin as a rail, and near-sighted, and nervous,

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and — to put it plainly — a trifle slow and dull; also, he was one who had nothing whatever to do with Kendall Browning or his friends.

The laugh was contagious; the farmer joined in heartily.

“ I dunno what the joke is,” he said in genial tone, “ but I suppose there is one somewheres; and laughing is kind of catching, you know.”

Then the imp named Mischief, who was always hovering dangerously near to Kendall Browning, seemed to take full possession of him. He suddenly resolved to “ see this thing through,” and find out how he would feel by Monday morning. He made no further effort at explanations of any sort, but plied the farmer with questions until by the time Dolly turned in at the open gate of a neat farm-yard, he knew more about the neighborhood and its possibilities than Sutton had learned in the ten weeks that he had been “ supplying.”

The large, low-ceiled room to which he was presently introduced fitted in exactly

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with the picture he had made of the home. There was a certain homely old-fashioned cottage house away back among the eastern hills of his childhood, where with his mother he had spent happy hours, that the surroundings and atmosphere recalled forcibly. The room was spotlessly clean, and careful hands had evidently freshened it very lately with a view to the comfort of the occupant. The old-fashioned two-leaved table was covered with a white cloth and held, besides the Bible and hymn-book, a little very old-fashioned pink pitcher filled with sweet peas.

“This is ‘Libby’s’ work,” said the youth as he bent over them. “She will find me more susceptible to flowers than Sutton is.”

He laughed a little over it all, yet there was a tender light in his eyes; his mother loved sweet peas.

Close at hand was a large wooden rocker, also of the old-fashioned sort that his childhood had known in but one place; it was wide-armed and gaily cushioned and

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had an immaculately white towel pinned to its broad shoulders.

Visions of Sutton leaning luxuriously back in this chair, selecting his hymns and his chapter, overcame Browning's gravity again, and also confirmed in his volatile mind the determination to "see the thing through." It was almost a certainty that Sutton had failed in securing a substitute to conduct the Sunday service. He knew the two or three fellows who sometimes responded to such calls, and he happened to know that several of them at least had engagements in other directions. But he was here, and — owing to a curious combination of circumstances — here he must remain until that business of his father's, whatever it was, had received attention. Why shouldn't he talk a little while, tomorrow, to the handful of people who would gather in the little church? He surely wouldn't do them any harm; for that matter, it was a pity if a fellow brought up as he had been to go to church twice on Sunday, besides always going to

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Sunday-school, couldn't say a little something about a Bible verse, or about a whole chapter if he chose, that might be worth hearing. What was the use of having the reputation of being the best speaker in college if it couldn't be turned to so much account?

He could read the hymns for them, anyhow, and in such fashion that they would wish that they need never hear Sutton drawl one out again; and then he could sing them, if they wanted him to. As for the praying, he would venture a whole paper of pins that the good old farmer knew how to pray; he could get him to attend to that part; he could tell him that he himself was new at such business, which would be the truth, certainly!

The more he thought about it, the more fascinated he became with the entire scheme.

"Jinks!" he said gleefully, "what would Brother Fallows think if he should find out how the fellow he sent home in disgrace spent his first Sunday! I hope

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he will find it out; and I'll carry it through in good style, too, just to show them that they have not crushed me."

In this way the idea that had at first presented itself to him as an idle fancy, took firm hold of his heedless, fun-loving nature, and by the time he had joined the hospitable household at their dinner-table and had eaten heartily of the luxuries from garden and orchard with which it was loaded, he was fully resolved to stay with them over Sunday.

To be sure, if Sutton should succeed in getting a substitute to appear on the 5:13 train, it would make an embarrassing interruption to the present smoothness of his career, but the gay youth comforted himself with the belief that he could manage it somehow.

"I'll meet him at the station," he chuckled, "and either buy him up or choke him, whichever he prefers. Or perhaps I'll let him stay, if he is open to reason, and just share the honors with him; however we fix it, here I stay until Mon-

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day morning; I intend to have some more of that chicken pie and Sally Lunn short-cake whatever happens."

In this mood he went to the station to meet the 5:13 train.

"Hello!" said Dennison as he caught a glimpse of his friend seated complacently in the spring wagon with Dolly standing comfortably by, looking at the engine with tranquil eyes.

"Seems to me this is a very different looking chap from the one I left this morning. Struck a fortune, haven't you? Where did you steal your rig?"

"This is Dolly," said Browning, complacently, "and she is no more afraid of the cars than I am; and I'm in clover. Did the letter come? Say, Dennison, I wonder if you know how awfully obliged I am to you for everything?"

"All right," said Dennison. "Here's your letter. I'm going on with the boys. Just drive Dolly over to Mount Hermon after you have fixed things up here; the boys sent you a royal invitation to join them, and it will be just your style; they're

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in for fun to-night I tell you. Shall we expect you over? ”

“ Perhaps,” said Browning cheerfully, as he broke the seal of his letter. He had to shout his good-by and thanks after the departing train. There had been no chance for explanations on either side; but there would be time enough for that. He was very much pleased; no substitute had appeared and he should not have to share the chicken pie, nor enter into embarrassing details.

The letter received first attention, and had to do with business so important that his heart swelled with pride over the thought of his father’s trust in him.

“ I wish Brother Fallows could have a look at this,” he muttered. “ I guess he would discover that my father thinks me good for something, even yet.” But this was a sore subject and he got his thoughts away from it as quickly as possible. Time enough to think over the shame and pain of his position when he reached home; at present he certainly had enough to attend to.

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He wrestled for some time with a telegram, covering the backs of all the old letters he had in his pocket with formulas before he succeeded in putting the facts he must convey in briefest language, making them intelligible to his father, and meaningless to others. At last he succeeded and smiled on it gleefully.

“That’s the talk, old chap,” he said; “the local operator may study over that as long as he pleases before he sends it up, and it will continue to be Greek to him, while father will know exactly what it means. I say, Brownie, you are good for something yet, aren’t you?” Then, long as the despatch was, after a thoughtful moment he added this:

“Wire me here; am here for the meetings.”

“If I am not here for the meetings,” he chuckled, “what am I here for? Mother will like the sound of that; poor mother!”

It was horrible to have to close every thought of her with a sigh; it was horrible

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in a fellow to disappoint his mother; he had never meant to do it.

“And I don’t mean it now,” he muttered. “I’m in for one more good time to-night with the boys,—I wonder what they are up to?—and which set they are, anyway. I ought to have asked Dennison. Oh, well, no matter, it’s my last night. I’ll never come back to this college, no, sir! not if they get down on their knees to me, but I won’t break mother’s heart, either, though that is what they expect me to do. I’ll show them! after to-night I shall reform.”

He did not realize how often he had made some such pledge with himself, and that it was always “*after to-night.*”

The evident respect with which the telegraph operator greeted him was both amusing and comforting.

“You’re the new preacher I take it,” he said, as he handed back the change. “Mr. Brown told me he was expecting a new one for to-morrow.”

“Mr. Brown?” repeated Browning inquiringly.

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“ Yes, Farmer Brown. You are stopping with him, aren't you? The preachers always do, and I see you are driving his Dolly.”

“ Oh, yes, certainly. I'm at *Dolly's* house, all right, but I hadn't thought to ask her owner's name.”

“ He's Jonas Brown, the best man by all odds in these parts; everybody, saint and sinner both, believe in Farmer Brown.”

“ I'm not surprised,” said young Browning, cordially, “ I believe in him myself.”

XIII

MR. BROWN TO THE RESCUE

Mrs. ROBERTS and Mary Brown were both in that end of the large tent which they chose to name the pantry, engaged in making cake. Mary, as she carefully stirred the white mass which Mrs. Roberts's knowledge and skill had got together, let her thoughts wander to the girls and the trouble which was evidently upon at least a few of them.

The tell-tale eyes of Alice Upton, the tall, fair girl, had plainly shown that morning that she had been crying, and even Lida Brownson's usually bright face wore a gravity that was marked. As for Betty Lewis, the girl whom they had named "chief slammer," she dashed about with more noise than usual, and a flash in her eyes that meant indignation.

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Mrs. Roberts, while she measured the flour and powder and butter for another of her great loaves of cake, with the precision and skill of one accustomed to the work, wore a thoughtful pucker between her eyes that was never produced by cake-making. Something was the matter. Mary Brown pondered it with an anxiety that, if she had taken thought for herself, might have amused her. How strangely she was entering into the lives of these people, so that in a new and interesting sense their very troubles were her own!

While she considered, Mr. Brown came with the morning mail.

“Here is your cherished *Herald*, Mrs. Roberts,” he said as he laid a package of letters before Miss Brown.

Mrs. Roberts sighed. “Put it over on the table, will you, Mr. Brown. Or on the shelf there, anywhere; I don’t seem to care much what becomes of it this morning; I’ve got something else to think about.”

Mr. Brown, who had turned to leave the room, came back a step or two, and sur-

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veyed the elder woman with an inquiring smile on his face.

“That sounds alarming,” he said. “What can be the matter? The cake isn’t far enough advanced to declare itself heavy, is it?”

“The cake isn’t going to be heavy,” said the housekeeper with a significant toss of her head. “My cake never is, nor Mary’s either; she’s got a knack that goes ahead of mine I really believe; but there are some hearts that are going to be heavy before this day is done. They are heavy enough now, for that matter. Don’t you think it is ’most too bad to have her plans upset like this? Leading them into temptation, one may say, instead of helping them, as she meant to do.”

“It sounds bad, certainly! May I stir that mixture Miss Brown has in her bowl while you tell me about it? Her hand is plainly not strong enough to do it well, and mine is aching for exercise.”

“She does it beautifully every time,” said Mrs. Roberts, jealous for the skill of her handmaid, “but it is hard work, that’s

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a fact; and if you are a mind to give it a stir or two, it will help along a good deal; and Mary can be beating the yolks for the gold cake. Why, you've heard about the doings to-night, of course?

“ You haven't! and haven't you, either, Mary? Well, now, that's strange! I thought the girls had told you all about it, of course: and Miss Hadden is so kind of used to depending on Mr. Brown to help her out, that I supposed she would go to him first thing.

“ Why, you know her boys, Bible-class boys, that she had come down for a three-days' visit? They are good fellows every one of them, and they have to work hard and don't get many outings, and she thought if she could give them three whole days in a place like this, it might do wonders for them. Alice Upton's brother is one of them, you know, and poor Alice is breaking her heart over him this morning; and there she was, tickled to death at the thought of his coming; it does seem too bad! ”

Mrs. Roberts had her own way of telling

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a story; the cake-stirrer and egg-beater could only exchange amused smiles and wait until she rounded the corners and came upon the main theme.

“ And there’s Will Holden, an easily tempted fellow as ever was, and he has a cousin in Carmen College it seems; a pretty hard fellow Alice Upton thinks; she knows his folks and she says they are dreadfully worried about him, that he is always getting into scrapes; one of the kind that gets others in trouble and slips out of it himself, I guess; he’s a summer-school boy, but that maybe is chiefly because he earns his board by working in the family of one of the professors, and they like to have him around summers too. Well, what does he do when he hears that his cousin is up here at Mount Hermon for a few days, but get up a party of some of the summer-school boys and some of the village boys and come down here for a frolic, and invite not only Will Holden but all of Miss Hadden’s boys to join them! They are coming to that redwood campground just above us, and are going to

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have a bonfire, and set the whole forest on fire, maybe, and play a game of cards by the light of it, and they play for money, too, and Alice says her brother just simply *can't* keep from playing when he is where they are, though he has promised his father that he won't touch them. They are going to bring a big basket of champagne along, and there comes in Will Holden's temptation, as well as another boy who is Lida Brownson's cousin and is just like her brother; the girls are all worked up about it; and our Betty, who thinks Will Holden is the very nicest boy in the whole world, when he is nice, is just in a rage and thinks something ought to be done about it. But there! what can we do? We don't own the redwood grove; I wish to goodness we did, and we can't prevent their coming out there for a frolic and inviting our boys to join them. I don't see a living thing that can be done, except to coax the boys not to go, which won't do a mite of good; but it does seem too bad!"

Mr. Brown stirred the smooth mass with

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strong, skilful hand and spoke no word for several minutes.

“ But he was thinking all the while,” Mrs. Roberts explained afterwards. “ It beats all how he thinks out things! I felt better the minute I saw the look come on his face which showed that he had taken hold of it.”

At last came his question.

“ How would it answer, do you think, to meet the enemy on his own ground? ” Mrs. Roberts stayed her busy hands on the sides of her bowl, while she looked at him wonderingly.

“ How do you mean? ”

Mr. Brown glanced at Mary Brown and laughed.

“ I was wondering,” he said, “ what sort of a scheme it would be to work up the hint they have given us and include them. We are so much interested in our meetings here that we have given very little attention to social functions. What if we could give up this evening to pure fun? Have a gathering on the Zayante lawn, which is far more attractive than

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the redwood grove across the way; decorate the trees and the porches and all other available places with Chinese lanterns, plan for the finest bonfire that our splendid brush heaps suggest, and serve unlimited sandwiches, cake, coffee, and anything else that could be gathered in haste, and is calculated to tempt the appetite of the average boy. Then we could send a deputation to meet the train and kidnap the crowd as our honored guests, meeting their spirit of frolic and good time at least half-way.

“ I chanced to hear just as I came over here that there had been a telegram received from the speaker promised for this evening, to the effect that sudden illness in his family would prevent his coming; so perhaps the Management would take kindly to some such scheme under the circumstances. If they should do so, do you suppose the ladies could manage their part on such short notice? ”

Mrs. Roberts's face answered for her. It beamed with delight, and suggested en-

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ergy enough in reserve to meet any emergency.

“ Isn’t that the greatest — ” she began with the delight, but energy overtook it and she branched off to say: “ Of course we could! Why, I can bake biscuits for them all day, as well as not, and rolls; or I can make cake and cook meat; I can do all of them, for that matter; and so will Mrs. Peck, and Aunt Lucy Forbes and the Jones girls, and all the rest of them. You can count on us, Mr. Brown; we’ll get up a regular feast, and treat them so well that they will want to come again; maybe they can be made to understand what Mount Hermon is, after awhile. It’s the nicest kind of a way to circumvent them, and it’s just exactly like you, isn’t it, Mary? ”

The cheeks of the industrious egg-beater grew pinker, and she did not raise her eyes to the amused ones that she knew were watching her; but Mrs. Roberts gave no heed to either of them. She dipped her compound into its tins with rapid hand and continued her comments.

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“ I guess we all need a little fun; it will be good for my girls, I know, every one of them. If you'll get them to agree to it, Mr. Brown, I'll go right out and see the women and begin our part; there's no time to lose, but you can count on our being ready for the spread when the time comes.”

Mr. Brown understood Mrs. Roberts's peculiar method of speech, and knew that he was to get the Management and not her girls to agree to it, so he went at once to his appointed task.

The Management met him more than half-way. The evening was unexpectedly free; they had been trying to plan what should be done with it,— and something must be done, of course, about those college boys; they were handicapped because they did not own the redwood grove, and could not control it. They hailed Mr. Brown's idea with joy. He had not been among them for these weeks without their discovering, at least to some extent, what manner of man he was, and with great unanimity and heartiness they put them-

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selves under his lead, promising to help carry out his suggestions to the utmost of their ability, and turning over to his control all the resources of the grounds.

It is doubtful if Mr. Brown, being used to busy days, ever lived through a busier one than that eventful Saturday suddenly became. His original idea kept growing on his hands; nearly every one with whom he talked offered a suggestion that added to the charm of the occasion and also to the work. The young people generally received him with acclamation. Oh, yes, indeed, they would help; they would sing, they would recite, they would get up charades, they would make taffy, they would do anything in the world to help make the evening a success.

“My Ailene,” said Mrs. Roberts, “is just as interested as she can be. She is going to sing some of those funny little Glee Club songs for them; Mr. Brown asked her if she would. He thinks she has a voice of great promise, he told me so. It is the first thing on these grounds that she has been downright interested in. She

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says this is something like, and she didn't know it could ever happen here. She thought that most of the folks who come here considered it wicked to have any fun. The idea! I don't see where the child got such queer notions. I'm sure I like fun first rate, or would, if any came my way; I don't have time to go out hunting it; and I shouldn't like it for a steady meal, either, as some folks seem to."

There was a moment's pause, and the next sentence was prefaced with a little sigh.

"I don't suppose you think it is any great thing to be glad over, that the child is interested in the kind of evening we are planning for, and I don't believe I could make you understand what it is to me to have her one with us for once. I'm so kind of lonesome for her sometimes that it 'most seems as though I couldn't stand it if she wasn't converted right away. But there! even the Lord can't do that for her if she won't let him."

It was Mary Brown to whom she was confiding this word. In truth, Mary was

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the one in these days to whom she talked oftenest "right from her heart," as she expressed it; and that young woman was rapidly becoming a formidable rival of Mr. Brown in the good woman's confidence. She felt as she listened a curious sense of indignation toward that winsome butterfly Ailene. How could the child be willing to ignore her mother's yearning hopes, and pay so little attention to her tender, wistful efforts! "If I had a mother," began the girl, and then her face crimsoned under the goad of her conscience. Intellectually, at least, did she not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as one who yearned over souls, and was he to have less consideration than a human friend?

If the men were busy that day, what shall be said of the women? Mrs. Roberts had judged them well; not one failed her; and the baking and boiling and stewing that went on with unremitting energy all that day resulted in such bounty that the few men who were allowed peeps into pantries stood amazed before the array.

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“ Really,” said Mr. Brown, as he surveyed the rows upon rows in Mrs. Roberts’s pantry, having just come from a similar experience at Aunt Lucy Forbes’s tent, “ I believe we could entertain the standing army to-night.”

“ We are going to entertain an army of college boys,” said Mrs. Roberts, quickly, “ and they’re worse.”

Dinner at Mount Hermon that evening was a secondary matter to be disposed of with as little ceremony as possible. The guests, to a man and woman, were interested in the evening’s programme, large numbers of them having contributed in some way to its success.

The table waiters at Mrs. Roberts’s, especially, were jubilant. The fair Alice’s eyes shone as though they had never thought of tears.

“ Isn’t he the grandest man ! ” she said, catching at Mary Brown’s arm as she was passing, her eyes meantime fixed on the distant form of Mr. Brown as he strode across the lawn intent upon some last effort. “ I never knew before how much

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one person could accomplish when he really set about it. He is just the centre of this whole thing, do you know it? He has been everywhere to-day, and attended personally to everything. And the boys like him so much! they have been with him all day long, you know. Will Holden says he has had them in training, showing them how to do two things at once and plan a third. Some of the girls were wondering what we would do if the college boys declined our invitation, after all; and my brother Ben spoke up just as quick: 'Of course they'll accept,' he said. 'If they don't, we'll punch their heads for them!' He's only a boy, you know; and, oh, dear! I was so worried about him this morning! I felt responsible, you see, and that made it so much worse. It seemed to me that I could never go home and meet poor papa if he got into disgrace here, after my coaxing so hard to have him come. Now I believe everything will go right, don't you? If Mr. Brown should get a permanent hold on my brother, I could go down on my knees to him in gratitude. What a

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splendid thing it must be to be that kind of a man."

Lida Brownson came up to them all but breathless with haste. "They have gone to meet the train," she said. "Mr. Brown and all the boys who were invited to their frolic this evening; and they are just as full of fun, the boys are, as they can be. How they have entered into the spirit of it all! Mr. Brown has got hold of them, some way. Even that slippery little Tommy Adams, that we were afraid would spoil it all, told me he considered 'that Brown fellow a brick!' I suppose in his vernacular that is high praise."

XIV

MR. BROWN AND MR. BROWNING

THEY drove to the Assembly grounds together, Farmer Brown, his young daughter, and Kendall Browning. The fun of appearing to the boys in just that style compensated for the brisk walk the young man had meant to take by the "short cut," and helped to make him the "jolliest" companion that the farmer had enjoyed since he was himself a boy.

What Professor Fallows called the "hopeless levity" of young Browning's nature had by this time pushed his disgrace and trouble quite into the background; or, more properly speaking, he had firmly and somewhat sternly ordered them into the background with the emphatic statement that there would be time enough in all conscience to think about

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that; for this one night he should give himself up to a good time. So he laughed and chatted with the farmer, made conundrums for Libby and told her jokes that convulsed her with laughter, and was withal so courteous to both father and daughter, so thoughtful of their comfort and so kind and friendly in all that he said and did, that both were ready to sound his praises to any who would listen.

It was while Dolly was making her leisurely way up the last ascent that Farmer Brown's strong voice suddenly rang out to a man who was just ahead of them walking rapidly.

"Hey! Hello! Hold on, won't you? Ain't that Mr. Brown? I thought so. Got time to stop a minute? I want to introduce you to our preacher."

"Good!" said Mr. Brown, heartily. "Perhaps he is the very man I want to see especially just now."

He told himself that he liked the boy none the less for the crimson flush that dyed his cheeks at the farmer's words. The probability was that the embryo min-

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ister was not used to hearing himself introduced as the "preacher."

"Are you a Carmen College man, sir? Then I am very anxious to have a few words with you as soon as possible. Mr. Brown, suppose I borrow your guest to walk up the trail with me while you take Dolly around by the road. I want to enlist his services to-night, and there are some matters to be explained first."

"There is no question about that!" muttered Browning as he sprang from the wagon. Mentally he added, "But I'm the fellow to explain, I fancy, instead of you; and I don't mean to do it. Brownie, you are in for it; see to it that you carry this thing through in your best style."

His new friend's manner was that of a comrade. He linked his arm in his and began in confidential tone:

"You are just exactly the man I want, Mr. Brown. Am I right? Is that the name?"

"Not exactly!" said Kendall. "It's getting there, but it isn't done yet; my name is Browning."

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His companion broke into hearty laughter.

“ Browning, is it? Well, that is a relief. I must be pardoned for thinking that of course it was Brown, for that seems to be the name of every third person one meets. Well, now, Mr. Browning, I want to talk business, as we have very little time. Have you visited the Assembly before? Then you have come at a unique time; we have guests from Carmen College this evening, or else we are the guests, I am not sure which way it should be stated; I know we invited ourselves. You came over for the lecture, I suppose? It's off. The speaker was providentially detained in more senses than one I am inclined to think.

“ Let me state the situation briefly. One of the Sunday-school workers living not far from here made an effort, at some self-sacrifice I imagine, to have her Bible class of young men, at least a half-dozen of them, spend the week-end at the Assembly, with the hope, you understand, of interesting them in such meetings as we have here.

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They are good fellows in the main; some of them inclined to be rather gay; and they are all out just now on what they consider a lark. Still, they were doing splendidly until this counter attraction came up.

“ Two of them have acquaintances at Carmen, and yesterday they received invitations to join some of the college boys — summer students I am told, with a few of the rougher element from the town boys to help on — in a frolic to be held at one of the picnic grounds on the other side of this reservation. I haven't their programme very clearly outlined, beyond the fact that there was to be a bonfire, and a supper with plenty of champagne and other objectionable accompaniments; and the people, who have suffered from these affairs before, were extremely anxious, and anticipated serious results for some. There is always a doubtful element in all large colleges, and some of them drift even into the summer schools, it seems.

“ The one whose name I have heard the oftenest in connection with this affair is

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acquainted with two of our boys, and the teacher whom I mentioned is especially afraid of his influence. His name is Dennison. Do you know him?

“That’s all right then. I think the Lord sent you here to-night to help us. I had a feeling the moment I saw you that you were the one who could do it.”

Kendall Browning was glad for the cover of the night, with only faint glimmerings of moonlight through the trees; he knew that his face was ablaze, and he felt as though his brain was in a whirl. So this was the company that Dennison had assured him was “just his style!” Well, why should he not say so? Hadn’t he been given abundant excuse for such an estimate? Still, he had never carried champagne and a frolic into the midst of a religious gathering and tried to undo earnest efforts at helping others. He had respected his mother too much for that, at least. But he had come out here this evening on purpose to help the boys; he had told himself that, being in disgrace, anyhow, he might as well have what fun

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was to be got out of it, and he believed he knew how to manage both ends of his rôle. But it was growing increasingly difficult. There was good Farmer Brown and the innocent little girl, who had furnished his table with sweet peas, mother's flowers, they both believed in him; and here was this Mr. Brown, with his keen gray eyes and confident hand resting on his arm, claiming help.

“What are you planning?” he asked at last, feeling the necessity for saying something.

“A flank movement,” said Mr. Brown, smiling.

“We cannot forbid the frolic, of course, so we invited ourselves to join in it. The Management gave up the evening meeting entirely, and planned for a general gathering on the Zayante lawn, where we propose to have a mammoth bonfire, and songs and stories and supper and anything else in the way of recreation that the skilful and trustworthy can devise on short notice. Our good women have been at work all day, boiling and baking and

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frying. I can vouch for their part as a prospective success. A few of us met the train and introduced ourselves to the Carmen boys, thanked them for their happy thought of an evening given over to fun, and begged the privilege of joining in. Then we represented the immense advantages that our ground had over the redwood flats that they had proposed and begged them to move over to the Zayante lawn, offering every inducement we could think of, including barrels and boxes innumerable for the bonfire, and men to haul them.

“ They were an astonished set of boys, I assure you; but their good breeding stood the strain; they treated us as gentlemen should, and after a half-dozen objections to our plan, all of which we overruled, they surrendered gracefully, and I think can be fairly depended upon to meet us nearly half-way.

“ I heard some loud laughter, doubtless at my expense, as I walked away, but I think their general intentions are good.

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“ What we need now is a sort of connecting link, which I feel sure you can supply. Our ladies should be properly introduced, you know, and all such little matters arranged in accordance with the customs of well-behaved people, and I believe in my soul that you are here for that purpose; depend upon it, the Lord is in it.”

During the first half of this explanation Kendall Browning's mind underwent a variety of changes. Perplexity over the intertwined meshes of the “ scrape ” into which he had got himself, disgust with Dennison, who seemed to him in some way to blame for helping him into such a “ mess,” fun over the counter-movement that this quick-witted Mr. Brown had evidently planned, by which a wild frolic — and none understood better than he how wild a frolic Carmen boys could plan on occasion — was being turned into a Sunday-school picnic affair; and then, suddenly, a vision of his mother and a shiver of pain over the history of failure that he

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was carrying to her, and a troubled, wistful look bestowed on Mr. Brown under cover of the deepening twilight.

“The devil is in it!” he had told himself angrily as he turned from his interview with Professor Fallows; yet here was a manly voice with a strong and reverent ring, saying: “The Lord is in it!” Which was right? What a thing it would be to be the sort of fellow that this man evidently thought him! He could be. “You are a leader, you know,” Professor Fallows had said, and he knew that this was true.

“Sutton couldn’t have helped them out,” he said to himself, as a vision of the thin, pale, short-sighted, spectacled man, whose place he was supposed to be taking, appeared to him. Sutton was afraid of the boys, of all boys indeed, and would as soon think of trying to lead a herd of wild buffaloes as the mildest of the Carmen students.

Suddenly Kendall Browning threw back his head with the air of a victor and spoke with a note in his voice that gave his com-

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panion confidence: "All right, Mr. Brown, you may count on me to help the thing through in every way that I can."

And Mr. Brown, looking on, well pleased, only half understood how royal was the help he gave that evening.

The Carmen boys crowded about him the moment he appeared, eager to be led by him, and brim full of some secret of their own which they were anxious to impart; but he gave them no chance.

"Hush!" he said, lifting a warning finger at Dennison, who began with a bewildered: "What in thunder—" then stopped, arrested by that warning finger and an imperative shake of the head.

It was then that Dennison "caught on," as he told the others. "Brownie was up to something," he assured them; he didn't understand it fully, but he was evidently behind this whole affair, and the best thing they could do if they wanted to be "in it" was to fall into line. So they fell into line, and Browning moved among them like a king; they obeyed even the lift of his eyebrows, all the while holding themselves in

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readiness to explode with mirth whenever the point of the joke should be made apparent.

It was a remarkable evening. There was plenty of fun and almost continuous bursts of laughter; there was the most wonderful bonfire in the memory of Carmen and all other college men and women. There were college songs and college yells; certain gray-haired and much-titled men volunteered to give the special yell and sing the special song of their own far-away colleges. There were improvisations, in which — this being his special field — young Browning shone preëminent; albeit he stoutly, and with an emphasis that was not to be misunderstood, refused Dennison's pleadings for a repetition of certain efforts that had convulsed the Carmen boys but a few nights before. When opportunity offered for a hurried whisper, Dennison heard this:

“ We've got to have things in keeping this evening, and don't you forget it. I won't do one of those stunts to-night that you boys are after, not if you yell your-

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selves hoarse; and the sooner you get the fellows to understand, the better time they will have. They accepted the invitation to come over here, and they must live up to it. But you'll have a good time all right; and as for the joke, there is joke enough to last for a lifetime! If you watch out long enough you can't help seeing it."

One of the things he meant was that they should have a good time, and he kept himself continually on the alert, and knew that they were having it.

Then came the feast, eaten in the light of that magnificent bonfire; and what a feast it was! Certainly the women who had been in their kitchens all that day made good Mr. Brown's word for them. Never did chicken pie and chicken and ham sandwiches taste as they tasted that evening, to say nothing of the potatoes and corn that were roasted in hot ashes before their eyes. As for the cakes and pies —

"Oh, the *pies!*" groaned Dennison, putting tears into his voice.

"Boys, for the first time in my life I

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understand Alexander and feel that I am one with him. He wept because there were no more worlds to conquer, and I weep because there are no more stomachs to conquer pies! ”

Yet, through it all, the Carmen College boys were struggling with a puzzling question. What did it all mean? Or, as they phrased it: “ What was Brownie up to, anyhow? ”

It was growing late; in a very short time the express on which they must return to college would sound its warning whistle at the station above, and they had not yet discovered the point of the joke.

“ Look here, ” said Dennison, catching at his friend’s sleeve as he was attempting to rush swiftly past. “ Now I say — what in thunder does all this — ”

“ Hush up! ” said Browning peremptorily. “ Haven’t you had the tallest feed that was ever got up at a picnic? ”

“ I’m too full for utterance along that line, Brownie, but all the same I say — ”

“ Don’t say anything, dear boy; mum’s the word. Just go home in peace and com-

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fort and sleep the sleep of a good boy who has helped his fellow out of more scrapes than he knows of. I'll tell you all about it as soon as I find out myself. Just now I don't know where the end is; I don't, honest! but it's sure to end, and it's big, too, I can tell you. Bow-wow! you might as well keep still, old chappie, for I won't say anything more, not if you choke me. Hello! that's your train whistling this minute at the up station; it will be on you in a jiffy."

"What is the fellow up to!"

This was the reiterated exclamation of the Carmen boys, as they crowded about one another on the train to talk things over.

"I'm blessed if I understand a thing about it!" owned one of the leaders. "I kept waiting for the climax, and it didn't climax."

"I think it did!" said Dennison with a sudden outburst of laughter. "Wasn't that last scene climax enough? Think of us fellows standing about as sober as a board of deacons, joining with all our

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might in the long-metre doxology, and Brownie leading off!"

They roared in unison over the remembrance.

"It sounded fine, though," one broke off to say. "That fellow can sing as well as he can do most things that he wants to. I think the doxology was a fitting close to the whole performance. There wasn't a word said nor sung this blessed evening that that psalm-singing crowd couldn't have joined in if they knew enough. And the champagne baskets are going back as heavy as they came. Isn't the joke on us fellows, somehow? But I don't mind if it is; we had a jolly good time, and there won't be any headaches nor demerits to score up against this night's performance, which will be new for us certainly. All the same I should like to understand just what Brownie is about."

XV

MR. BROWN'S PLANS

MEANTIME, on the Assembly grounds the evening was being eagerly discussed by those who had worked hard for it. They gathered about Kendall Browning after their other guests had departed, profuse and hearty in their thanks for the help he had rendered.

A little later, Mr. Brown walked down the hill with him toward Farmer Brown's spring wagon, talking eagerly.

"I told you, brother, that the Lord was in it; you have done good work for him to-night. You met Miss Upton, did you not? The tall girl who served coffee. Her eyes shone with gratitude whenever she looked your way. She has a brother who keeps her in a state of anxiety a good deal of the time; she had made her eyes red

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with weeping over her fears for this evening, when I first heard of the plans. Do you know, my friend, that you captured that brother? He was the one who sang with you in the duet, and you congratulated him on his voice. The fact is you got hold of every one of those boys, and could lead them now in any direction that you chose. Do you remember Will Holden? He is a good fellow, bright and keen, and the victim of his fondness for fun. I was especially interested to see the way in which he watched you to-night. Will has ambitions, but his way is hedged, and it may be that he will not be able to go to college. He has hours of being sore over it, and sensitive about his work; he fancies that college boys look down upon him; and he has met with one or two who did what they could to foster that impression. But you knew just how to meet them all, without patronage or any appearance of superiority; you helped some of them to get away from an overweening self-consciousness that takes them captive on occasion, and have a good time together

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as comrades. It is a great gift that you have, my friend, that ability to win the boys to follow your lead. I know ministers who would give all they possess if they could thereby secure such an influence over boys as you showed to-night."

And then, glancing back to see who was within possible hearing, he linked his arm in Browning's and let his voice drop into a confidential tone.

"It wasn't the boys alone over whom some of us were glad this evening. Do you recall the young lady who sang soprano with you in that first quartette? You must have noticed her voice; it has possibilities of a high order. She is Miss Ailene Roberts, daughter of a strong-souled, large-hearted Christian woman who keeps a boarding-house on these grounds, and made all the chicken pie we ate to-night. She is very anxious about her pretty daughter, her one treasure. The girl is not interested in the meetings here, nor in anything religious I fancy; has not been. I think she looks upon religion as a matter chiefly for old people and

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sick people; at least she associates it with ill health and declining years and long faces. It was especially good for her to meet a young college athlete and leader among his set who stood for it boldly. I could feel the impression you were making; and so could her good mother. 'God bless him!' she said, as she shook hands with me, and followed you with her eyes, her face shining. 'God bless him! he has given my Ailene a new idea of religion this night. He's so young, you know, and so full of fun, and yet he's a preacher!'

"So you see, my friend, the hopes we are building on you, and the opportunity you have. By the way, we have a little plan for to-morrow morning that interests us very much, and of which we hope you will approve. The boys are anxious to hear you preach; I think each one has come to me separately to ask if it would be feasible to walk over to the little chapel for that purpose. And Miss Brown and I agreed that we should like of all things to join them. It is just a pleasant walk,

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you know, along the trail. I am not sure that you realize as I do what this may be for the boys. Some of them are just in the mood to be reached by the right person, and we are praying and believing that you are that person."

For the third time during this interview Kendall Browning opened his mouth to interrupt, to protest, to explain, but Mr. Brown had not noticed. He knew that his time was short, and made haste with what he wanted to say.

"So, if the weather should be pleasant you may count on us as an addition to your little congregation to-morrow, and you may know in the meantime that a few of us are carrying your words, before they are spoken, on the wings of faith and prayer."

"Mr. Brown!" rang out a voice from the hills above them, "are you coming? We are ready to take the trail."

"Ay, sir," he said, making a trumpet of his hand. "Coming this minute! Good night, my dear friend, and God bless you." He held Browning's hand in hearty

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grasp for a second and then strode away. Kendall Browning looked after him for a dazed moment, unable to decide what to do, then came to his senses.

“ Oh, I say! ” he called out. “ Hold on just a minute! Come back, please, for a moment. I must not detain you, but I simply *must* explain. I am not — ”

But he stopped, realizing that he was talking to trees and moonlight. The wind was against him, and his companion had run down a trail, jumped a ravine and was springing with long leaps up the wooded path on the other side. It was of no use to try to explain to him.

And here, within plain view were Farmer Brown and Dolly waiting for him. The little girl was already seated in the wagon.

“ I’ve been watching you and him visiting along, ” the farmer said genially. “ I guess it’s a good thing they called him, because we ought to be getting home right smart now, or it will be Sunday morning before you know it. Well, sir, we’ve had a great time to-night, haven’t we? I

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reckon I was about right when I said you could preach. Do you know I've made up my mind that Mr. Sutton can't hold a candle to you? Mr. Brown come and thanked me, before he went along with you, for bringing you over to-night. He said only the Lord knew what you might have accomplished by this evening's work. He is a great fellow, that Mr. Brown is! If we had a few more like him, we wouldn't have to pray any more for the millennium to come; it would be here. You like him, don't you? I dunno how a body could help it. And he took to you the first minute he saw you. My! but you can sing, can't you? Look here, you're pretty well tuckered out, ain't you? and no wonder, you've had a busy evening of it. I'm going to keep my tongue still now and let you rest."

Rest! He was grateful for the silence, but it seemed to him that he could never rest again. What had he done! He, Kendall Browning, grandson of the Reverend John Calvin Kendall of sacred memory, descending to the level of a trickster and a hypocrite! He was deceiving some of

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the choicest people he had ever met in his life, and he was preparing to conduct a service of solemn mockery in the church of God!

For the remainder of the drive comparative quiet reigned. The good farmer several times forgot his vow of silence and began with: "Wasn't that story Mr. Brown told —" or some kindred reminiscence of the evening, but midway in the sentence invariably checked himself with a sibilant "Shh!" whereat his guest laughed and tried to politely urge its continuance; but for himself he found it impossible to get away from his own scathing self-condemnation.

This mood continued after he had said good night to the farmer and his daughter, and had hidden himself in his room. Indeed his surroundings seemed to intensify his feelings. The very hominess of the flower-scented chamber, prepared so carefully for the comfort of the occupant, served to emphasize the fact that he had been compelled to play the hypocrite in order to enjoy it.

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He sank into the cushiony depths of the wide-armed chair with something very like a groan, and tried to bring some order out of the chaos of his thoughts, and determine what he must do. But certain features of the remarkable evening through which he had just lived persisted in coming to the front.

He to be congratulated because of his influence over boys! He, Kendall Browning, just expelled from college because boys would follow his lead!

How had it all happened? Why had it happened? Why should he have been left to get himself into such a mess? It was this infernal spirit of fun that had taken possession of him. Talk about *his* leading people! he was being led himself, he was not in the least his own master! Whatever diabolical spirit of the air attended upon people given over to fun evidently had him in charge, bound hand and foot. It was new business to discover himself a slave. The young man's face burned red under the smart of it; he, who had gloried

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in liberty, and boasted of it and waxed eloquent over it in debate!

But he must stop thinking of all this, and hold his mind to the contrivance of a way out of this awful situation. Why it was almost midnight, and to-morrow morning he was expected to stand in a pulpit and preach a sermon! The preposterousness of the idea presented itself to him fully for the first time. Driving home from the station that afternoon he had thought of the affair with almost complacency. There was a certain paper of his which had been prepared the year before for the Sunday evening annual meeting of the Young People's League connected with his home church. He had always remembered pleasantly the happy look on his mother's face as she listened to it being read by her son to a large congregation. It had been received with enthusiasm, and he had been urged to repeat it before the union meeting made up of all the young peoples' societies in town. He remembered that Dr. Carter, who had the reputation of being the best preacher in

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the little city, spoke very congratulatory words to him at the close, and added: "You ought to be a preacher, my boy; that is evidently the field of usefulness for which you were designed."

He had kept the paper, at first because his mother had liked it so much, and afterwards because he had made notes, on the reverse sides of the sheets, which were useful in class work. By what he had called in the afternoon a "streak of good fortune," those papers had been used during his last college recitation and thrust into his grip with other things that were lying around, during that last angry packing. It was the recollection of this which had made him decide to avail himself of the farmer's hospitality for over Sunday. Why shouldn't he read it again to that handful of people who could not walk to the Assembly grounds?

"It's got a lot of religion in it," he had told himself complacently, "and a whole raft of Bible verses. I'll sail in, and come out on top of the heap; Sutton will be nowhere."

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But all that had been in the afternoon. Now he thought of "that thing," as he contemptuously named the eloquent paper, with a loathing which had in it also a tinge of indignation. It seemed in some way to be responsible for the "scrape" in which he found himself. It must have been noticed before this that Kendall Browning was given to blaming every person or thing but the right one for his troubles.

He kicked the neat footstool on which Sutton was wont to rest his slippered feet quite out of its place, as he told it angrily that at any rate he could not read that stuff to those nice, jolly fellows who were coming out to hear him, and that Mr. Brown wanted him to "influence," and there was no use in talking about it.

There was another person before whom he knew he could not read "that stuff." "Did he recall the young lady who sang soprano?" Mr. Brown had asked. And he had gone on to particularize so that the stranger could distinguish her from the others. It wasn't in the least neces-

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sary; Kendall Browning remembered her as he remembered no other girl whose soft plump hand had rested for awhile on his coat sleeve. They had walked together about that enchanted ground, after the quartette had done its duty. He could feel at that moment the touch of her hand and the thrill that it gave him. Why hadn't Mr. Brown described her eyes if he wanted to recall her? They were like no other eyes in all the world, the boy was sure of that.

"But he couldn't describe them," he said softly, reaching for the overturned footstool and reinstating it under the spell of the gentler feeling. "He did well not to try. 'Possibilities in her voice,' I should think there were! She sings like an angel."

And he went back over the walk they had taken together, and the talk they had enjoyed while the others told stories and laughed. Her voice was sweet in conversation, as well as in song. He knew just the words she had said to him.

"I did not know that there were any

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men in college like you, Mr. Browning." How much he had liked to hear her say, "Mr. Browning!" He was not used to it. The girls he knew as often called him "Ken" as any other name; some of them even said, "Brownie," his pet nickname among the boys. He couldn't conceive of that sweet voice saying it. Her tone had been vibrant with admiration and respect; there was a sense in which he had understood her, but he had affected not to, just to enjoy her explanation.

"Like me!" he had exclaimed. "Am I so different from other people?"

"Yes, indeed!" she had said with emphasis. "Ever so different." And then he had felt humiliated, as a hypocrite should, and had tried to explain:

"You are awfully mistaken in me, Miss Roberts; I'm not a bit better than the other fellows, and I am not so good by a million times as some of them."

But he had neither enlightened nor disturbed her. "Oh, of course not!" she said with a pleased little laugh. "You don't think yourself good; I know just

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how Christian people feel, your kind of Christian, at least; but all the same they — well, I know what I mean.”

The sentence had closed with another of those exquisite little laughs that some way sent him back to a lovely nook in the sheltered gardens of his home, and a tiny waterfall that tinkled down over the mossy stones, making music to his ear; how well she fitted in to the choiceness of his thought about that home shelter! But he was miserable; she must be made to understand!

He opened his mouth to explain, to tell everything, if need be, in order not to deceive this lovely girl. He got out the words:

“ But I am not — ” He meant to say, “ But I am not a Christian at all; I am as far removed from one as possible. I have even, somehow, got myself into a scrape where I am posing as a hypocrite! ” And there had come an interruption; a peremptory call for both of them to sing in a quartette; and they had been suddenly surrounded by chatterers, and there

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had not been a moment, either then or afterwards, for explanation; and now he could not think of the beautiful girl without a flush of shame dyeing his face.

XVI

KENDALL BROWNING'S ANSWER

SUDDENLY an added terror struck the distressed young man, under the power of which he drew out his handkerchief and mopped his forehead. What if Miss Roberts should decide to make one of the morning audience in that little church! Mr. Brown said he should come with the boys, and that Miss Brown — his sister, probably — would be with him; and Miss Roberts was something to them, a cousin perhaps, or a ward; she seemed to be in their company much of the time. He could never read that thing before her! she would know in a flash that it fitted neither him nor his audience. This was awful!

He sprang up and began to stride up and down his few feet of space in a fever of shame and perplexity. What should he do? What *could* he do!

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There was his father with his unsullied name and his high sense of honor, trusting him, too, with business so important that most young sons would not be likely to be taken into confidence concerning it. Would his father regret his confidence when he heard of this latest most disgraceful of all his escapades? Heretofore he had at least maintained a reverent attitude toward everything of a religious character. As for his mother, the boy told himself resolutely that he would not think of her at all until he was out of this mess. Why, his mother *loved* the church, all churches! even the floors of the material building were dear to her as ground made almost sacred by their dedication to God's service. Such an act as he was planning would, in his mother's eyes, be sacrilege.

“ And she is right! ” he said suddenly, pausing before the white draped table and bringing his fist down upon it with an emphasis that made the sweet peas tremble. “ And I won't do it! there! I'll go down-stairs this minute and wake up that

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snorer and tell him I'm a jackass, a hypocrite, an impostor of the meanest kind, and deserve to be kicked out of his house.'"

And what then? Why, then, he would take himself off into the night and tramp anywhere, no matter where, so that he got himself where none of those good, dear, kind people whom he had met that day need ever be disgraced by seeing him again.

His excitement lessened after that; the decision reached to be as much of a man as circumstances would permit had a quieting effect.

He began to pace slowly up and down the room, trying to formulate what he should say to Farmer Brown, in order to acquaint him in as few words as possible with the necessary facts. He took out his watch and looked at it, and wondered if he could make the train that he knew would be due at the upper station soon after one. Why hadn't he learned the exact whereabouts of that across-lots route? He meant to hold himself resolutely now to definite plans for ridding this part of

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the world of his presence; he looked over at his suit-case in the corner and told himself that he would thrust back into it his belongings and take it down-stairs with him, and "that thing" he would carry in his hand and strike a match to, and watch it burn as soon as ever he got a safe distance from the house. He still had a vindictive feeling toward it, as if it were somehow to blame.

Suddenly he stood still in the centre of the room, his face paling. No sound was heard, no voice spoke, but a Presence seemed to be there, and to him there was a Voice, and this is what it said:

"Why not to-night?"

Instantly over the weary stretch of miles and years he was back in the old home. It was a winter night and they had been to evening service at the home church. Revival services, his father called them. There had been a very earnest, tender sermon preached by a gray-haired minister. The sermon had not been remarkable in any way save for those two qualities, earnestness and tenderness.

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Following it, a voice that he had not heard before, a young man's voice, rich and cultured, had filled the room, singing a simple hymn, the refrain of which kept coming again and again: "Thou would'st be saved — Why not to-night?"

Kendall Browning was a high-school boy then, and very wise. He had criticized the tune and the words and even the singer. He had said that the words were in horrid taste, they were sensational and entirely unpoetical, that the thing was not song at all, but sermon. He had laughed at the singer and called him pretentious, and was almost sure that he had flatted on some of the high notes. He had said all this to his young friends, the boys, with whom he had sat; some of them had seemed impressed seriously at first, by the services, but they had laughed with him, and agreed that the hymn was "mere doggerel." He had left them at his father's door, and had gone, presently, to his mother's room to bid her good night. She was not very well, and had been persuaded not to go out that evening; and no one, he was

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sure, had been to her room as yet to make any report of the service. Yet, without asking a question, she had touched his cheek tenderly, as he bent over her, with a soft hand that was feverish, and had said with singular impressiveness:

“Kendall, dear boy, why not to-night?”

He had been very much startled at the time, and had taken pains afterwards to assure himself that no one had told her about the service or the song; it had been simply one of those strange coincidences that help to get imaginative people off their balance. He was not imaginative, he told himself, nor superstitious, and he was able to evade his mother and throw off the impression, even to laugh over it afterwards; and he had not thought of that scene in years. Why should it present itself at this time? He had been resolved not to think of his mother; he knew that he was not thinking of her at the time. And then he became suddenly aware that the Voice was not his mother's. Whose was it? No one had spoken, no one at all!

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He assured himself of this with emphasis and knew that it was true; no one had, *except to him*. He knew what his inner self had heard. Well, even so, what was the explanation? Was the Lord really in it, as Mr. Brown had said?

“ Why not to-night? ” He repeated the words, gravely, aloud. Then, as though replying to some one, said, quietly,

“ Well, why not? ”

He admitted as he stood there that he understood well enough the general plan of salvation as it was accepted in the various churches, and believed in it. He admitted that he had meant all his life to some day turn squarely around and walk the Christian way. He had told his mother so. He had known exceedingly well just what she meant when she asked that question: “ Why not to-night? ”

He had put her off then, and often since; he had done it tenderly, with kisses and caresses and promises still unredeemed. His mother, of whom he had resolved not to think, might be praying for him at that moment. Then, suddenly, came the mem-

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ory of another strange experience of that strange evening, which for the moment had slipped away.

That Miss Brown, what was it she had said to him? He could seem to hear her words now, though for a time the young girl's voice had obscured them. She had told of a car acquaintance, a "lovely lady," with whom she had enjoyed much conversation, and who had talked about her son in college, much as he knew his mother would have talked; and finally, when they exchanged confidences concerning names, it had appeared that the lovely lady was his mother.

"What a joy you must be to her!" Miss Brown had said. "I am glad that the son of such a mother is all that even such a mother could wish him to be."

That was an unusual way of putting it, and in view of the peculiar circumstances, it had stabbed him at the time, and made him speechless with the pain of the thought that he was on his way home to bitterly disappoint that mother. Then, before he had recovered, had come that other

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sentence, spoken hesitatingly and with a smile that suggested embarrassment.

“Your mother told me that if I ever met you I must say some word that would help you, because that was what all women ought to do for all men. But you see I don't know how to do such things, and I am glad to know that you are not in need of help. I have been thinking what a joy it would be to her to hear you to-morrow. If I were to be at the service I should try to listen for her, and write her how good it was. I know it will be the kind of sermon that she wants to have preached.”

It seemed to him now an extraordinary thing that he could even for a moment have forgotten such a message! but it was just then that he had been introduced to Ailene Roberts.

He “not in need of help!” Was there a wretch on earth who needed it more? And he was to preach the kind of sermon that his mother wanted! He knew well what kind that would be, and that first of all it must ring true. What a strange coincidence it was that such a message

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should come to him this night of all nights!

And then had seemed to come to him again that Voice: "Why not to-night?" But he knew that it was not his mother who was questioning. Who was it? "Behold, I stand at the door and knock."

Why should that verse learned away back in his early childhood come and stand before him now, together with the picture that his mother had shown him of the waiting One with the thorn-crowned head?

"Why not to-night?"

No matter if the wording of the hymn was "mere doggerel," as he had said, and the music incorrect; that single question was alive with good sense and suggestive of a logic that was unanswerable.

He went back presently to the old-fashioned rocker, and sank into its depths and put his face in his hands and tried to think.

It would involve a great deal, this decision that he was being asked to make. He knew the steps; intellectually he was able to point out the way to any inquirer. But he was not ready to settle the ques-

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tion. Why should it force itself upon him to-night of all nights? He was on his way home in disgrace; if he should make any radical change of base now, it would look to some of the men in college like a bid for favor. Even his father might think that it was a desperate effort to turn the thoughts of his friends away from his disgrace. But his mother — ah, that was different; his mother would believe in him. Still, this did not seem the proper time for such decisions. One's mind should be calm and his way clear when he gave attention to such matters. Suppose he should resolve to settle this question once for all and in the right way as soon as he was free from his present embarrassments? It was of no use. The persistent Voice pressed its solemn question: "Why not to-night?" He was made to realize that it was the voice of that One who stood and knocked. Would he wait? Should he be made to wait? The minutes passed steadily; he could hear the solemn old clock in the hall ticking them away. Every sense was keenly alert. It seemed to him that

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he could almost see his mother's kneeling form; he knew that she was praying for him. He knew that no matter how hard pressed she was with anxiety about her mother, or with physical weakness, he was not for an hour forgotten. What were those old verses she had copied for him once? The title of the poem was "Un-forgotten." The words floated through his mind. He had learned them because he was always learning verse, and because his mother had sent them:

"Perhaps just then my friend has fiercer fight,
A more appalling weakness or decay
Of courage, darkness, some lost sense of right;
And so, in case you need my prayer, I pray."

He was sure that his mother was praying.

The minutes passed; the kerosene lamp burned low, gave forth a frightful odor and died out. But the room was flooded with moonlight.

The old clock in the hall struck one, struck two, the express train whistled in

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the distance and then rushed on; and still that bowed figure sat there, deciding.

The immediate embarrassment connected with the coming morning passed out of mind, he was fighting the battle of his life. He had not been a slave to his lower nature all these years for nought. His *will* did not want to yield; it wanted to put off, to compromise. "Some lost sense of right" the poem said. Had he lost the power to make right decisions? Was his mother praying that he might have strength of will? Was it in answer to her prayer that he was made to understand that the hour for decision had come; that as he settled this question now, it would be settled for life? He knew that he was as sure of this as that he sat in that chair being given liberty of choice. He might choose, there was yet time, but he must do it *now*.

It was as the clock in the hall was slowly tolling four that he went to his knees. His first words were characteristic of the man, and were significant.

"My Lord, I open the door: come in,

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as thou hast promised and abide with me.”

He knelt long; it was the first time he had really prayed since he had grown away from the habits of childhood. But he had been taught how to pray.

It was past six of that summer Sunday morning when Kendall Browning pushed away the curtains and looked out upon the world. The sun was busy decorating the old earth with ten thousand times ten thousand diamonds that glowed and sparkled in the dewy air.

“A new day,” said the young man, reverently, “and a new world.” A great peace was on his face. He remembered the morning’s ordeal, but it had lost its horrors. He wanted to speak to the people; he had something to tell them; and a special word for those boys.

“The Lord is in it!” he said. And his mother would have liked to see the smile with which the words were spoken.

XVII

THE BROWNS AND THE BROWNING'S AT CHURCH

It was some two hours later that Farmer Brown, sitting at his bountifully spread breakfast-table, looked troubled over a message that his young daughter brought from the guest room.

“Father, he says he won’t have any breakfast, only a glass of milk in his room, if it isn’t too much trouble.”

“Sho!” said Farmer Brown, “that’s too bad! he’s fretting over his preaching, and there isn’t any kind of need of it. I know just as well as I want to that it will go all right. If he had ever heard Mr. Sutton, he’d know it, too. Why, mother, if you had heard him talk last night, you’d know in a minute that he could preach, or do anything he wanted to. What he ought to do is to come down and eat a good

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hearty breakfast; some of this nice ham and a fresh egg or two would set him right up. But there's something about him, young as he is, that makes you feel he knows his own mind; and I don't like to interfere."

So a pitcher of creamy milk and a plate of fresh rolls were despatched to the young man's room.

Another disappointment awaited the good farmer. A little while before his hospitable spring wagon, drawn this time by two stout horses and having in it three seats, ready to pick up less fortunate neighbors, was ready to start for church, his guest came springing down the stairs and asked for careful directions for the trip across lots and strode away.

"Don't you be a mite worried," his host called after him cheerfully. "I ain't, the least speck in the world; I know you'll come out all right, see if you don't! The Lord takes care of young folks who are trying to honor him; I've seen that proved a hundred times." This last was to his

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wife and daughter, for Kendall Browning was already out of hearing.

A surprise awaited Farmer Brown. When he at last had his horses comfortably settled and appeared in the doorway of the little church, the size of the audience, he afterwards explained, almost took him off his feet.

On ordinary summer days if twenty grown people were present at the service, he had been in the habit of remarking cheerfully that "they had a real good house to-day." What was his astonishment to find nearly every seat in the little house already filled, although there were still five minutes before the service would begin. In some way the impression had evidently gone abroad that there were to be unusual doings at the chapel that morning. In truth, the good farmer, without realizing it, had been busy the day before doing what he could to create such an impression. To every person he met he had said:

"Come over to the church to-morrow

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and hear our young man; we've got a new one, and he can't be beat."

As for the young man, who was already in the "minister's chair," he knew three things. First, that Miss Roberts was there, sitting beside the young woman who had given him a message from his mother. He had given the girl one swift glance as he seated himself, and had seen, all in white, that which had suggested to him a vision of angels. Then he saw Mr. Brown and the boys; but they were decorous and dignified; to them there was nothing incongruous in seeing their new acquaintance in the seat of the preacher. But the sight that would have struck dumb the Kendall Browning of yesterday was a row of Carmen College boys filling two front seats and nudging one another and grinning conspicuously over the wonder in the pulpit. Browning had not thought of this, even as a remote possibility, and it gave him a strange thrill, but not of fear. He had been thinking a good deal about Dennison, and Dennison was there. Had

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he possibly been given a word especially for him?

The advent of the college boys had, at least from the human side, resulted from very natural causes.

While they had been in full tide of talk the night before, going over the history of Kendall Browning as they knew it in college, and touching on his latest prank, the dire result of which they partly surmised, a young fellow in front of them suddenly wheeled around with a question:

“ Say, are you talking about that chap who said poetry over there at the campground to-night, and sang songs and did lots of things? I thought you were. Well, he’s the one that’s going to preach at our church to-morrow.”

The outburst of merriment from the boys, over this piece of news, rose above the noise of the train, and Dennison explained.

“ I guess not much, my good fellow. That was a Carmen College man, and he isn’t exactly a preacher.”

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“ It’s him, all the same,” said the other, confidently. “ Ain’t he the one that sang the solo, and you boys joined in the chorus? and ain’t his name Browning? He’s the man. He’s staying at Joel Brown’s house back here two or three miles from the camp, and he told me all about him. Why, I live out there myself when I’m at home, and I ought to know about things. Joel Brown said it was a pity I’d got to go back to-night; he said I ought to stay so as to hear him preach; he believed he could preach as well as he could sing. But I work at the engine house, and I’ve got to be on duty to-morrow. I’m awful sorry, too; when I heard him going on to-night I made up my mind that he had a lot more preach in him than the other one. He’s Mr. Sutton, you know. He is from Carmen College, too; know him? I don’t care much for his preaching. Oh, it’s all right, of course, and good enough for them that like it, but I never get interested in it, somehow. I’d like first rate to hear this one.”

“ Boys,” said Dennison in undertone,

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but with an emphasis that carried conviction, "I believe he is right! This is the climax we were watching for to-night; it's Brownie's latest! Yes, sir, that's it! He was posing all the evening as a preacher; and that's the reason he was so mulish about the songs and the stories that we wanted; and to-morrow he's going to stand up in the pulpit and preach a sermon! I say, boys, let's be in it! We belong in this joke, anyhow; we have helped him carry it out so far, it's no more than fair to stand by him. He ought to be choked for not giving us the hint."

"I'll bet he'd rather be choked than to have us come," said one of the quieter boys. "If you are right in your guess, Dennison, our sudden appearance might throw him off his base."

"He deserves to be, the scamp! He hasn't any honest base to stand on. I say, let's go out in a body. We can take the morning accommodation and get there just in time."

And there they were.

There was nudging and whispering

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among them as Kendall Browning came swiftly down the aisle and mounted the little platform that served as a pulpit.

“It’s his ghost!” murmured one.
“Look at him! he is white to his lips!”

“He can read yet,” murmured Dennison, as, after a brief earnest prayer offered by Farmer Brown, the young man announced the hymn and read it in such fashion that the little church fairly held its breath to listen. It was not a familiar hymn, indeed it had never before been sung in that little church, and most of the worshippers there had never heard it before, although it was in their collection. But the reader read it as though it had been written for that particular hour and voiced the feeling of his soul.

“No, not despairingly come I to Thee;
No, not distrustingly bend I the knee;
Sin hath gone over me, — yet this is still my plea,
Jesus hath died.

“Lord, I confess to Thee, sadly, my sin.
All I am tell I Thee, all I have been,
Purge Thou my sin away, wash Thou my soul this day.
Lord, make me clean.

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“ Faithful and just art Thou, forgiving all.
Loving and kind art Thou, when poor ones call.
Lord, let Thy cleansing blood, blood of the Lamb of
God,
Pass o'er my soul.”

There had never been such singing in the little church as followed the reading of that hymn. Just before the service began, Farmer Brown had announced to the preacher in a troubled whisper that their singing leader hadn't come, he was sure he didn't know why, they could 'most always depend on him; and he didn't know as there was one of their folks in the church who could “raise the tunes,” though they could all sing if it was started. Therefore, young Browning, as soon as he had read the words began to sing, and the Carmen College boys, five of whom were members of the same glee club with himself, chose to join him. The guests from the Assembly grounds were evidently all singers, and some of them knew this hymn, or joined in it as though they did. When Kendall Browning caught once a sweet,

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clear strain from Ailene Roberts's lips, he thought again of angels.

For himself, he wanted to sing; he had never felt more like song; and he knew that he had never sung before as he did that morning, for the heart went with the words. When he reached the strain:

“Faithful and just Thou art, forgiving all,”

he let the joy of his recent discovery as to the truth of that statement roll heavenward in song.

The talk that followed was as unaccustomed to the ears of those who listened as the hymn had been. Not Sutton certainly had ever thought to tell the simple story of a soul on whom the light from the Sun of Righteousness had dawned consciously for the first time.

“Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not.”

Those were the words the young preacher had chosen as a centre around which to weave his tale.

It was very simply told; there was no attempt at oratory, and he had forgotten

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that he was expected to preach. He had made a discovery, and enjoyed a realization of something that was blessed to him, and was for them as well, and he wanted to tell them about it, that was all.

He was by no means unpleasantly personal. He entered into the details of his life only far enough to make plain to his listeners what he now felt sure of, that the Lord was in it all, had been from the beginning, and had brought him step by step to the day and hour when a decision had to be made and to be made for life.

He told about the old hymn, "Why not to-night?" and of the tender wistfulness of his mother's voice when she, not having heard the hymn that night, nor known of its being sung, used the same words and sought to win his answer to them. He told how he put her off with an excuse; how he had always been putting her off with all sorts of cheerful excuses; how he had gone on from year to year putting off; knowing his duty, understanding perfectly the claims of a religious life upon a responsible person, believing fully and

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unreservedly in the Lord Jesus Christ as a Saviour and Leader, yet making his life one long record of folly and disappointment. He told them briefly yet with strong feeling of his hastily undertaken journey of the morning before, of its being providentially intercepted, of his being providentially met by "the Lord's messenger disguised as Farmer Brown," of the kind words that had mistaken him for a servant of the Lord and mapped out work to be done for Him. Of the message from his mother, coming just then of all times in his life, of the Presence, or at least the Voice in the silence and solemnity of his room repeating steadily the old question: "Why not to-night?" and forcing him to the conviction that the night had come in which that question must, so far as he was concerned, be answered once for all. Very simply and quietly he told of the surrendered will at last, and the glory of the new morning, and his assured and blessed conviction that the Lord was in it all.

"Boys," he said suddenly, looking

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straight at the Carmen College group, "I know that this is a great astonishment to you. You did not expect ever to see me in such a place as this; and, discovering me, you did not in the least expect from me such words as I have spoken. You all know that some tremendous change must have come to me since you saw me, but a few hours ago. And there has. The most tremendous change I believe that a human life is capable of experiencing. I will not except even that other change when the soul parts company from the body and goes its way, for that is only taking the journey to which one has looked forward to reach the home where one has planned to be. But this is a changed *will*. New life, new love, new desires, new intentions. Boys, I am in dead earnest and the Lord is in it as surely as he was with that wanderer from whose words I took the Bible verse I gave you this morning. Like Jacob I knew it not; I believed that I was running away from Him, from responsibility, from honor; and He followed me every step and drew me to the place where

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His people gather, so that the words of an old hymn which my mother used to sing in her childhood, and which I never understood, and laughed over as meaningless, has come to me to voice the thought of my heart this morning.

“ ‘Twas the same love that spread the feast
That sweetly forced me in;
Else I had still refused to taste,
And wandered in my sin.’

“ Comrades, you will be sure that this ought to make a tremendous difference in my entire life, and I am sure that it will. Some things — a good many things — will have to be radically changed, and shall be. It could not be otherwise in any life, and in mine, I know just what you are thinking, that there is special need for change, and there is.

“ Now, why am I standing in this place consecrated to the service of God, and taking up the time with telling my story? What excuse is there for such an act? Just one, friends. One motive alone prompted me to carry out in dead earnest

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what the Lord has forgiven me for beginning in jest. It is because I wanted the opportunity to ask any who listened to me who had not already taken the single step which means decision to take it now.

Listen:

“ ‘Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him and he with me.’ Did you ever stop to consider who it is who said that? Do you realize that it is the Lord Christ? You believe in Him, don’t you? Did you ever hear of such marvellous opportunity as that?

“ I learned that verse from a little pictured card given me in Sunday school when I was six years old. I knew no more what the words meant than if it had been written in Hebrew. They have been lying dormant in my memory all these years. I haven’t even taken the trouble to think about them. Wasn’t that marvellous stupidity on my part? What I want to tell you is that this morning, only this morning, He verified to me the truth of those

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words! and all I did was to open the door. Comrades, will you try it? ”

They listened. Some of them at first with half-amused, half-puzzled smiles on their faces, and a general air of expectancy, as though somewhere the ludicrous would appear. Gradually the smiles faded, the faces grew grave. One or two partially shaded them with their hands. Dennison, at the mention of the waiting mother, surreptitiously brushed away a tear; he, too, had a waiting mother. One bowed his head on his hand and did not raise it again during the service. His mother had waited, and *waited*, in vain, and then had gone away forever.

XVIII

KENDALL BROWNING'S OPPORTUNITY

“COME out to the Assembly grounds with us, brother, and speak to our young people. We have a grand rally there at four o'clock, and an opportunity.”

These were the words that greeted Kendall Browning as he turned from the Carmen boys. Mr. Brown's hand rested on the younger man's shoulder, and his tones were those of a comrade.

Browning's eyes were bright; the excitement of the morning's effort was still upon him, and he felt eager for opportunities. It seemed to him that he had a message to be given as often as possible. He spoke eagerly.

“A young people's rally. May I come? I should like to tell all the young people in the world what I have found.

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“ Yes, thank you; I shall be glad to go. Boys, will you go over to the Assembly with me? It is a splendid walk under the big trees. It will be all right for them to go, will it not, Mr. Brown? ”

Whereupon, that gentleman extended his invitation to them, and made it hearty.

The boys looked at one another and laughed a little. They were embarrassed; this was entirely new ground. Did Brownie mean just what he had been saying, or was this part of a colossal joke? Do them the justice to understand that if it was a joke, they were ashamed of Browning. There were limits even to fun; and these young men came from Christian homes.

They looked helplessly at Dennison who, in the absence of Browning, had always been their leader; indeed he had sometimes led in ways that Browning would not have chosen. He spoke quickly now, in undertone. “ Let us go, boys, we might as well make a day of it, and see what this really means. I don't understand it, myself.”

KENDALL'S OPPORTUNITY

So, to the disappointment of farmer Brown, whose thoughts of hospitality had included the Carmen boys, they all tramped away up the hill toward the Assembly trail.

Kendall Browning ran his eyes eagerly along the groups walking by twos until he saw Miss Brown with Ailene Roberts; then, with a word of excuse to the boys, he made a rush for her side.

“ May I have a word with you, Miss Brown? Do you really mean to write to my mother, as you said? ”

Miss Brown laughed a little: she was almost as much embarrassed as the Carmen boys. “ I am afraid that was one of my rash remarks,” she said, trying not to meet his eager eyes.

“ Ah, but I wish very much that you would, if you are willing. My mother would appreciate it. The ladies are so much better at description than boys are; and mothers, you know, like to be told every little thing. How the church looked, and how the people were seated, and what was sung. By the way, wasn't the singing

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fine? Boys, I never heard you sing better, and I appreciated it. And then, you Assembly people helped so splendidly!

“Why, Miss Brown, I don’t want to trouble you, of course; but I am sure my mother would be very grateful.

“I can’t tell you how wonderful it seems to me that you should have given me that word from her, and that good word from yourself, last night of all nights in the world! It would be unaccountable to people who do not believe in God, wouldn’t it? Some time, I want to tell you about last night. Oh, I shall never be able to put into words the story of what a night it was! You couldn’t possibly appreciate it anyway, because you never, either of you, took the rôle of a hypocrite, you see.”

His glance included Ailene, but he went on eagerly, before either could speak.

“That is precisely what I was doing last night. Posing as a minister! It hardly seems possible that I could have done it, or meant to do it! My mother will scarcely believe it. But after the Lord really takes



“ MAY I HAVE A WORD WITH YOU, MISS BROWN ? ” — Page 269.

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possession of us, things have a very different look from what they did before, don't they? "

And then, Mary Brown could not help feeling that she was playing the rôle of a hypocrite. He talked to her as one who knew experimentally what it meant to have the Lord take possession of her; and she did not know how to undeceive him. Indeed he gave her no chance. He went on eagerly, about his mother, and the joy she would feel in hearing the great news.

"Of course I shall write to her at once, and tell her how her message came, through you, at exactly the right moment to influence the decision.—Isn't living wonderful!" he broke off to say with added enthusiasm. "What if you had not cared to use your influence for God, last night? or had been so indifferent to his work that you had forgotten the message? Should I not have needed it to tip the balance? Of course I should! and of course the Lord knew it, and knew that you would supply your link in the chain. I say,—doesn't that make life *grand*, if we are

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true to it? But it makes it solemn, too, doesn't it? To think that the passing word we speak or fail to speak may help or hinder a soul forever!"

She got away from the enthusiast as soon as she could. It became increasingly impossible to try to explain to this honest, eager boy that she was not a disciple in any sense of the word, notwithstanding the fact that she was posing as a link in that wondrous chain.

As the trail narrowed, she purposely dropped behind, the boy and girl seeming to be in no wise disturbed thereat. Indeed, the moment he found himself practically alone with Ailene, Kendall Brown-
ing began earnestly in lowered tone.

"Will you let me tell you, Miss Roberts, how much you helped me?"

"I!" said Ailene, and she put both amazement and delight into the small pronoun. "How could I? You are confusing me with some one else."

"Indeed not! as if I could do that! It was what you said about my being different from other college boys, you know.

KENDALL'S OPPORTUNITY

It was when you thought I was a minister, or was going to be one. It made my face burn, at the time, to think what an awful hypocrite I was! I tried to undeceive you; do you remember that I made the attempt? ”

“ Oh, yes,” said innocent Ailene, “ I remember every word you said; but of course I didn't think — ”

“ No, of course you did not understand; how could you? But, do you know, I could not get away from the wish that I were in reality just what you thought me? ”

“ And so you went and made a truly minister of yourself, right away, just to make good my opinion? That was real nice of you.”

Ailene's silvery little laugh bubbled out, and her bright eyes sparkled with fun. Browning laughed with her; but he was in too intense earnest not to grow instantly sober.

“ No, really, Miss Roberts, it was a God-given thought on your part. You were led — don't you see — to say just the right word! I felt its power; I have felt

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it all the morning. I'm not posing now; — you understand that, of course. I am in dead earnest; and I wanted to say to you at the very first opportunity that I'm going to try to do it: to live up to your ideal of what a Christian should be. I know it is high, and I can only aim for it; but it is worth a great deal to have high ideals; to know what is expected of one. Don't you think so? Of course there is an even higher motive now, one that controls. Do you get my meaning? A higher than earthly motive. I have always wanted not to disappoint my mother; and yet I have gone on disappointing her year after year in the most reckless way! but now it is different, utterly different; and I realize for the first time the meaning of your motto that I have heard so often: 'One is our Master, even Christ.' He is '*Master*,' I feel his hand. But I need not try to explain to you; of course you understand, better than I do myself, that I am in a new world to-day; I have crossed the line." There was no mistaking the solemn earnestness of his voice.

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The fun had gone out of Ailene's eyes; she spoke very gravely.

"No, Mr. Browning, I don't understand; not in the way that you think. I am not in the least what they call a Christian; and the new world that you talk of, I know nothing about."

He gave her a troubled look.

"Do you mean it, Miss Roberts? Why, I thought—I thought—this morning when I heard you sing, I almost felt—"

He did not finish any of his sentences. He was not the kind of young man who could tell so new an acquaintance that she had made him think he had seen a vision of angels.

She came to his aid.

"You thought everybody was good, because you meant to be. It is not true, Mr. Browning. I am not good at all. My mother could tell you that I do not care for any of these things. Mother is a Christian, I don't believe there could be a better one, and she wants everything good that there is in the world for me; and nothing so much as to have me a real

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Christian; and I keep on disappointing her all the time; so now you see what I am."

"Then we are on the same ground," he said quickly, "you and I. It is the way I have treated my mother for years and years. But you will not do it any longer? You will settle the matter to-day, now. Will you not? I am sure you will." His voice throbbled with feeling.

She looked up at him then, wondering; her face flushed, and her whole fair person trembling.

"I do not understand what you mean," she said. "One cannot settle such things as one would decide a trip to town, or some other trifle. If I cannot feel as my mother and a very few other people would like to have me, I am surely not to blame; we do not make our feelings; and I will never pretend what I do not feel, even to please my mother. One cannot force oneself to be interested in such matters."

"I beg your pardon," he said eagerly, "but that is just what one can and should do; not force one's self to be *interested*,

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exactly — I should not use that word — but one can oblige one's self to take hold of a duty and be loyal to it, no matter what one's feelings are. If there is anything in this world that I have been sure of for a long time it is that. Why, in college, I felt like fooling away my time and money in what I was pleased to call fun, and did it; but dear me! I knew all the while that I had no business to be doing any such thing, and that I was entirely capable of turning around and facing the other way the minute I told myself to do so; and this, without the slightest regard to what my feeling in the matter might chance to be; there is a sense in which feeling had nothing whatever to do with it."

"Then," said Ailene in an astonishment that was almost indignation, "religion is a mere matter of decision; and being 'converted,' as my mother calls it, is just saying that you will or will not do certain things, and that is all there is to it."

"No, oh, no indeed! That is very far

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from being all there is to it. It may be that we do not use the right terms in talking about it; strictly speaking, I suppose we convert ourselves; that is, we change our position: turn around and face the other way; that is really the best way I can put it; it appeals to me, you see, because I had to do exactly that. But there is another word—I was brought up on theology, Miss Roberts, my grandfather and two of my uncles were ministers, and I can remember what must have been theological discussions as early as I can remember anything; I used to hear much about that long word ‘regeneration’ which seems now to be seldom used. But it is a good dictionary word. I looked it up this very morning in connection with a thought that troubled me; and it explained for me the sudden and remarkable change that had come over my feelings. I discovered that that was God’s part.

“ ‘A radical change,’ the dictionary says, ‘accomplished by the direct action of the Spirit of God.’ You see, I was perfectly certain that something had hap-

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pened to me, outside of and entirely beyond myself; and that word 'regeneration' took hold of me; I am a dabbler in the study of words; I like to get at their root meanings, they sort of fascinate me — and the word seemed just great enough to express the meaning of the change that had come to me. I felt myself made new.

“ But before that time, Miss Roberts, before God consciously took hold of me and wrought his marvel, I was just as distinctly conscious of an act upon my part, of a decision, deliberate, entire, unchangeable. I surrendered; that's the word. That tremendous force within me which had heretofore been the victim of my caprice, or of any passing feeling, I gave over *consciously* into the hands of God, and pledged myself irrevocably to follow his lead from that time forth, without any regard to whether I felt like doing so, or not. If I were going to make a dictionary, I believe I should name that act on my part, conversion. I could, and did do it, of my own will; and I believe in my soul

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that it had to precede that other act of God's.

“ I hope you can forgive me; I did not intend to preach a sermon at you; but I did want to talk about this great thing with you. And I want to ask you something; I want to ask if you will not, without regard to any feeling which you may or may not have, take that one step, to-day, and do it because you ought? You see I take it for granted that your intellect doesn't need convincing; most of us brought up in Christian homes I think understand the way, well enough. But I am going to do more than that, a strange bold thing, perhaps. I am going to ask it of you as a favor to me.

“ This morning, the Bible that lay on the table in my room opened for me of its own will — I did not know where to turn; I have neglected the Bible disgracefully, but it seemed to like to open to that account of the calling of the first followers of Christ; and I read it. I'll tell you what took hold of me. Do you remember that every one of them went, almost as

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soon as they had had speech with Jesus, and told some one else, whom they wanted to have come and see him? And instantly I felt the naturalness of that, and the reasonableness. Why shouldn't we want to do just that thing? I do. I want to do it all my life; I believe the Lord has regenerated me for just that work. I am to go after others with all the strength there is in me. And Miss Roberts, I hope you will forgive me, and not think me rude, or bold or presuming, but instantly I thought of you, and I wanted you to be the very first one to whom I should tell this part of my story, as you are. Now, can I help asking you to go with me to meet Jesus? "

She was strangely moved. No appeal from mother or teacher — and there had been many — had ever searched her as this one did. She struggled for words to make the reply for which he waited.

"It is true," she said at last, "what I told you last night. You are very different from other people. I never in my life heard any such talk as this! it seems to

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me that you are asking me to do what is impossible.”

“ No, I am sure I am not. I am sure you will see when you think it over quietly, the simplicity and reasonableness of your part. God will do the part that seems to you impossible. But I will not ask you to promise *me*, anything, I have no right; I will ask you to take it to Jesus Christ and simply promise Him, on your knees alone with Him, that you will do whatever He directs.”

XIX

MARY BROWN'S TROUBLES

“WE have another Carmen College guest to-day,” said Mr. Brown, as he shared with Kendall Browning the hospitalities of his tent while they waited for dinner.

“He is spending Sunday with his friends at Glen Cairn, I believe, and as there are several young people in the family they have driven over to the Rally. I was introduced to him when I went to petition Mrs. Roberts for your seat at her table. It is Professor Fallows. You know him, I presume?”

“I should think I did!”

The energy of this reply did not escape his host, and he waited expectantly for more; but Browning was silent for so long that he concluded there was nothing fur-

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ther to be told him, and began to speak of other matters. But his guest was evidently preoccupied, and he was about to suggest leaving him for a quiet hour, when Browning said suddenly:

“ Mr. Brown, I wonder if I may intrude a little more of myself upon you? I should like, since things are as they are, to tell you something of my college life; especially of the last few days.”

Whereupon, he began at the beginning of his retrograde movement in college and sketched rapidly his roads of descent, down to the Saturday morning in which he believed that he had bade good-bye to college life forever. Then he gave as briefly as possible such links as Mr. Brown did not already know in the strange chain of circumstances that had contributed to the mighty change which had come over his life.

“ And what are you going to do next? ” was Mr. Brown’s question, as soon as the story was concluded.

“ Next, I am going straight back to college, to-morrow morning, to make a full

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confession and explanation to the President and such of the professors as should hear them, and beg forgiveness, and ask to be tried again. At least that seems to me now the thing that ought to be done next."

"In that case, my friend, I think you may certainly consider the presence of Professor Fallows just at this time another link in the chain of unusual Providences. By the way, is he a Christian?"

"No; he respects religion, and is fond of saying that if he could find more Christians in the world like my father he would be tempted to make a profession, himself; but he considers them very scarce. He is a grand man; a faithful friend to the boys, and one who has a great deal of influence over them; and he is a regular attendant at church, and advises the students to cultivate that habit; but that is the extent of his religious influence."

"Then," said Mr. Brown, smiling, and rising, as the summons to Mrs. Roberts's dinner table sounded on the air, "you

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have a chance to get him to say that since there are Christians like your father's son, it is time for him to take a consistent position before them."

It was this confidence on the part of the younger man which enabled Mr. Brown, several hours later, to make just the reply he did to Professor Fallows.

That gentleman was standing in front of Assembly Hall, waiting for the carriage that was to take him back to Glen Cairn. Kendall Browning was still inside, surrounded by a crowd of young people; old friends and new, all eager to take him by the hand and welcome him as a co-laborer in the cause they loved.

But among the many who had stopped to shake hands with the young enthusiast and bid him God-speed had not been Professor Fallows. He stood aloof, and waited with dignity while the members of his own party hurried forward to greet his pupil, who had just spoken what they believed to be earnest words for Christ.

The professor's face was strongly marked with emotion; and indignation

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was undoubtedly struggling with the distress that was evident. He was still debating mentally whether it were better to speak, or to keep silence. Suddenly he turned to Mr. Brown, who had just come out.

“Do you know, sir, that that young fellow to whom we have just been listening, and who seems to be a sort of protégé of yours, is grossly imposing on you? He is an impostor of the lowest kind.”

“You mean Mr. Browning?” said the younger man, calmly. “I think he is very far removed from that.”

“That is because you do not know him. I do. Did I not hear you tell some one that you met him first, yesterday? I thought so. Let me tell you who and what he is. A son, to begin with, of one of the best fathers in the world, who has every reason to be ashamed of him. A young man of exceptional ability,—as he has shown you here,—who has chosen to waste his time in college in all sorts of follies, and lead others into all sorts of scrapes, and now has capped the climax

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by making capital out of his religious training, and his remarkable gift of language, to dishonor the religion that his mother loves, and hoodwink an entire congregation. Why, sir, he was practically expelled from college night before last!"

"So he told me," said Mr. Brown, still letting the utmost calm of his voice and manner contrast sharply with the excitement of the other.

"He told you! When did he tell you? Why did he tell you?"

"The time was two or three hours ago. The object, at least one of his objects, was to make plain to me how wonderfully God had been leading him through strange experiences."

The professor made a gesture of impatience, and spoke angrily. "To show you what a smart fellow he is, and how entirely he can humbug whoever he chooses! I know him. I don't deny that the boy is a genius; he has remarkable histrionic talent; but I thought that love for his mother would keep him from ever descending so low as to make a cloak of

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her religion with which to cover his sins. I am wofully ashamed of him. All this hurts me, sir, more than I can make plain to you, for there were reasons why I loved the boy."

The tremor in his voice comforted the listener.

"I think I understand your feeling," he said gently. "That is, if you look upon him as an impostor; but I am able to assure you that he is nothing of the kind. The fact is that, since yesterday morning, at which time you doubtless knew him well, a mighty change has come upon him which has made of him a new creature."

The usually courteous professor's lip curled slightly, very slightly, he could not help it, as he said:

"I am afraid you credit me with slight knowledge of human nature, if you think I do not know the human impossibility of so sudden a real change of character as that would be."

"I beg your pardon; I said nothing about human possibilities. I am speak-

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ing of something far higher than those. It is the young man's tastes, feelings, intentions, rather than his character, that have changed; though that must necessarily follow. Professor Fallows, he loves God and has determined from henceforth to serve him; it is that which has caused the mighty change of which I spoke. In theological language, he has been born again. Your name, Professor, is associated in my memory with a long line of eminent theologians, you must at least be familiar with that term."

The eminent student of history stood before him silent, astonished, almost bewildered with a sudden rush of memories. He was a boy again, a restless tow-headed bobbing boy in a village Sunday school of a summer Sunday afternoon, watching the buzzing flies on the small window panes, and surreptitiously catching one, even while he recited many verses that he had learned from the little red New Testament that the teacher held in her hand. He recited with glib tongue and heedless mind. And what were the words?

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“ Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; the same came unto him by night.”

And the words that were spoken by Jesus to that night visitor? The Professor had forgotten them forty years ago, so he thought; but they wheeled into mental vision:

“ Verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

And here, after the passing of nineteen centuries was another Nicodemus saying, in effect, “ How can these things be! ”

He had forgotten it: this possibility of a marvellous experience outside of one's self, wrought upon one by divine power. Did the Church believe in it in these days? It seemed doubtful to him. He was a nominal church-goer, and he could not recall that he had heard much about it. Certainly his attention had not been arrested in this direction. Yet he was a believer in Jesus of Nazareth, and it was he who said: “ Ye must be born again.” And here was one man in the flesh, an intelli-

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gent man, above the average, he fancied, who evidently accepted it.

He spoke, at last, in an entirely different tone, gently, almost humbly.

“ And do you believe in him? ”

“ Utterly. Every thought of his heart is sincere. You will feel it when you talk with him to-morrow. He is going back to-morrow morning, on purpose to see you, and certain others. He has a confession to make, he told me.”

“ Good! ” said Professor Fallows. “ That sounds genuine, at least.” And there was a sudden light in his eyes that expressed gladness.

Mr. Brown, looking after him thoughtfully as his carriage rolled away, knew that he loved Kendall Browning with a deeper love than that usually bestowed on pupils, and wondered if the boy could not win him for his new Master.

Meantime, Mary Brown was not enjoying life as she had meant to do. She found herself bewildered and distressed over recent events. The young man who had sud-

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denly taken strong hold of her interest, had had much to say about acting a part. "Playing the hypocrite," he called it, and she was in hearty sympathy with his disgust. She had always hated deceptions of every sort; by nature, every fiber of her being rang true. Still, it did not trouble her that she was in that part of the world under apparently false pretenses.

"They are *not* false," she told herself, haughtily. "I am Mary Brown, and no one else; and I have an undoubted right to go to the ends of the earth if I want to, and do any work that I choose, so long as it is honest, and I do it well. If I have chosen for a time to ignore the money that has been in the way of my comfort and pleasure many a time, and live as though my father's millions were not in existence, whose business is it but mine, and what harm to any one can possibly result? I am doing good; Mrs. Roberts is having a more comfortable summer than she has had since she went to keeping boarders, she says so; and it is simply because I

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have turned my brains to her account. And the girls — bless them — are learning to be sweet and kind and thoughtful for me, who am less favored of fortune than themselves! As for me, I know how to help girls as I never did in my life before.”

But there was another kind of deception, it seemed, that she was unwittingly fostering, and it distressed her. Without any intention on her part, and assuredly without any desire, it was being taken for granted by those about her that she understood and was in sympathy with the subject around which their lives seemed to centre.

The girls, who at first had been reticent with regard to their personal experiences, had apparently settled it that of course she was one with them in this matter. “ Else why should she be here? ” she had overheard one of them ask.

On that Sunday evening after the rally, she thought of it, and told herself it was a reasonable question, hard to be answered. Why was she here? As she now

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understood it, there was no spot in all the world, as she knew it, where she belonged less. Yet there was an undertone that constantly told her,—and on this evening spoke more loudly than ever before,—that she was dissatisfied with this state of things; she *wanted* to belong. These people, the plainest of them as well as the most cultured, were in the possession of something that not only satisfied but daily sustained them through their lives of perpetual service and more or less drudgery.

The impression left upon her by the services of that memorable Sunday, instead of wearing away with the week's pressure, strengthened and deepened. She had an added discovery to study over. This experience, whatever it was, changed people. Here, for instance, was Ailene, the butterfly, being transformed before her eyes!

For Ailene, although she had promised nothing, had been wonderfully impressed, even awed, by that unusual request of Kendall Browning, and had stopped for the first time in her life to give serious

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thought to the subject which had been so often pressed upon her.

She had gone to her own little private corner of her mother's tent on that Sunday evening, declining with emphasis her mother's urging that she should go with her to the vesper service.

“ I have been to meetings enough, for one day, mother, too many, perhaps. No, I'm not a bit sick. No, indeed, I don't want you or anybody to stay with me! I would rather be alone.”

So the good blind mother went away at last, giving her eyes a hurried brush with the back of her hand, as she joined Mary Brown, who was waiting to walk to the hall with her, and confided to her her sorrows.

“ I'm dreadfully disappointed! Ailene seemed to like going over with you to that meeting this morning, and she was so ready to go to the rally this afternoon, without a bit of coaxing, that I did think she was interested. And now she is all off, and won't go a step to this vesper service though it is the loveliest meeting

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we have, and she seemed to like to help in the singing, before this."

"Perhaps she is tired," ventured Miss Brown, sympathetically, but the mother was not comforted, and shook her head.

"She isn't one of the tired kind, except for meetings. Ailene is strung on wires and always was. No matter where she has been, or what she has been doing to tire her, she always springs right up the minute she is interested. I kind of thought maybe that boy, being so young, and so smart, and talking as he did straight to young folks, would — Oh, well, there's no use worrying; I've just got to leave it with the Lord."

Yet if the dear woman could have peeped into Ailene's little tent corner but a short time thereafter, a revelation would have been given her.

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LEFT to herself, Ailene, still with a sort of awe upon her, and some feeling accompanying it which she did not recognize, set to work deliberately to think over what had been said to her; what had been asked of her by that strange boy. Yes, indeed, he was unlike any other in the world. Didn't she know *boys!*

And he had made her promise,—no, she had not promised anything—but he had asked her—what was that he had asked? Something so strange that she drew back from it in fear—to promise Jesus Christ! She had never spoken to the Saviour! Oh, of course she had said: “Now I lay me,” when she was a little girl; and later, she had sometimes, at night, said over: “Our Father who art in heaven,” to please mother. But this was

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different, very different. She was to "take it to Jesus Christ!" Those were the very words he had used. Take what? What could he have meant but all that talk they had been having, — that she did not feel like being a Christian, and wouldn't be a hypocrite? Could such things as that be told to Him? But there was something more, something tremendous. He had asked her to promise Jesus that she would do whatever he told her! Could she do such a thing as that? Could she dare? At the thought, a look almost of terror overspread the pretty face. She was afraid! Of what? Why, of God! the thought of speaking to him, *she!* Jesus Christ was *God*; she knew so much. Suppose — it seemed incredible, but she knew that people believed it, her mother did — suppose he should answer her! What if he should give her something that she could not do? But he wouldn't do that, He was God, and knew all about her.

It was real thinking. And she found, — as any one who tries it will — that, once admitting into her arrested consciousness

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the thought of God listening, waiting, it was hard to get away from it. She began to realize, and at first it was with terror, that if now she put the whole subject from her, refusing to think about it any more, it would be, this time, not simply a turning away from her mother, nor from the young man who had been so much in earnest, but from Jesus Christ.

She sat very still in her little dark corner when the import of this solemn truth first pressed itself upon her.

Outside, the twilight deepened into night. From the large tent near by, where the vesper service was being held, there floated back to her the words of the hymn they were singing. They sang it often:

" I sing because I'm happy,
I sing because I'm free,
For his eye is on the sparrow,
And I know he watches me."

Something in the almost merry little refrain moved her strangely. She had sung it often, because she liked the quaint, strange melody, without a thought of the

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words. Now they arrested her. For some of those singers she knew it was true. They sang for very happiness, and the source of their happiness was that which had always frightened her when she gave it entrance: the thought of God watching her. Did he watch? Was not that poetry, simply?

Oh, she knew it was truth. Her mother loved the words of Jesus and had been faithful in teaching her child. "Fear ye not, therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows." It seemed to her that she had always known that verse.

The moments slipped away, and they sang again: this time it was a single voice, and it rolled out on the quiet air, each word as distinct as a call. The words were new to her.

"'Some day,' you say, 'I will seek the Lord;
Some day I will make my choice;
Some day, *some day*, I will heed his word,
And answer the Spirit's voice.'"

She was very much startled. It was the almost literal word that she had spoken

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to her mother. " Oh, mother! don't worry about me; some day I'll go to church all the time, and be so good you won't know me. I will, mommie, truly, see if I don't." She had meant it, too, although her mother had sighed over the rollicking spirit in which the words were spoken. Hark! he was singing the next verse.

"God's time is *now*, for the days fly fast,
And swiftly the seasons roll;
To-day is yours, it may be your last;
Choose life for your priceless soul."

Somebody had quoted that verse in a prayer meeting one evening, and Ailene had curled her lip over it, and had told her mother on the way home that she should never be scared into religion, anyway; that no one need think of influencing her by telling her it might be her last chance. Now, her words seemed those of a fool! What was it the hymn said but the simplest commonplace that the veriest child knew was truth? It might, of course, be her very last day; and some day, when perhaps she would know quite as little

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about it as she did now, the last one would surely come. Why should not one be ready for it?

Hark! they were singing a closing hymn; they would soon be home. She must keep her promise; no, she had made no promise; but—he would be so disappointed. Who would? A new thought; an overwhelming thought; it made the child's breath come in great throbs. Could she possibly disappoint Jesus Christ! Could he really *care*? Yet, if he did not, why should—

She did not complete her argument; she was taken hold of with a sudden powerful conviction: he cared! She knew it!

And Mrs. Roberts, her strong homely face transfigured with her joy, was giving Mary Brown confidences concerning the result, while they planned, the next evening, for another breakfast.

“Oh, well, we won't mind if we don't have muffins for breakfast to-morrow morning. What does it matter what we have to eat? Yes, it does, it matters a

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great deal. We want the best breakfast to-morrow morning that was ever had in this house. I should like to feed everybody on roses! though after all I don't suppose they would like them to eat, half so well as they do muffins. Or Sally Lunn; I'll have Sally Lunn to-morrow, whole sheets of it. Mr. Brown says nothing was ever better to eat than my Sally Lunn; and Ailene likes it better than anything else; I wonder I didn't think of it the first thing. Oh, Mary Brown! I'm that happy to-night over the child, that it is a wonder I can think of anything to eat! I feel as though I could fly, without wings. Don't you think she's settled it! She belongs to the Lord!

“ ‘Mother,’ she says to me, when I came in last night. I was real late; I stopped in, you know, to see how Aunt Polly Forbes was, and I found her poorly, and I stayed to warm her some broth and make her bed comfortable, and tidy up the room; I pattered around there at one thing and another for quite a while, till I was afraid Ailene would be scared over my be-

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ing gone so long; but she had something else to think about. 'Mother,' says she, as I came into the room, 'mother, I've given myself away.' And her eyes couldn't make you think of anything but two big evening stars; and I was struck all of a heap; for a minute the room just turned round and round. Thinks I to myself: 'Can it be possible that that child has gone and got engaged, and me so watchful of every boy that speaks to her!' I'm thankful to goodness that I didn't say a word, and that she didn't seem to notice my face; such a thought as mine, just then, would have seemed most like blasphemy, wouldn't it?

"Why, the child has been converted; right there in our tent, alone with the Lord. Isn't it wonderful? And me crying, inside of me, all the evening because she didn't want to go to meeting! It does seem to me that I'll never doubt the Lord again. But there! I s'pose I will, by to-morrow morning, or maybe to-night, if things don't happen to go just as I plan 'em. We're such a set for the Lord to get

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along with! I don't know how He does it.

“ Well, now I guess we're through; you'll be on hand early in the morning, won't you, to beat up the batter for Sally Lunn? That's half the battle, you know.”

And Mary Brown was left alone with her news and her wonderment. So Ailene had deserted her? She had been “ converted.” Miss Brown had heard that term oftener, in the few weeks that she had spent with Mrs. Roberts, than in all the twenty-six years of her life before. In truth, she could not recall when she had heard it before.

What had happened to Ailene in her tent, “ alone with the Lord ”? There swept over this lonely young woman just then such a yearning to understand what it all meant, that she felt she would have given back willingly the long years of opportunity, in which her exceptionally thorough education was being acquired, if by so doing she could receive an experimental knowledge of what this thing was that seemed to be pulsing in the air about her,

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and yet, to be as far from her ken as ever.

Meantime, she watched Ailene with a curious half skeptical, wholly interested observation.

Would it last, this sudden change which her mother believed had come to her? And if it did, what would be the effect on the butterfly? No other name, as yet, seemed so appropriate to the girl as butterfly.

Yet this watcher came early to the conclusion that whether or not "it" lasted, something had happened. Ailene was different. The puckers about her eyes, which had been gathering into real wrinkles, and that evidenced her semi-discontent with herself and all her surroundings, were smoothing out. Yet she was not so gay as, at times, she had been before. She was more quiet. An air almost like womanhood was creeping softly and becomingly over her. She was uniformly cheerful. Certain trifles that had annoyed her much, seemed to have lost their power. She was still very fond of her pretty clothes, and dressed herself with the same

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careful attention to details that had been marked in her; but even here, there was a difference.

Mrs. Roberts bewailed the fact that the new "best" dress which had been almost promised for the early summer, was not forthcoming.

"It's a real shame, Ailene! I meant you should have had it long before this time; but you know how dreadfully put about I was, before we came down here, and then, for awhile, there was such a lot of extra expenses, it seemed as if everything was going to wreck and ruin, and we wouldn't need any clothes. And now, I don't know how to plan to get it picked out, in town, and brought down here and made, before the concert. I don't want you traipsing around town all alone, and it doesn't seem as though I could get away —"

Here Ailene interrupted.

"Oh, never mind about the dress. Don't worry, mommie. My best white dress will do nicely for the concert; none of the girls are going to have new ones; and we don't

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want to spare the time now to go to town; let the dress go over until next year." And she smiled brightly on her mother and left the room. In a moment they could hear her clear voice outside singing the refrain:

"When by his grace I shall look on his face,
That will be glory, be glory for me."

The mother stared after her with a gaze that was touched with something almost like awe.

"Did you hear that?" she asked Miss Brown, gravely. "I never in all her seventeen years heard her say anything like that before. The child has always been half wild over new clothes. Before she could walk, she would stand and look down at her new white dress, and smooth it out with her little hands and say: 'Pretty, pretty!' It has been so all along. New clothes? My! I couldn't get them fast enough for her; and that new rig for this summer, she just fairly pestered me about, before we came down; she

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kind of needed it, too, but I just couldn't manage the money for it then, and now hear her! 'Don't worry, mommie; let it go till next summer.' Don't that beat all! You don't suppose she is going to be sick, do you?"

Mary Brown laughed. "I never saw any one who looked or acted less like illness," she said. "Listen."

The strong and wonderfully sweet voice was rolling back to them from the other tent, every word as distinct as though she were reading.

"When, by the gift of his infinite grace,
I am accorded in heaven a place, —
Just to be there, and to look on his face,
Will, through the ages be glory for me."

What was that strange homesick longing that swept over Mary Brown as she listened to those words:

"Just to be there, and to look on his face."

Was she longing for a sight of His face?

"She is getting a view of relative values," she said aloud, to herself, rather

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than to Mrs. Roberts. She was trying to formulate an explanation of the change in Ailene.

Mrs. Roberts considered the words, at first, doubtfully. The phrase was new to her, and was not worded in the form in which she thought and spoke; but she was a quick witted woman, and after a moment her face suddenly cleared.

“ I guess you are right, as you mostly are; though I never should have thought of putting it that way. ‘ Getting a view of relative values.’ That’s so! she has had values mixed all her life; clothes on top, or fun, and the most important thing of all jammed down out of sight. Now it’s got turned upside down and she sees where things belong. Hark!” The triumphant voice rang out:

“ Then just a smile from my Saviour, I know,
Will, through the ages, be glory for me.
Oh, that will be glory, be glory for me.”

“ Yes, it will, bless her! Ain’t it wonderful?” and the mother’s plain features were glorified with her joy.

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“ And you’ve had a good deal to do with it, too,” she continued. “ It was so nice in you to get her to go out to that meeting Sunday morning! I never shall forget it of you. And Mr. Brown couldn’t have been more thoughtful of her if she had been his sister. I know he has prayed a lot, and he’s one of the kind whose prayers get answered. And then there’s that lovely Browning boy; he talked to her like a minister! She told me what he said, and it was really wonderful for one so young; sensible, you know, and friendly, as though religion was the most common-sense thing in the world, as of course it is. Well, the Lord has given me lots of blessings, this summer, and you are a great big one of them, yourself, Mary Brown; I tell him so every day of my life, and thank him for sending you to me.”

So here was Mrs. Roberts, too, taking it for granted that she understood, and had asked Ailene to join them that Sunday morning, for her soul’s sake, instead of because she had suddenly determined that Mr. Brown should have no opportunity

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that day to press his views upon herself. Yet she need not have been afraid of him, she told herself half angrily, he was like the others. He said very little to her now, concerning the subject that she felt was uppermost in his thought; and that little appeared to take it for granted that she knew as much about it as they did.

In truth, Mary Brown was out of harmony, not only with herself, but with everybody else. It was almost ungenerous in Ailene to desert her. "Even Ailene!" she said to herself, with a laugh that had a tinge of bitterness.

XXI

THE NEW MISS BROWN

SUDDENLY, a new perplexity, or complexity, came into her life. She had known for several days that with the first of the week the dining-room girl, Alice, was to leave them, and another was to take her place; but she had given little heed to the proposed change. What then was her dismay, on coming early to the dining-room one evening at Mrs. Roberts's direction to show the new girl her duties, to find, not quite a stranger, but the girl who had helped her select the very dress she was now wearing! The girl recognized it, too; the flash in her eyes, as she gave a swift general survey, told that on the instant.

Now what was to be done, or said?

One irritating feature of the situation was that the new Miss Brown recognized

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her advantage; she was just herself, while the other had about her an element of the mysterious; that element from which people of culture instinctively shrink. While she was considering what to say next, after the first formal greeting, Mrs. Roberts bustled in.

“Here you are, on time, ready for duty,” she said cheerily to the new-comer, “and here is my faithful Mary ready to show you what to do. Well now, Miss Brown,—queer that you are both ‘Miss Browns,’ isn’t it? Still, I don’t know as it is, Brown is such a common name—Mary will show you all about things; she can do it better than I could myself; I never was good at setting tables nor waiting on them, but she is. I’ll give this table right here into your care, and then I’ll leave you together; and if you use your eyes—and I guess you will, they are bright enough—and do just as she tells you, you’ll get along all right.”

By this time Mary Brown had determined to be as frank as circumstances would admit. She must if possible fore-

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stall revelations made to the others, mixed with all sorts of imaginings.

“ I think we have met before,” she said, pleasantly, as she pointed out the dishes designed for Jennie Brown’s table.

“ I think we have,” said the girl with a toss of her head and a saucy smile, “ and the dress fits you, if it didn’t the other girl. What became of her? ”

“ She is here,” said Miss Brown, smiling cheerfully. “ She was this one all the while, though she did not at that time see the need for explanations. You will keep my little secret for me, won’t you? ”

“ I shall not run around talking about you, if that is what you mean. I don’t think I should be likely to do that in any case, as I am an entire stranger here, now that my cousin is gone; but I am sure I don’t know any of your secrets to tell, if I wanted to ever so badly.”

They were not getting on; the girl spoke coldly, and evidently resented the air of mystery, as something not quite reputable. Mary Brown saw that she had made an unfortunate beginning.

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“ I didn’t mean that,” she said, trying to laugh. “ There is really no secret, in the ordinary use of the word. I am away from home, having a vacation, and for certain reasons I wanted to try my hand at earning my living in this way; and chose to do so without explaining to everybody I met that I had some money laid aside. That is really the whole story in a single paragraph, and I assure you I am a reputable person with acquaintances in the East who would be ready to vouch for me.”

The new Miss Brown laughed a little, and spoke less coldly; although her face still wore a puzzled look.

“ Still, I don’t see the need of making a secret of the money part. Of course you didn’t want to wear such nice clothes as those you travelled in to do housework; I can understand that, but — You bought a lot of things, you know, some of them real expensive; and you acted as though you had money enough to never think of housework.”

“ I have,” said Miss Brown, firmly.

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“ And I wanted to get rid of it for a while, and be as though I hadn't it.”

“ Oh, I see,” said the other. “ Social settlement notion, and all that sort of thing.” Her tone was cold again; for some reason she did not heartily approve of this form of social settlement.

“ No, it is as far from social settlement work as possible; this fancy of mine has nothing whatever to do with associations, or with other people in any way. I simply wanted to make acquaintances and possibly friends at my own valuation, and not on account of money. I don't know that you will understand my meaning, but — ”

“ I don't,” said the other, as Mary Brown hesitated for words. “ I don't see what money had to do with it; people don't choose their friends nor their acquaintances on account of *money*.”

Mary Brown laughed at the tone of fine scorn, and the emphasis on that word “ money.” This girl evidently belonged to another world than hers; she knew of scores of people who struggled to choose their acquaintances, and she was much

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afraid those also whom they called friends, just on account of money; but she liked the girl for not understanding.

“Don’t they?” she said, trying to speak lightly. “I have met a few who, I thought, did. Anyway, I wanted to try it. I couldn’t come to a boarding-house as hired help on any other basis. Don’t you see that I couldn’t? I am not on a social plane with you, for instance, at this moment. You come for a few weeks of vacation, to work a certain number of hours each day, for room and board, do you not? I thought so; that is the way with all the others, except Jonas, the man of all work, and Mary Ann, the cook, and myself; and you will find that it puts us on a very different basis, socially, from the rest of you.”

“Who is the man who brought me from the station? That wasn’t Jonas, was it? They called him Mr. Brown. Is everybody around here either Miss or Mr. Brown? But I don’t believe he is the hired man.”

Miss Mary Brown could have shaken herself, because she knew that her cheeks

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were like blush roses. Why must her face grow red at the mention of any person's name? she asked herself indignantly, and tried to make a commonplace reply.

"There are certainly a great many Browns in the world, as Mrs. Roberts said. No, he isn't Jonas; he is a boarder here, who drives the Company's horses, and helps people generally; for exercise, I suppose, or else for kindness of heart."

"Is he one of the acquaintances you wanted to make without having money come in?" the girl said shrewdly, as she looked at the flushed face. And the crimson mounted to Mary Brown's very temples; but she recognized that she had, in a sense, given this girl the right to be rudely familiar.

However, the girl was kind-hearted; she had not meant to be disagreeable. She dismissed Mr. Brown with a word:

"Well, he was kind, certainly; and friendly, too, without being impertinent. I liked him. What did you mean about being on a different basis? Don't the girls treat you well?"

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There was a curious flash in her eyes as she asked the question. It came into Miss Brown's thought that here was a girl who could be revolutionary, should occasion arise. But into her own eyes there came a tender light.

"Yes, they do," she said. "Bless them! they are pure gold, every one of them."

"That is what I expected. I mean, that I don't believe that people attach so much importance to just money as those who have it think they do. Shall I put the spoons around at the places, or leave them in the holder? Take me, for instance. I have always been poor, and have had to earn what little money I had, behind a counter, if not behind a dish-pan. Yet I have always gone into just as good society as there was in our little town; why, my father is a minister, and one of the oldest pastors in the place."

Mary Brown laughed. "Then you do not know how much you may be indebted to your father's profession for your own social position," she said gaily. The new

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Miss Brown made an impatient movement and brandished a handful of forks by way of emphasis as she said:

“ But that is despicable! Clothes, and the accident of the way one earns them determining who shall be one’s friends! I won’t believe it; I should despise any one who did not like me just as well whether I did my work in a kitchen, or a study. It isn’t that people want to be intimate with the rich; they don’t think about that at all; at least I don’t believe they do. They just have a kind of curiosity as to what rich people do, and wear, and all that; surface curiosity, you know. Take me for illustration. When you came into our store that evening I was interested in you right away. I admired your hat and knew it must have cost lots of money. Do you wear the hat you bought for that other girl? ”

She stopped to laugh over her own question; then went on eagerly.

“ I can’t believe that you are the other girl, and I can’t help being sorry for her; she would have liked all those pretty

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things you bought, so much, and I don't suppose you care for them at all."

"I do," said Mary Brown, looking down on her neat dress, with a curious smile on her face. "I like them very much; I think I am more interested in them than in any clothes I ever had. I wore only black for years."

"Oh," said the other girl, sympathetically. Then she returned to her illustration.

"Well, what I mean is that, interested as I was in you, I had no thought of choosing you for my friend, you know, I cared nothing whatever about you; I mean —" she broke into merry laughter, in which Mary Brown joined.

"I don't get on well, do I?" the girl said, gaily. "But I know what I am trying to say: that if I had had a chance, I should have chosen you for just yourself, without any regard whatever to your pocketbook. At least that is what friendship seems to me to mean."

"Of course," said Mary Brown, who was beginning to like her namesake. "We

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should agree in the main; especially when it came to actual friendship; but we do have false values for general acquaintances; and we make a good deal, either consciously or unconsciously, of what you call the accident of their occupation. I can illustrate by my own experience. Take these dear girls in this boarding-house, and I love every one of them and always shall, for their goodness to me. But they have to make a distinct effort to be good to me. They patronize me, not consciously, but definitely. Without reasoning over it, probably without thinking much about it, they have decided — don't put those plates on your table, Miss Brown, we serve the salad from the side table — that I cannot be interested in, well, in college life, for instance, as they are; and that, in order to be kind to me, they must cease talking over class work, or class functions of any sort before me, and — ”

The new Miss Brown interrupted eagerly:

“ Are you a college girl? ” There was

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such a marked accession of respect in her tone that she had to laugh over the way in which she was controverting her own argument, as Mary Brown with a flushed face admitted that she was. But she returned to it stoutly.

“ Still, that has nothing to do with fine clothes, or money values. I know hosts of college girls who are poor, and who have earned their chances by hard work. I’m trying for it myself. Father and mother want me to get started this fall; mother is determined that I shall, and she is going without shoes, even, to help me; but I don’t expect to get there; I think I ought to earn more money first, so as to be sure not to be a burden to them; they have burdens enough, goodness knows! Don’t you think it is education, after all, that some people worship, instead of money? ”

“ Oh, but you shall get there! ” was Mary Brown’s mental answer. She was beginning to like her money, and to see possibilities in it. Aloud, she answered very quietly, even gently.

“ Perhaps it is. Perhaps people are a

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great deal better than they seem to us when we stand outside their circle and look coldly over at them. I don't think I mean as much as you fancy I do; of course there are multitudes to whom a mere money value would be despicable; but I think the surface judgments are gauged in that way, out in the world. This isn't the world, you know; it is a little bit of heaven slipped down here for the purpose of showing us what real living would be.

“ I think your table is complete now, and I have explained all I can before the general uproar begins. Shall I wait and introduce you to the girls, who will be here in a few minutes, or would you like to get acquainted with them by yourself? ”

“ Never mind the introductions,” the girl said; she didn't like to make acquaintances wholesale; she would wait and try some of her newly acquired ideas upon them.

There was a gleam of fun in her bright eyes, and Mary Brown went away, believing that she would make acquaintances readily enough.

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“ She can pronounce ‘ shibboleth, ’ ” she told herself, smiling, as she remembered that the new-comer was a clergyman’s daughter, and was planning for college. At the remembrance of college she smiled again, a rich, glad smile; here was yet another whom the woman who lived on Euston Square could materially help; this summer’s experience was making her rich indeed. She felt wonderfully drawn to the new girl; perhaps the more so because she called after her:

“ About that other matter, I shall be a sphinx; you and I met first in this dining-room, of course, where you came to show me how to set tables; and I’ll not so much as hint at the other girl who didn’t get the pretty clothes.”

Mary Brown laughed out, at that, and trusted her. How much the child liked pretty clothes! And Christmas was coming, and birthdays, and all sorts of special days. Oh, living was delightful.

“ And it really is strange,” she said, “ that her name is Brown.” That house party was certainly growing.

XXII

QUESTIONS FOR MARY BROWN TO ANSWER

STILL, it was an embarrassment. Mary Brown never caught the interested look in the other Miss Brown's bright eyes, without remembering that there was a sense in which she was playing a part, and wondering uncomfortably how her part was to end.

There were hours, spent quite alone, when she was sad beyond reason, she told herself, over the changes that were near at hand. The summer was passing swiftly. In a few, a very few more weeks, it must be Euston Square again, and that ridiculous Alice, next door, and the obnoxious "Doctor" who was by this time without doubt fully established. There, too, would be Richard Wade; but over that name she set her lips firmly; so much at least the

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summer had taught her. She believed that at last she had made Richard understand; yet it might be hard for him to meet her constantly in the old atmosphere. There were going to be a great many hard things. Could she possibly leave all these dear new people, good kind Mrs. Roberts and that darling little flower, Ailene, and go back to the old life?

She never could! it should never be the old life. Some other things had been radically changed for her by this summer's outing. But she did not see her way clear. She thought of Circleville, and the little six-roomed cottage, with the tenderest possible smile, and a slow blush suffusing her face. That charming little supper for two on the quaint old-fashioned table with the old-fashioned blue willow-patterned dishes — she could not carry out her dream with regard to it. There were people, oh yes, there were now a number of people whom she would really like to take there as her guests, to spend two weeks — six weeks, perhaps — but it could not be managed without too much absurdity. They were

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workers, all of them, with responsible places to fill, that were waiting for them; only she was an idler.

It was at this point that she sighed wearily. If it could all in some way be different; if there could be made a radical change, not only in her life but in herself. That was really what was needed, a radical change in herself. She needed to be made new. It could be done; at least it had been done for others; had she not watched the process of development? Dear little Ailene! not merely a butterfly any more. Her wings were still bright and airy; and she was sweeter, oh, a thousand times sweeter than before, but—What was it? Had the wings become immortal?

Then, there was that Browning boy whose life had been completely transformed. She had spent an hour in Professor Fallows's near vicinity but the day before, and heard him tell what a remarkable change had asserted itself here. How, from being a dangerous element, he had become a power for good. Why should

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these, and others, be capable of such experiences, while she —

She made a distinct pause in her thoughts at this point. She was conscious that the "Why?" had been made plain to her. At least these two young people had told her plainly, carefully, of their own part in the transaction; both of them used, apparently because no other term would serve them, the language of surrender. "I have given myself away," had been Ailene's simple explanation, her face radiant the while; and the young man, with a young man's way of telling it, had said the same thing.

"I was just as conscious of a deliberate act of the will, as I am conscious at this moment that I *will* to rise and open this door; and just as certain that I could leave the door closed against the incoming Guest, as I am that I could leave this door as it is, if I chose."

Now Mary Brown knew that it was this distinct and deliberate effort of the will from which she shrank. She had been for years, for more years than most women

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of her age, a law unto herself. She had willed to do this, and not to do that, in an entirely autocratic way, and there had been none to gainsay her; very few who had even the right to advise, after her father's sudden death had left her sole representative of the family. And before that time, her training had been to an unusual degree in the same direction. Her father, immersed in business cares and responsibilities, not only idolized his daughter but believed in her as the most intelligent and capable young woman who ever lived; and deferred to her opinions, seconded her plans, and even asked her advice in a way that was flattering in the extreme, and trained her judgment, not only, but her pride. She did not name it pride, she did not even know that such was its name; but it kept her from being ready to yield her will to even the supreme Will. She liked to manage herself. She told herself that there was something uncanny about all this talk of yielding to an unseen Force. She did not understand it. It was not that she had said in so many words: "I will

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not." It sounded better to say: "I cannot." Yet with strange inconsistency she mourned over the desolateness of her life, and believed that she meant it when she told herself that she would be willing to give all she had in the world to be able to say, once more: "Father, may I?"

With equal unreasonableness she began to resent the fact that very little was now being said to her about this matter which filled the lives of those about her. Mr. Brown had not for some time said a word that could be construed as a personal appeal; and even Mrs. Roberts, though she talked continually of her joy in Ailene, had no appeal to make to her handmaiden.

"They think I am a hopeless case!" Mary Brown told herself, and tried to laugh.

But her irritation over this state of things was extreme, and unaccountable to herself. Why should she care to have them talk to her? She realized that what was important must have already been said, probably they could not make it plainer, but — Did she really want them

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to keep pressing her to do what she did not mean to do? She was amazed at her own inconsistency, and bewildered over her unrest.

One morning she precipitated a climax by what could be only named ill temper. She had been to the morning meeting for the first time in several days, and was hastening home when Mr. Brown overtook her.

“ Dr. Hart was fine, this morning, was he not? ” he said. “ Don’t you think his running commentary on the text is wonderfully rich? ”

“ I don’t know, ” she said, brusquely. “ I suppose I am not capable of judging. ”

“ Didn’t you enjoy it? ” he asked, gently.

“ No, to be quite frank I do not enjoy any of the words spoken at these meetings; as I told you, I am not capable of understanding them. Isn’t there something in the Bible about people speaking in an unknown tongue? To me they are an unknown tongue. ”

If she thought he was going to argue

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with her, she was mistaken; he said not a word. She waited a moment, then, with an irritable desire to prove her point, said:

“ What, for instance, do you suppose common mortals like myself could get from his exposition of that twenty-third verse? ”

“ What is the twenty-third verse? ” he asked, taking his testament from under his arm, “ I do not recall the words.”

She glanced at the book and astonishment turned her thoughts for the moment into a new channel.

“ Do you always use a Greek testament? ” she asked, her surprise showing in her tone.

“ Not always,” he said, quietly, though if she had been looking at him she would have noticed an unusual flush on his face. “ I like to look out the verse in the Greek; it sometimes makes the meaning clearer. My father was a clergyman, Miss Brown, and it suited his fancy to begin to teach me Greek at the same time that he taught me to spell cat, and dog, and all the other

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diminutives, so it happens that I am rather more familiar with the language than is common in these days. But you tempt me to ask if you always read your testament in French.”

She looked quickly down at her testament, with a little exclamation, and immediately hid it in her bag as she said:

“ I had forgotten that I had it; I am like yourself. When a child I lived for years in the house where there was a French maid, and I learned French as soon as I did English.”

But she was unreasonably annoyed over the episode. Did he think she was trying to make a parade of her knowledge, and had called attention to his Greek testament for a purpose?

If he did, he put it all aside as unimportant. He was reading from his Greek testament, “ ‘ If a man love me, he will keep my words.’ What is the trouble with this twenty-third verse, my friend? ”

“ I don’t understand it, as I told you; at least not in the light that Dr. Hart placed it.”

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“ Can you make your difficulty plainer? ”

“ It is all difficulty. Some one is saying distinctly — ”

“ It is Jesus who is speaking,” he interrupted her to say.

“ Oh, very well, then; Jesus says: ‘ We will come unto him and make our abode with him.’ What can that be but a poetical thought? ”

The look of commiseration with which she was regarded irritated her. Did this man presume to pity her? Perhaps he would laugh at her ignorance if he dared!

But there was no sign of laughter; his voice was grave, and also gentle.

“ It is not poetry, my friend, it is fact. If there were any way in which I could convince you of its truth, I should be more glad than words can express.”

The evil spirit within her tempted her to speak lightly, almost scornfully.

“ But my ignorance is too dense, I suppose, for enlightenment. I have observed that my friends generally have given me over as a reprobate.”

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Perhaps he did not consider this worthy of answer; at least he made no attempt to reply to it; but after a moment of silence, during which she had time to grow ashamed of herself, he said with exceeding gravity:

“ I am going to presume upon your friendship and ask you to do me a favor; so great a favor as to pledge yourself to a certain line of action. Will you, at your first opportunity for privacy, go on your knees to God and say to him just these words: ‘ Lord Jesus Christ, I open my heart to thee; come in, *as thou hast promised*, and make thine abode with me ’; and will you repeat just those words, again, and again, and *again* and AGAIN, if need be, until you are answered? ”

But she looked at him almost defiantly, as she said with as near an approach to pertness as she had indulged in many years:

“ I am sorry not to be able to accommodate you, but you are asking an impossibility. I never say words that I do not mean.”

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“Do you mean, then, that you consciously refuse him? that you *will not* open your heart to God?”

She paled before the solemnity of the phrase, and the exceeding gravity of his manner, and faltered that she did not understand anything about it.

“Do not try to understand,” he said. “Don’t attempt to reason it out; you have gone beyond that. There is a mystery about it that human wisdom cannot fathom; but the part that I am asking you to do you can surely perform if you will; will you?”

She tried to speak lightly as she said that perhaps she would try. But he left her no loophole for escape.

“No,” he said, “I am not asking you to try, I am asking you to *perform*. A blessed man who has been in heaven for years, once spoke a helpful word to me. ‘My boy,’ he said, with his hand resting on my head, ‘I heard you speak of being “more faithful.” Don’t do it, be *faithful*.’ Those small words with which we limit ourselves are often insincere. We

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cannot honestly *try* to do a thing, unless there is a possibility of our not being able to do it. I know you can do what I ask. Will you? ”

“ I will not promise anything,” she said, frightened, and fled away by the side entrance into the house.

It would have made a study for this young woman, and possibly a revelation of character, could she have known how similar had been the lines of approach to her, and to the one whom she looked upon as a mental and moral child, — Ailene.

The boy just beginning his work for Christ, but with the background of an education in Christianity to aid him, had perceived almost at a glance that what the pretty girl beside him needed was something to move her indolent little will to definite action in the right direction. And the mature Christian who was always about his Master’s business, had long known that what the strong-willed young woman needed was not instruction, despite her constant assurance that she did not understand, but a definite turning of

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her soul toward Jesus Christ, and a definite surrender to him as her dependence. So, by different roads, indeed, yet having a marked surface similarity, she and Ailene had been pressed to the same standpoint. Given honest action upon their part, both workers knew to a certainty what the result would be. The boy knew it because he had been trained almost at his mother's knee in the Father's plan for saving his straying children; and the other knew it because he had watched many times the working, and the yielding, of the human will; and his study about it had been based on the words:

“Ye *will* not come unto me that ye might have life.”

It is true that Miss Brown had promised nothing; yet the man who had tried to help her went away hopeful. He believed that she would be better than her word. The very irritability, almost rudeness indeed, that she had allowed herself to exhibit, was to this student of the human mind a hopeful sign. So he went away to wait, and to pray.

XXIII

MR. BROWN AND MISS BROWN

“SAY,” said Mrs. Roberts, halting her comrade and confidant with her favorite monosyllable. She was in her chosen morning retreat, a little platform just outside the kitchen door where she could work in coolness under the shadow of a great redwood tree, and at the same time give a careful eye to the boiling or stewing that might be going on within. Mrs. Roberts had spent some of her most profitable minutes that summer alone on the back platform busy with her hands and her thoughts.

Her hands were busy now; she was carefully sorting a great box of late peaches; for it was time for late peaches; practically the season was over, though so large a company were lingering, that

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Mrs. Roberts' house, being the favorite one, was still quite full, and her hands were as busy as ever.

Mr. Brown, who was moving across lots toward the tabernacle, turned at her call and retraced his steps; and Mrs. Roberts stayed her busy fingers for a moment and gave full attention to the message she had to give.

“Say, do you know, I believe in my soul that she's been converted! I've thought so for a good while, but I haven't said a word to her; I took your advice about keeping real still and giving her conscience a chance to work. Oh, I've talked about religion, of course, a body can't help that; but I mean I haven't said a single solitary word to her about herself; I've just treated her as though she belonged. But this morning I can't help feeling kind of sure that the thing is done, and settled. She's different, someway; and it ain't easy to tell how, either. She's been just as faithful as the sun, always; but some of the time she's been pretty still; not glum, you know, or out of sorts, but just

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very sober and quiet. But for a spell back there has been a change in her. Did you ever hear her sing? Well, she can sing equal to the birds; I was wondering this morning if they ever felt jealous of her; maybe they do have their temptations, like us, who knows? She hasn't sung much about her work for quite a spell until a week or two ago; then she began to hum things; and this morning I declare if she didn't trill out that glory song almost equal to my Ailene!

“‘That will be glory for me,’

I heard her voice ringing it out, away over at the other tent; and I believe in my soul that she means it.”

There was so glad a ring in the good woman's tones that Mr. Brown smiled in sympathy as he gave hearty answer.

“She does mean it, Mrs. Roberts, and understands as well as any of us do its wonderful import; the Lord has found her.”

“I knew it!” said Mrs. Roberts, clasp-

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ing her hard-worked hands in ecstasy. " I felt it in my bones! I told Ailene that I couldn't help thinking it was 'most a pity that her mother was in heaven, instead of being here to rejoice over it. But then, maybe she knows all about it. Don't you think so? I wonder if they do understand what is going on here? Sometimes I want them to, and then again I don't. There have been times when it didn't seem to me as though Mr. Roberts, being the kind of man he was, could be happy even in heaven, if he knew what a tug I was having down here; he was always so kind of sparing of me, you see, that I hoped to goodness he was being spared himself. But there! we don't have to plan the Lord's doings for him; and isn't it a mercy we don't! "

And then the good woman astonished her listener by turning suddenly to a radically different theme.

" Are you in a tearing hurry, Mr. Brown? Because if you've got a few minutes to spare, there is something I've been thinking about this good while; but I

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didn't know as I'd better meddle, and then again I thought maybe I ought to, and at last I made up my mind to speak right out plain. And you won't mind my doing it, will you, being I'm an old woman, and a mother? It isn't that I don't believe in you through and through, and in her too; for I do, and no one could make me do anything else. But for all that — ”

Mr. Brown had believed himself to be in haste, but he knew now that he should wait, and so replied pleasantly, “ I haven't a great deal of time, this morning, Mrs. Roberts, but you evidently need help in sorting these peaches, and as I can listen while I work, let me by all means have your message.”

“ And you won't mind if I speak out real plain, just like any old meddler, will you? ” said Mrs. Roberts, beaming on him as he pushed the large peach box a trifle to one side, and seating himself beside it, went to work.

“ I understand all about it, before I say a word. I know it is just your kindness of heart that has made you walk back and

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forth with her so much, and do so many thoughtful little things for her, besides asking her to go with the rest on that long walk the other day. You are as good as gold to do it, and I not only admire but I respect you for it all. I haven't had all sorts of boarders in my house these fourteen years without learning a good deal about folks; and I know men,— and they called themselves tip-top men too, who wouldn't hardly have said 'good morning' to her when they met her in the hall, because she worked in the kitchen for pay. I despise that kind, and I know you couldn't be one of them if you tried. But then —

“ The fact is, Mr. Brown, maybe I'm foolish, and worrying over what doesn't concern me, anyhow — and yet it does, we are all bound to look after one another a little, if we can — I'm mortal afraid she will get to thinking too much of you. She is alone in the world, you may say; she's told me a good while ago that she hadn't any folks of her own, and it would be real kind of natural if she should get to feel-

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ing so before she knew it, you've been so good to her.

“ Now you don't mind my giving you this little hint, do you? Of course I haven't said one word to her, nor I wouldn't for the world; and maybe I oughtn't to to you, but I kind of felt — I haven't spoken to a living soul about it, except the Lord; I guess you know I'm not one of the kind that goes around talking, but it seemed to me that — ”

The good woman found it hard to complete any of her sentences. Her plain strong face was flushed to her forehead, and she was clearly very much embarrassed, even to distress.

Mr. Brown hastened to her rescue.

“ Don't be troubled, Mrs. Roberts, at having spoken out frankly. I know very well indeed that you do not meddle with other people's affairs; this is not meddling in the least; it was like your good motherly heart to think of it; and I am sure that Miss Brown would be only grateful if she knew how careful you were of her. But I can set your mind at rest in

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this matter. There is not the slightest danger of her ever thinking too much of me; there are reasons why it is impossible."

The quick-witted woman caught at his sentence eagerly.

"Dear me! is that so? Is she going to be married, do you think?"

"I am strongly inclined to think that she is."

"Dear, *dear!* I never thought of that. She hasn't acted like it, somehow; she's been so interested in folks, and things, right around her, and she has never fussed about the mail being late, and that kind of thing, you know. Dear me! that upsets all my plans, about the mortgage and everything, doesn't it?"

"Still, maybe it isn't going to be for a year or two, and she might like to earn a little extra money; I'd pay her real well; and my niece writes me that prices are a good deal higher here than they are East. Do you know when she is planning to be married? O dear! I hope he is worthy of her, whoever he is. I wonder what he

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does for a living? Do you know anything about him, and do you think he is her equal? ”

“ I’m afraid he isn’t,” said Mr. Brown with an entirely grave face.

“ To tell you the truth, Mrs. Roberts, I think one would have to look long and far to find the lady’s equal.”

“ So do I. She’s true blue every time, if ever anybody was; and girls are always making that kind of mistake, anyway, and marrying men that ain’t worthy of them; I did hope she wouldn’t. I even hoped, some of the time, that — but there — what’s the use of talking! Have you any kind of a notion when it’s to be? Do you suppose there is any use in my having a talk with her about winter plans? ”

“ I am inclined to think,” said Mr. Brown, with the gravity of an owl, “ that you are too late. I think she has other plans already made.”

Then he rejoiced at the sound of the Assembly bell, for now he must really make all speed, and there was not time for even one more question.

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The day was a busy one, and it was not until the evening of the following day that this industrious young man found, or rather made, opportunity to give Mary Brown some good advice. He was bold about the opportunity; he came to the side porch in broad daylight while Mrs. Roberts and Mary were both at work there over the peaches for dessert and presented his claim.

It was one of the few free evenings when people were expected to furnish their own interests, or amusements, and he proposed a trip to the village for a certain kind of paper that would be needed in the morning, and a walk home by way of the redwood camp to call on certain friends whose headquarters were there.

Miss Brown expressed her satisfaction with the arrangement provided — and here she looked at Mrs. Roberts.

“ Perhaps you have something planned for the evening that requires my help? ” she said inquiringly. “ If you have, it will make no difference. Mr. Brown can select his paper without me I am sure; ”

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and she gave a swift glance at the waiting gentleman and dropped her eyes.

“Why, no,” said Mrs. Roberts, but there was unusual hesitancy in her tones, and speculation in her good troubled mind.

Would Mary like to have her say it wouldn't be convenient to spare her? Perhaps she did not want to go rampaging off on a moonlight walk with another man; “he,” whoever he was, might not like it. That is the way young men used to feel, and girls too, she remembered. Had there not been a certain David who used to want her to take walks with him, and Mr. Roberts did not fancy either him or the walks. And his name was Brown, too, now that she thought of it. How queer! and she hadn't thought of him before in a quarter-century at least. Then she came swiftly back to the present; Mary ought to have mind enough to say she wouldn't go if she didn't want to; and probably she had too. What harm could there be in it, when she had told him all about the other one? Anyhow, they were all going to break up, next week, and she needn't fuss.

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“ No, indeed,” she added with heartiness. “ You can go as well as not; it will be a nice night for a walk, and you can bring us some fresh yeast-cakes for tomorrow.”

It was when they were homeward bound, and Mr. Brown was carrying the paper and the yeast-cakes that he began his remonstrance.

“ Why did you tell Mrs. Roberts that I could select this altogether exceptional paper without your help? Had she known the special use to which it is to be put, what would she have thought of you? ”

“ I cannot see that its use after it is bought has anything to do with its selection,” said Mary Brown, with a bewitching little laugh.

“ Oh, can you not! then you are not so quick at seeing some things as Mrs. Roberts would have been; I consider this a very important purchase indeed, and so would she. By the way, Mary, I am afraid your policy of utter silence is almost cruel. At least, you should confide in that good woman, for the sake of her peace of mind;

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she is troubled about you; if I were in your place I should relieve her at once. She thinks you may be in danger of thinking too much of me."

And then even in the moonlight it was plain that Mary Brown's face was aglow; though she laughed immoderately and murmured: "The idea!"

"Preposterous, isn't it? I told her there were excellent reasons why the thing was impossible; but she did not understand in the least. I am truly sorry for Mrs. Roberts; she is going to be sadly disappointed, however gently we break the news."

"Disappointed in what?"

"In you, my dear. She is depending on you, and so, I am sorry to say, is the mortgage. Of course you know about the mortgage? but I don't think you fully understand how it is to be cancelled."

"Indeed I do! but I did not think that you knew anything about it."

"You amaze me. Haven't I been in Mrs. Roberts's confidence all summer? I had made acquaintance with the mortgage

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before you ever saw her; and I know you do not understand how it is to be lifted, because she told me but yesterday that she had not talked with you. It isn't possible that since yesterday morning she has been scheming with you and has prevailed, is it? "

" You are talking in riddles. Mrs. Roberts has not said ' mortgage ' to me for several weeks. Just what do you mean? How can she fancy that the mortgage and I have any connection? "

He laughed gaily. " The connection is exceedingly well defined in her mind, I assure you, or was, until I gave her a hint this morning that troubled her; she sees a possibility of having her plans nipped in the bud; but she is ready to struggle to the last for them."

" Mr. Brown, you haven't told her! "

" Miss Brown, I have told her nothing, save that I suspected you as being guilty of schemes that might conflict with hers. How long am I to continue to be addressed in that objectionable manner? "

She laughed and blushed. The new re-

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lations between them were so recent that she had not yet taught her tongue to say: "John." But her mind was full of those "hints" to Mrs. Roberts, and what he could mean about the mortgage.

"I am not to be turned from the subject in hand," she said with mock firmness. "I insist upon knowing what you told Mrs. Roberts; and what plan of hers can possibly connect me with that mortgage."

Whereupon he gave her in vivid detail Mrs. Roberts's plan of a semi-partnership at "real good wages"—"better than she could get in the East"—and they laughed, those two, so merrily that other, promenaders turned to look at them; and one middle-aged and careworn woman said to her scowling companion:

"Look at those two, they haven't a care in the world; wait until they get married, and have rent to pay and taxes and goodness knows what not, and no money to pay them with! They'd better laugh while they can." And she sighed heavily.

"So you see," Mr. Brown concluded, "that you are bound to nip her plans in

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the bud; and some of her hopes for Ailene fall with them; therefore it becomes your duty to break the news to her as soon and as gently as possible."

"Dear little Ailene!" said Mary Brown, tenderly. "She is her mother's idol, and no wonder. I do hope that Browning boy, dear fellow though he is, will not interfere too soon. I have some delicious plans for Ailene, and for the mortgage too."

She stopped suddenly to laugh, and to blush vividly over her own words. What was she saying? How did such speech sound from a girl who was supposedly earning her living in a way that was accounted as one of the hardest?

XXIV

“ MARY BROWN CARPENTER ! ”

FOR the remainder of the walk Mary Brown gave divided heed to what her companion was saying, being distraught with her own thoughts. She realized that she was still living in a double-faced way before this part of the world, before even this man whose promised wife she was. Of course she was going to tell him all about herself, but when was it to be done, and how?

There had passed two precious weeks, during which she had revelled in the thought that she had been chosen and loved for herself alone. The almost morbid strain in her mind, born of certain sad experiences, that it was her large fortune rather than herself in which many of her so-called friends were interested, had hov-

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ered in the background during all those months in which Richard Wade was trying to convince her that she loved him well enough to be his wife. Not that she did not believe that Richard sincerely loved her, or thought he did, but Richard, without being a wealthy man, was yet one who had never been compelled to curtail his personal expenses, or forego any of the small luxuries with which he surrounded himself. Without realizing it in the least, he had seriously perilled his own hopes more than once by random remarks that hinted at the value he placed upon money.

Mary Brown remembered distinctly one bit of history. They had been out together, she and Richard, on an errand of mercy. A young woman who had once been nursery governess in her father's family, and who had married from their house a man who was considered above her in station, had fallen upon sad times.

The husband was the victim of a serious illness so long drawn out that he had lost his position, it being believed that he

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would never be able to fill it again. During this time, one of the children sickened suddenly and died. Then, before the man had succeeded in finding another position, the overburdened wife and mother fell ill, and the family was really in need, or would have been, but for Mary Brown's timely discovery of the situation.

It was just after they had left this stricken home that Richard Wade with an expressive shrug of his ample shoulders remarked that such an experience as that poor fellow was having was calculated to make the average man think twice before he plunged into matrimony.

“Do you remember what a free and easy life he used to lead?” he asked her. “And how well gotten up he always was, like a man who had no occasion to think twice before he bought what he wanted? And now look at him; actually seedy! If I were he I should go and hang myself.”

Careless words, forgotten by the speaker as soon as uttered, but Mary Brown pondered them. Since that was the way Richard felt, suppose she should marry him

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and lose her money and fall ill, would he want to go and hang himself?

Of course it was folly; Richard did not mean anything very serious; but — money had wings, everybody knew that. Suppose she, with all the advantages of education and culture that wealth had permitted her, should lose just the money, would Richard want to marry her then? She could not be sure that he would!

“ And I,” she told herself, “ would want to marry him if neither of us had a penny in the world. No, I don’t mean that; I mean — I should want to marry the man that I really *wanted* to marry, even though — ” and then she had stopped suddenly; startled over the inevitable logical conclusion of her own thoughts; and she had never been able to get entirely away from the self-revelation that Richard Wade’s random words had given her.

During the progress of her acquaintance with Mr. Brown, no thought of money had intruded until this moment. Suddenly the problem that had haunted her young womanhood rose up before her in

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new form. This man would be ready to marry her to-morrow, even though she had not so much as shoes for her feet; she was sure of it; she exulted in it; but — would he be so ready if he knew that she had inherited and held in her own right a very large fortune? Was he a proud man, in that way? She knew that some men were; but she did not believe it of him. She believed that the “other Miss Brown” had been right when she suggested that true people, those whose friendship was worth having, chose their friends without regard to the accident of money. It was hardly possible, she thought, that the fortune which had interfered with her plans and menaced her happiness for years could disturb her now; the man she loved was too great for that.

Still, it ought to be explained without further delay, and her reasons for her anomalous position made clear to him; and she did not know how to do it, nor where to begin.

When they reached the tree-shaded porch of the dining-hall and found it de-

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sented, she placed herself resolutely in one of the large rockers, as she said:

“Have you work that must be done to-night? If you haven’t, suppose we sit here for awhile? I have something that I want to tell you.”

“No work to-night,” he said, helping himself to the chair beside her, with alacrity. “I am ready for anything you have to offer, and rejoiced that at last you have something to tell me. It is my belief that I have done most of the telling, for the last two weeks.”

She laughed and flushed over the hint. She knew it had reference to his complaint that she had never told him in so many words that she loved him, while he —

But her face grew serious again at once. Part of the story she had to tell, she liked; but some of it troubled her. Would he think she had done very wrong in deceiving people, or at least in letting them infer what they had?

“It is a very different ‘telling’ from what you think,” she began, and she knew that her voice trembled a little; it was

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absurd, and it was new to her to care so very much about the effect of what she had to tell.

“ I don't have to earn all my living,” — this was surely true, but did not sound honest; she tried again.

“ I would not have to earn any of it if I did not care to. I have a little six-roomed cottage at Circleville, all my own. That is why I am to stop there on my way home; and it is why I would like to have you stop there to see me. I want to invite you to take tea at my cottage. There are little blue cups and saucers, willow pattern, and real silver spoons; lovely old-fashioned ones, very thin. Mary Brown, that other Mary Brown, whose place I told you I took here at Mrs. Roberts's, because she could not come ” — she hesitated in a surprising way, considering the commonplaceness of such a statement. Ought she to explain to him that she had never seen the other Mary Brown? What did it matter to him? Some other time she could explain, and she hurried on.

“ I can get her, I think, to come and live

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with me for a few weeks at the cottage; at least I am going to try for it; and have her serve us, when you come to take tea. Besides, I have a charming plan about that; I want her to — oh, there are so many things to tell you! Never mind now, — it is the dearest little cottage! the rooms so tiny and neat and comfortable. It will be great fun to entertain you there.”

He sat where he could get a full view of her face in the brilliant moonlight, and he was looking down at her, his own face alive with amusement.

“ So you have a cottage of your very own! ” he said. “ A cottage with six rooms and blue cups and willow patterns — whatever they are. You have no idea how very glad I shall be to see it; that will be some compensation for the loss I have sustained here. I have simply suffered for a glimpse of the room behind those red curtains.”

She made a dismayed exclamation.

“ How did you know anything about that room? ”

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“ From my friend Mrs. Roberts; she admires all the cunning little contrivances for comfort and beauty, hidden behind those curtains, and so do I. She has agreed with me that it was a ‘ dreadful pity ’ I could not see it.”

“ Just hear those two people laugh! ” said the other Miss Brown, who sat in the door of her tent chatting with one of the girls.

“ What two people? ”

“ Mr. and Miss Brown. I wonder what the fun is? ”

“ I wonder if they won’t be ‘ Mr. and Mrs. Brown ’ one of these days? Don’t you believe so? ”

“ I have no reason for ‘ believing ’ anything about it. I hope so, if that is what you mean.”

“ Why? ”

“ Oh, because! I think they are suited to each other, and because he could teach her some lessons that she needs to learn.”

“ I thought you admired her immensely.”

“ Of course I admire her; if I didn’t

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would I hope that she might marry Mr. Brown? ”

“ It is very interesting to own a six-roomed cottage,” Mary Brown hurried to say, when the laugh was over. “ I have felt peculiarly rich ever since it became mine.” And she told him hurriedly and eagerly the story of Nurse Borland and her legacy.

“ That is a charming story,” he said. “ She was once in your father’s family, did you say? And remembered you tenderly all these years? I do not wonder that you prize the cottage. What were your plans concerning it, before I persuaded you to consider others? You did not mean to live there, yourself? You intended to return to your work in the city? ”

“ Oh, no,” she said hurriedly. “ I had no idea of living there; but I planned to stop there on my way home and stay a few weeks; provided I could find some girl that I liked well enough to invite her to stay there with me.”

“ And you did not find the girl? ”

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“ Oh, yes, I found dozens of them, but — ”

“ But there was a man who pushed in and spoiled their good times? I am sorry for them, and delighted to be invited, instead. Only, I cannot stay a few weeks, Mary, I must be back at my work. Would it not be well to take one or two of the dozen with you, to stay in the interim? ”

“ Oh, no,” she said. “ I have a plan. The other Mary — Have I told you anything about John Jackson? ”

“ Not a syllable. Who is John Jackson? Am I to shoot him, or admire him, or what? ”

“ Oh, he is admirable in every way. He wants to marry the other Mary Brown, and I want them to live in my little cottage.”

“ Ah, that sounds interesting. Since it is the other Mary Brown he is seeking and not this one, I shall not object; indeed, I am ready to further his plans. Are you arranging for a wedding in the six-roomed cottage? ”

“ I hadn't thought of that, but wouldn't

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it be charming! We could have it while you were there. You are to stay at the Circleville Hotel, you know, and only come to the cottage to call. The hotel is very nice; at least I have always remembered it with pleasure. I wonder if we could plan for a wedding? But I shall have to wait until — ”

She made one of those sudden pauses of which her life in these days seemed to be full. She was not yet ready to explain that she had never as yet beheld the face of the other Mary Brown whose place for the summer she was trying to fill.

“ So the happy man’s name is John? ” he said amusedly. “ Another John and Mary.”

“ Yes; if his name had been Brown, also, wouldn’t it have been too ridiculous! But there are millions of them. I thought at one time of making a house party and inviting all the Browns I could reach. Would you do it? ”

“ In the six-roomed cottage? ”

“ Oh, no! ” she laughed again, and then grew suddenly quiet. How was she ever

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to explain to him about that house on Euston Square? Nothing that she had told him thus far seemed to have awakened the slightest curiosity or suspicion than she was other than one Mary Brown, a public school teacher — which latter fiction he had evolved for himself out of very scant material, and without, she was thankful to remember, the slightest help from her. He had seemed to be so sure of it that he had asked but one embarrassing question in its connection; that had been: what ward she taught in. And at that opportune moment Mrs. Roberts had called her hurriedly, and he had never repeated the question. There had been such a short time since he had the right to ask personal questions, and their opportunity for private conversation had been so limited that she had escaped many perils.

But he seemed to have no more questions to ask. He fell into a silence which lasted for so long that she wondered a trifle anxiously what he was pondering. How could she continue her revelations

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without compelling him to feel that she had been culpably insincere? Suddenly he spoke.

“This seems to be an hour for confessions. I have some to make for myself; and it has puzzled me not a little to know just how to make them. I have no six-roomed cottage, dear, but I have a name. Should you be very sadly disappointed, Mary Brown, and would it shut me out from that intended party of the Browns, if you found yourself compelled to change your name, after all?”

She was looking at him wonder-eyed and bewildered.

“I don’t understand,” she faltered.

“And no wonder! The truth is I am half ashamed of the situation in which I find myself. Aliases have always seemed to me to be a very cheap form of joking, and nothing was farther from my intention than to indulge in one. It must have been partly the fault of that clear-visioned station agent, who, you will remember, asked me the first time I set eyes upon you if you were my wife. I am able to

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forgive him much because of that. 'Mary Brown Carpenter.' Would that be *very* objectionable, dear?''

Astonishment made her, for a moment, speechless.

XXV

EXIT ONE OF THE BROWNS

“ You don’t mean,” she said at last,
“ you *can’t* mean, of course — ”

He came to her aid.

“ That I am John Brown Carpenter?
I do, I mean just that. I assure you it was
a surprise to myself; and distinctly it had
to do with the Browns, not the Carpenters.
You know our friend Jonas Brown, the
discoverer of our dear boy, Browning?
He was the first man I met at Mount Her-
mon, and he read the name on my bag
with punctuation and comments all his
own:

“ ‘ John Brown; carpenter,’ eh? Well
now, that’s a new idea and a sensible one.
Folks needn’t lose any time in finding out
who you are and what you want to do.
But you’re pretty late for these parts;

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if you had come along say six or eight weeks ago, you needn't have lost an hour in getting to work. Lots of houses being built, or wanting to be built, and carpenters as scarce as hen's teeth. But now, they've shut down on all building until after the Assembly is over. They want the folks to go to the meetings, you know, and besides it makes a noise and disturbs things. Everything in this place gives way to meetings. But if you wait till they close up you won't find a better place for work from Maine to California.'

"All this poured out upon me in the dear Jonas's inimitable style, and before I could take breath and explain, up came Dr. Hart and Mr. Warren and I was duly introduced as 'Mr. Brown, a carpenter.' From that time on, brother Brown may be said to have adopted me. He took a sort of fancy to me, and was pleased with the idea that we had the same name. He enlarged upon it at a time when to explain would have been impossible, and derived so much pleasure from it that I felt as though I shouldn't have had the heart to

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undeceive him just then, even had there been opportunity.

“So now you have my confession. There are minor details, but the main point is that I stayed John Brown, instead of being the person I was designed for, when they added my mother’s maiden name to the ‘John’ and made me John Brown Carpenter. The deception was in no wise planned, it simply grew. At first, of course, I expected to explain, and then I became interested. I found that I had reached a spot where John Brown, a carpenter, with no introductions and no credentials, was welcomed as cordially to all the unique privileges of the place and treated as well in every respect as though he had come with a flourish of trumpets; I liked the atmosphere, exceedingly; and I liked Jonas Brown and felt that I would have been glad to claim him as my father. And as there was a sense in which it might be said that I had run away, it amused me to discover that by no planning of mine I had lost my name as well as my proper location. I’m afraid my story sounds very

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lame; as I tell it to you I find that I am ashamed of having given up my birthright so carelessly. But you must remember that I had no idea of remaining here as long as I have. A couple of weeks at the utmost I expected to make my limit, and I could not seem to make it worth while to stop busy people who had no reason for being especially interested in me, and waste time and words in explaining that a dear old man had made a blunder. What did the mere accident of the name by which they called me, matter, after all? That was the way I reasoned, after I had let the thing slip until really explanations would have been rather formidable. This is not as interesting as a six-roomed cottage, Mary, but it is a surprise, and I am afraid one that you do not like. Do you begin to feel that you can never trust me again, since I had not even a name of my own? ”

But Mary Brown was busy with one sentence that had startled her. “ As there was a sense in which it might be said that I had run away! ” What did he mean?

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Could it be that they had both run away? It was what she asked as soon as she found voice.

“ Did you say that you had *run away*? ”

“ Well, not exactly that,” he said, and laughed. “ I simply did not run home, as was expected of me. I was due at my uncle’s in the East, nearly three months ago, and allowed myself to be side-tracked for what seems to me now to be the most absurd reason in the world.

“ My uncle’s house, I must explain to you, is home. How very little we know about each other’s life, Mary! Doesn’t it seem strange? But there has been no time for general conversation. We shall enjoy leisure enough to make each other’s acquaintance, shall we not?

“ You will like my aunt, — indeed you will like all of them; they are a charming family. My blessed auntie has mothered me ever since I was a lonesome boy of twelve. There couldn’t be a better substitute for a mother than my Aunt Margaret; and the girls are as good sisters as a man need have.”

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“ Are these the reasons why you ran away from them, or was it from them, you ran? ”

“ I ran from Alice,” he said, laughing. “ She is the youngest, and is at the teasing age. She lives and moves and has her being for the sake of helping me to select a wife. The truth is, the girls have all bored me more or less on the subject of matrimony; and as it happens to be a subject about which I never until this summer got up any personal interest, you may judge what a nuisance it was.

“ They were forever selecting just the right person for me, you see, and pressing her upon my attention, sometimes in a really embarrassing manner. This time, Alice was insufferable even on paper. Her letters simply gushed over a certain new neighbor of theirs. By the way, I am going back to a home that is quite strange to me; I do not even know that part of the city very well; it is some distance from the — from my work. Certain valuable property over there which has by right always belonged to my uncle came

EXIT ONE OF THE BROWNS

into his hands somewhat unexpectedly, after I went abroad, and the family decided to move over there." Mary Brown interrupted him, with a curious eager half breathless note in her voice:

"Have you been abroad?"

He stopped to laugh again. "Why, yes," he said. "Several times. I reminded you that we did not know each other's past very well. Remember that six-roomed cottage and the blue teacups which you have just sprung upon me! Yes, I have been abroad for a year. And my cousin Alice, well, in fact the entire family fell in love with their next-door neighbor, almost immediately after their removal to the new neighborhood. Their letters fairly throbbed with detailed accounts of her. After I met you, and began to know you well and have ideas and hopes connected with you, which latter it seems to me I have entertained ever since the station agent suggested them, it amused me very much to remember that the lady's name was also Brown. You will have to add her to that house party. Are you

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growing chilly, dear? The wind is drawing in here quite freshly, and I thought I saw you shiver.”

He leaned over and drew her light wrap more closely about her shoulders, she speaking not a word, and continued his story.

“Alice selected her at once for my seventh wife; I believe it was the seventh she had chosen and been sure was fore-ordained to fill that place. And they bored me so with their plans for the summer, all of which included the fair unknown, that I suddenly changed all my plans of travel; came back by an entirely different route, and instead of going home direct, came, instead, as far west as I could get. I had intended to make this trip sometime, and I put it in this summer to get rid of embarrassments. The stopping here, instead of going to Southern California, was what we call an accident; the sort of accident for which I shall thank God for all eternity. Don't you think there will probably be many such, that we don't understand now?

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Why I stayed on here in this surprising way, until I am almost due at college, I shall leave you to explain, since you are responsible for it.”

She did not make the sort of reply that he had anticipated.

“Are you going to college?” was all she said, still in that breathless tone. He burst into hearty laughter, and for a moment seemed unable to control it.

“Upon my word!” he said at last, “what a bungler I am. I constantly forget that I began in the middle of my story. Why, yes, to tell you the truth I work in a medical college.”

“But I thought you were a builder.”

“So I am, in a sense; only, instead of building houses I build at young men. I am a member of the Faculty, dear. Don’t despise me because I seem to have deceived you. In all honor I meant nothing of the kind, as I said. And I should have told you all this, long ago, if I had not been afraid—well, I shall not tell you what I was afraid of, because it puts too low an estimate on your good sense.

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When I came to know you better, I ceased to believe that you would indulge in any petty pride about — about any of it. As I said, it was the merest accident, so called, the being misdirected as to which train to take, that brought me this way in the first place. I stopped at this particular point because I had heard of the Assembly, and the efforts they were making toward uplifting the summer vacations, and I wanted to investigate. Mary, think what I have found; not only the most restful and helpful summer of my life, but I have found my wife; God bless her.”

No one was near, and even the moon just then slipped kindly behind a friendly passing cloud.

But his companion's first remark amazed him.

“ Do your cousins, Alice and Nettie and the boys and all the rest of them, live at 14 Euston Square? ”

He drew away from her to look full in her face, and the moon came out to help him.

“ That is my uncle's number,” he said,

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“ but how in the world! I haven't mentioned Euston Square nor Nettie, nor the boys.”

“ No, but they are all there. Oh, I know all about it because — Oh, John! we both ran away; and we ran from each other! ”

“ From each other! ”

“ Yes, we did! I ran from No. 16 Euston Square because Alice Harper's cousin, Dr. Carpenter, was coming home, and I knew he would spoil all our nice summer plans, and be in the way, and make everything dreadful. So I gave up the outing I was to have with that dear family, and went away in haste, all for your sake. I went first to Circleville to see my dear little six-roomed cottage, and then I came away out here to take the other Mary Brown's place; but the real reason was to get away from you.”

“ But my darling, who are you? This is astounding! ”

She laughed, and *laughed*. They both laughed, until the other Miss Brown over in the tent said:

“ What *are* those idiots laughing about,

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do you suppose? I've a mind to go over and tell them it is bedtime."

"Better not," said the other, sagely. "They don't care what time it is, so they can be together."

Suddenly, Mary Brown drew herself up and spoke with mock dignity. "Who am I? I am Mary Thornton Brown of Number 16 Euston Square, and the Harpers are my next-door neighbors, and good friends. Oh, you needn't think I have been posing under a false name all summer. It would be more in keeping, I think, for me to ask, Who are you? I am Mary Brown, as I said all the time, and no one else. I never thought of such a thing as changing my name." Whereat he laughed immoderately.

"This is amazing!" he repeated, when he could speak. "Especially that last about never having thought of changing your name, while I have thought of little else for weeks!" Then they laughed together.

"I shall compel you to think of it," he said, bending over her; "it is quite time;

EXIT ONE OF THE BROWNS

for I mean that you shall change your name, provided I have any influence with you, before this remarkable year closes."

"Yes, ma'am," said the stalwart man as he set the grip and the hand-bag down in the tiny hall of the six-room cottage, "I'm the same identical John Jackson that was here last June; and I knew you the minute you stepped your foot off the cars. But you look a sight better than you did then; the air out where you have been must have agreed with you."

Mary Brown laughed, a cheery good-fellowship kind of laugh, as she said:

"Yes, it did. I don't feel like the same person who was here in June. Now, Mr. Jackson, I want a little more help. I wonder if you are not the very man to give it to me?"

John Jackson straightened his tall form, threw back his broad shoulders and looked every inch a man, as he told her that he didn't know about that; but if it was the kind of help that he knew how to give, she might be dead sure of getting it, and he'd

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do his level best at anything she wanted him to try his hand at.

Mary Brown had slight conception of how those words, "*Mr. Jackson*," sounded to this big man who was "John" or "Johnny" to every youngster within five miles of the little village.

"I want a young woman who is entirely reliable in every way, and who would be a pleasant companion for me, to come here and stay with me for perhaps a month, and help in anything I may have to do. Housework, you know, and some sewing, perhaps. But chiefly work about the house; I am expecting a little company, in a couple of weeks, and there are some things I want done, to get ready for them."

John Jackson's expressive face was one broad beam of satisfaction as he fell headlong into the neat little trap she had laid.

"Well, ma'am, I reckon if you had had in all the wise men from the whole county, and the city, too, for that matter, you couldn't have hit one who could help you out on that line as well as I can myself. I know exactly the young woman for you.

EXIT ONE OF THE BROWNS

She's as true as the sun, every time and always; and she knows how to do 'most any kind of work, around a house or garden, and she has the name of being the handiest girl with her needle that there is in these parts; and as for being pleasant company, well — ”

John stopped abruptly and mopped his flushed face with a red-bordered handkerchief, and laughed. But he added bravely:

“ You can't find any better company in this world, according to my way of thinking, than she is.”

Miss Brown laughed, too, in sympathy.

“ Then if I can persuade her to come, I shall be fortunate indeed,” she said. “ What is her name, and where shall I find her? Do you think she will be able to come? I should need her at once. Of course I expect to pay my help; I shall offer twenty-five dollars for the month, to one who suits me.”

John Jackson was a gentleman at heart; he did not know that it was ungentlemanly to whistle in the presence of a lady, and he gave a short sharp whistle over this

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amazing suggestion; then the true gentleman came to the surface, and he spoke earnestly.

“ Why, ma’am, she won’t want no such wages as that; and it wouldn’t be right to leave you thinking so. Three dollars a week is the highest anybody ever got in these parts, for steady work; and she can get the highest there is going.”

“ We can arrange all this, afterwards,” said Miss Brown, and her smile was a pleased one. “ Do you think she will come? ”

“ She will jump at it, ma’am. There’s reasons why she would like first-rate to be in town for a few evenings this fall; she lives out, you see, about two miles, and — but maybe you wouldn’t be willing to give her any evenings out? ”

The tell-tale color was flowing all over John’s honest face.

“ Every evening,” said Miss Brown, recklessly. “ I mean, I shall have no work to speak of for her to do in the evenings, and she can spend them as she chooses.”

The anxious look passed and John’s face

EXIT ONE OF THE BROWNS

glowed with joy as he hastened to explain.

“ Oh, she wouldn't expect anything but an evening now and then; she's been away all summer, ten miles out, and has worked hard, evenings and all other times; but the folks she was with was called back to the city, unexpected, day before yesterday, so now she's at home, as good luck would have it. Why, ma'am, you know where she lives. You went out there to see her mother, when you was here before; it was to see about a letter. Don't you remember? ”

“ Yes,” said Miss Brown, her eyes shining. “ I remember. Is that the girl? Why, her name was Brown, too, wasn't it? ”

“ Yes, ma'am, it is; Mary Jane Brown. Queer, ain't it? And it's a streak of luck and no mistake for her to be home just now. She'll be glad to come. Why, ma'am, I could bring her out this evening to see you, if you like. I've got occasion to drive out that way after supper, and she could ride back as well as not.”

XXVI

MARY JANE BROWN ARRIVES

It was then that Miss Brown determined to force her assistant into further frankness. Certain things she must be quite sure of before she matured her plans.

“I should like that,” she said. “I would like to have her come prepared to stay to-night, if she could. In that case I would remain here, instead of going back to the hotel. But are you very sure that there will be nothing to prevent her coming? I fancied from what her mother said when I was here, that she would be making ready to be married, this fall, and would have no time to help others.”

A serious, if not a troubled look overspread John Jackson's face, and his next words began with a great sigh.

“No, she ain't getting ready to get

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married, and it's dummed mean that she ain't, too! I ask your pardon, ma'am, I hadn't ought to talk like that before you, but sometimes it kind of comes over me sudden, and before I think I — I may as well tell you right out, straight and plain, seeing I've said so much, that her and me has been keeping company for a lifetime; that's the way it seems to me; and I have known her ever since she was a little bit of a girl that I drewed on my sled through the snow to school. I meant then to take care of her all my life, and I felt as sure of it as I did that I was breathing that long enough before this time we'd have a little home of our own and be keeping house together. But I've had troubles, great big ones."

Here came another heavy sigh. His listener believed that he was thinking of the mother whom she had been told he "missed dreadful!"

"And I've been unfortunate in other ways, too," he continued. "A man who had ought to have paid me a good bit of money, didn't, and never will, I guess; and

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take it all together, I can't seem to get forehanded enough to get married. If we could manage a house, we'd see our way kind of clear. I've figgered it all out a hundred times, I guess, and I know we could pay five dollars a month rent and come out straight. But there ain't that kind of a house within ten miles of this town. Nor rooms, nor nothing; only over the livery stable; and I ain't willing to take Mary Jane down there; it's no place for a woman.

“ If we could go out to her mother's place to live, we might manage, for awhile, though it's a scrap of a house, and there's four children; but her mother thinks we could get along, somehow; but there's no use of talking about that; for the company won't agree to my being out so far; they want me handy, nights and all other times. So we've just got to keep on waiting. I ask your pardon for talking so much; I don't calculate to do it, not to strangers; but I can't make you seem like a stranger, somehow.”

Those heavy sighs came from the depths

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of his great heart. Miss Brown's strong impulse was to offer him the six-roomed cottage then and there, blue dishes and all; but she held herself firmly in check. She must first see Mary Jane. If she proved to be even half as "nice" as John Jackson, why then —

No maiden waiting for the first glimpse of her prospective lover could have been more excited over it than was Miss Brown while she waited, that evening, for her namesake.

She had lighted a fire in the tiny grate, the September evening being cool enough to lend itself to her desire to see the cunning little room by firelight. She had filled and trimmed the nickel-plated "parlor lamp," and polished the chimney, as she had learned how to do during the summer. But this introduction to another life than hers had no charms, and while she was busy over the disagreeable task she assured herself that one of her first duties should be to have the little house lighted with electricity; and if the coming Mary

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Jane should be anything like her hopes, she would tell John Jackson that lights were included in the rent.

She had dusted the big old-fashioned rocker, and the cunning little rocker, and in imagination seated John Jackson in the large one and Mary Jane beside him. Then she had plumped up the feather pillows on the old-fashioned lounge and seated herself among them to consider. "John and Mary," she said aloud, meditatively; then her face flushed richly and she laughed a low happy laugh. The old-fashioned lounge was delightful and there was room on it for another John. Wouldn't it be wonderful to have him sit there beside her while the other Mary Brown was in the speck of a kitchen ministering to their comfort! And the firelight would glow; it would be later then, quite into October, and the fire could be larger. But the time would be very short; only a few delicious autumn days, for it had been made very plain to her that that other John would have to be back at his college work by the middle of October.

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Oh, there were some long lonely days waiting for her at Euston Square. Still, there could never any more be such days as she had spent there; oh, no, indeed! she would be so busy, so very busy, getting ready for — why, there could never be lonely days for her anywhere any more, not while she and John were in the same world! She stopped gravely for a moment over the solemn thought that that last one suggested. Then a sweetness that was deeper and stronger than smiling overspread her face. Not even then would she have the right to be really lonely. She need not limit her joy; not earth, not time, not even a grave could wrest it from her. She had a new joy, and it reached away through time, and already touched eternity; and to eternity there was no limit.

What a summer it had been! Could she ever do anything great enough to express even a hint of the grateful joy that filled her soul because of what the summer at Mount Hermon had brought to her?

The grave sweetness of her face suggested the thought that gave her deepest

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joy. It was not John, alone, nor even first. Strong as was her gratitude for the priceless gift of human love, there was a stronger, deeper love than this. The One who had knocked so long and patiently at her heart's closed door, being admitted at last, had fulfilled his promise to abide with her; and all her loving loyal soul went out to him this night; and above the dear anticipation of that time when she and John would be together in their own home to go out no more, arose in her soul the glad refrain:

“When by His grace I shall look on His face,
Oh, that will be glory, *be glory* for me.”

And then there was a sound of wheels in the quiet street, and they stopped before the door of the little cottage; and the other John and Mary came in together.

The first glimpse of the neat trim figure arrayed in the cleanest of gingham crisp with starch, the fresh round face and rosy cheeks and smiling mouth and alert yet pleasant eyes, was reassuring and charming; especially with those expectant eyes



MARY BROWN HELD OUT HER HAND TO THE OTHER MARY IN CORDIAL GREETING. — *Page 397.*

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belonging to John Jackson watching to see the effect that his treasure would produce.

Mary Brown held out her hand to the other Mary in cordial greeting, and would have enjoyed making her first words:

“Here is the six-roomed cottage, furnished and waiting; take it, you and John, and be happy.”

“I didn’t tell her anything about wages,” said John Jackson, as, a few minutes later, Mary Brown asked some question bearing on that thought. “I knew you and she would have to settle that up between you.”

The happy fellow spoke as though wages represented very commonplace and unimportant matters. And so they did to him, by comparison. John was happy. He would have liked to throw his much worn hat away up through the low-ceiled roof and shout “Hurrah!” for this woman liked his Mary Jane, just as he knew she would. He could see it in her face. And wasn’t she to be here a whole month with a woman who understood the situation,

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and with evenings mostly to herself? Who knew what might happen in a month!

But Mary Jane did not understand his remark, and her rosy face grew rosier as she looked at him with a surprised and puzzled air. It was not like John to hint at such things! She made haste to say: "Oh, that will be all right."

"You didn't tell her?" said Miss Brown, turning, amused, to look at him. "Then we are not being very business-like, are we? I told Mr. Jackson to tell you that I would pay you twenty-five dollars for a month's help, if that would be satisfactory."

Then it was John Jackson's turn to smile, and he enjoyed the look on his Mary's face, and the sound of her quick firm voice.

"Oh! Why, ma'am, of course I can't take any such wages as that! It wouldn't be honest. Why, ma'am, two dollars a week is all that anybody pays here in Circleville for the kind of work you want done; and that will be plenty for me. I've been getting three, this summer, but it was

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very hard work, evenings and all, in a large family.”

“The idea!” said Miss Brown. “I could not consent to any such terms as those! It doesn’t matter to me, you know, what the people in Circleville pay; I do not live here; and I want to pay what help is worth to me. I must be honest, too, you understand.”

This was new logic to Mary Jane; she turned timid inquiring eyes toward John. What ought she to say? Yet, there was a flash of light in them, behind the timidity. If it could by any possibility be made to seem right to take such wages as that, and if they could during the winter find those three rooms, or even two rooms, for five dollars a month, why, it would pay the rent for five whole months!

Miss Brown proposed to waste no more time in argument; she dismissed the matter of wages as something settled, and gave herself to immediate plans.

Oh, yes, Mary Jane could stay right on. She had brought her modest little bag of clothing, in case of need.

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“ I didn’t want to, ma’am,” she said. “ Because it looked as though I meant to stay, whether I suited or not. But John would have me, so it could come in the wagon. He don’t have to drive that way, often, and he didn’t want me to carry things afoot; he’s kind of queer about such things.” Oh, the pride in her voice as she gave this evidence of his tender care! Mary Brown told herself that it was delicious, and saw herself writing to another John all about it, and laughed in sympathy with his enjoyment.

Then Mary Jane, wasting no time in sentiment, went at once to the speck of a kitchen, and with swift skilful fingers prepared a little supper, which she presently served in the little sitting-room as daintily as her present mistress could have done it.

After that, John Jackson came over with a belated box for Miss Brown that he had found among the freight, and tarried to open it for her; and when its contents were unpacked and cared for, that bewildering new mistress said:

“ Now, Mr. Jackson, come in and have

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some supper with Mary. I have had mine, and I can vouch for its being very good. I have a letter to write for the morning mail, and you will wait and post it for me, won't you? "

She went away smiling, leaving heaven in the kitchen. And so life in the little six-roomed cottage was actually begun.

They were delightful days, those immediately following this auspicious beginning. Mary Brown, who had been studying girls all summer and thought she knew them, found a distinctly new type here. This strong, sturdy, clean-souled young woman who had made the best of her advantages in an indifferent public school, being kept there by a fond proud mother until she was fifteen, had abundantly justified her mother's faith in her.

" I reckon I knew what I was about," explained that historian the first time she had a chance for what she called " a good talk " with Miss Brown.

" It was a whole year after folks thought that she ought to be earning her living; some of the neighbors kept pestering me

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about it off and on the whole living time; you know there's some folks that think they know a good deal more about your business than you do yourself—but I ain't never regretted giving Mary Jane all the advantages I could. She's paid for the time, ten times over. She's sought after, Mary Jane is. Folks is willing to wait for her.

“ There's a woman after her now, to go to that new house up in the edge of the village, the other end from your place. Don't you know that big new house up there, kind of back on the hill? It's bigger than any of the others. The new manager over at the factory built it this summer, and he's come there to live. Oh, Circleville is coming up, I tell you! You'll be glad one of these days that you've got property here. Why, rents is something enormous! Poor John finds them so.”

She paused at this point long enough to heave a deep sigh, then the stream flowed on.

“ Well, as I was saying, they want Mary Jane at that house. The woman came here

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herself, yesterday, to see me about it. She'll pay her three dollars a week all winter long; and that's awful wages for Circleville, Miss Brown, just awful! But she's heard about Mary Jane, and she's willing to wait for her. I told her jest how it was. Says I, 'horses couldn't drag Mary Jane from where she is now, till her month is up, not if you was to offer her five dollars a week.' I never let on that you was paying any such ridiculous wages, because it wasn't any of her business, of course, and I thought it might make talk that you wouldn't like, being so unusual, you know."

Miss Brown coughed suddenly, to cover a laugh, and the proud mother continued.

"So I just says: 'Horses couldn't draw her away; because in the first place she has promised, and my girl always keeps her promises; and in the second place she is that fond of the woman she's working for that she'd do for her for nothing if she needed it.' And she would, too. I never see anything like the way Mary

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Jane sets store by you; but then she has reason to, I'm sure. And she said she had heard that you was real nice, and all that, and that she would willingly wait if Mary Jane would come."

"Which she will not," Mary Brown had said to herself as she arose, at last, without waiting longer for a period.

It was still early in their acquaintance, but she was already quite certain that the six-roomed cottage was to be the home of John and Mary Jackson. Her sole perplexity now was how to manage their sturdy independence. To befriend them royally and yet preserve their self-respect, had been her problem from the first. As she came to know them better, the problem changed its face a little and became a question of getting them to accept her offer.

While she studied this, she maintained a careful silence about a possible wedding, and a family of two to set up housekeeping in the cottage; and at the same time skillfully warded off John Jackson's well meant efforts to further her interests,

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over which he had evidently assumed responsibility.

“ You want to rent, of course? ” he said, interrogatively, as he lingered one evening, after having brought Mary Jane home from a moonlight walk.

“ The reason I ask is that maybe I’ve got a tenant for you. The foreman of the packing-room over at the new factory is around looking for a place. He asked about this house; he has taken a notion to it; he thinks it is too small, maybe, — he has got six children — but he don’t want to pay more than eight dollars; and he won’t find no bigger house than this around here for any eight dollars, I can tell him. I think maybe he will come and see you.”

“ He need not,” said Miss Brown, promptly. “ I can’t have six children spoiling my flower garden. If he asks you about it, tell him I don’t care to rent, just yet.”

And she laughed softly as she overheard John’s word to Mary Jane, spoken wistfully.

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“ My, how she lets chances slip! She don't care much about money, does she? I wonder if she would rent it to you and me for eight dollars? Always supposing that we had the eight dollars.”

XXVII

MISS BROWN DECIDES

THEN, into the midst of Mary Brown's already sufficiently absorbing interests came an unexpected letter.

John Jackson was the bearer, just after Miss Brown had taken her dainty breakfast from the blue dishes, alone; no amount of persuasion having been sufficient to induce her sturdy handmaiden to sit with her.

"It's got a special tag on it, you see," explained John Jackson, as he pointed to the stamp. "That kind can't wait, you know, for folks to send for their mail; they have to walk right along; and I reckon you ain't sorry to get it." The last phrase was evidently suggested by Miss Brown's sudden dash into the letter. It was without question from "John," though she

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had heard from him but the evening before; and it had a special delivery! Something must have happened.

John Jackson waited in respectful silence for a minute or two, and then, without further ceremony, opened the door leading to the kitchen and tip-toed in.

“She won’t want anything more than what she’s got for quite a spell,” was his mysterious explanation to Mary Jane, with a backward motion of his great thumb toward the other Mary Brown in the living-room. “I brought her over a letter, a special, and by the size of it and the looks of her, I reckon it’s all she wants and will last quite a while.”

“Oh!” said Mary Jane in instant sympathy. “A special delivery? I hope she hasn’t got any bad news.”

“No,” said John Jackson with conviction. “It ain’t anything *bad*. I waited a minute after she began to read, to make sure of that. I can tell you just how she feels. She feels as you and me do when we ain’t seen each other for quite a spell, and all of a sudden, unexpected, we get a

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chance to talk. Only, there's just one of her to have it; the other one is on paper."

"Oh, John!" said Mary Jane, laughing, and blushing to the roots of her bright auburn hair. "You think everybody — I mean, you don't think she's going to be married, do you?"

"She's planning to be, that's what!" said John, triumphantly. "I'd bet my last dollar on it if I was a betting man. I know the signs. You ought to have seen her cheeks when she got inside that letter! And I don't know what's to hinder her; she's got a house. Say, Mary Jane, ain't this the cutest little bandbox of a house you ever see? Just suppose, for the fun of it, that it was yours and mine."

In the living-room the eager reading went on, page after page; until suddenly the reader dropped them all in her lap and said aloud: "Oh! the idea! As if I could! —" then grasped at them and read on. Evidently it was an unusual letter. It began abruptly.

"You are not to think, dearest, that that six-roomed cottage of yours, wonderful as

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it is, contains all the life that is being lived during these exciting days. We are *living* — here — I assure you, and at an almost bewildering rate. I wrote you yesterday, from Carmen College, and said, I believe, that I would not write again until my work there was concluded and I was practically *en route*. But I was obliged to run up to Mount Hermon last evening, in search of certain papers, and I found that the world moves, there, even after the season has closed. Mrs. Roberts and I sat up until midnight talking it all over; and to-day I am afraid the visiting professor at Carmen College has shown a distraught mind even during his lecture, and at the conference which he is supposed to have led. It has been simply impossible to keep my new ideas and hopes entirely in the background.

“ Let me hasten to explain.

“ Has all memory of Mrs. Roberts’s niece — the blessed niece who couldn’t come here at her aunt’s call, and so made an important link in the wonderful chain of providences that were being woven for

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us — gone out of your mind? (If I made as involved sentences as that in my lecture this morning — and I fear I did — do you suppose the students followed me?) If she has not, you remember that the reason of her failure to respond to the call was that she was to be married in the fall. The happy hour has arrived, or is to arrive, for her, on the tenth day of October; and Mrs. Roberts and Ailene have been bidden to the wedding. That, as a matter of course; but the astonishing part, the part that almost overwhelmed Mrs. Roberts — and myself — is that, an unexpected bit of good fortune having come to her in the shape of a recovered sum of money that she supposed was lost (there is a remarkable story connected with its return which I hope Mrs. Roberts will soon be allowed to tell you in her inimitable way) made her suddenly decide to accept the invitation. I hope you see the connection? They plan to be my travelling companions, and the niece's nearest railway station is Circleville! But they do not know — reticent and cruel woman that

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you are, that Circleville is the centre of all my present hopes and plans. Think how the happiness of Mrs. Roberts and Ailene would be enhanced by the knowledge that they were so soon to behold your face. In all seriousness, dearest, it is a blessed thing to be missed and mourned as that good woman mourns for you; there are times when I could find it in my heart to be half sorry for her, because that mortgage scheme of hers will not work.

“ But my tale of wonder is not yet complete. The other Miss Brown — she will remain that to you and me, I presume, until there is one less ‘ Miss Brown ’ in the world — speed the day! after that, we shall have to call her ‘ *the* Miss Brown ’ — is in it. Some long-neglectful uncle has awakened to the fact that he has a niece who wants to go to college, and he lives in a college town, and offers her a home in his family free of expense, provided she will choose the college of his desire; and it being a very fair one among small colleges, rather above the average, I could think of no excuse for advising the other

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Miss Brown not to accept his offer. Yes, I know, dearest, how this nips some of your cherished flowers in the bud, but indeed it will be better. The self-respect of all the family will be sustained by the fact that in her uncle's house she is earning her way. I foresaw shoals of difficulty in the carrying out of your royal plans because of generations of honest pride. We can do multitudes of choice things for her that are as important in their way as her college course; there will be long vacations and opportunities that family pride can have no word against. But the important point is, that the uncle lives but three hours, by rail, from that mysterious and most blessed Circleville; and 'the other Miss Brown,' if she decides to accept the invitation, could enter, and should, after the Thanksgiving recess. Also, she, being unused to long journeys, ought to have a chaperone if possible, and Mrs. Roberts and Ailene, to make no mention of your humble servant, would furnish the choicest possible companions. Moreover, the other Miss Brown would be quite willing, I am

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sure, to add those other three hours to her journey provided space could be found for her in the six-roomed cottage. Oh, my darling! I am sure you have long since discovered where all this is tending? Don't you remember the evening when you told me how strangely this one who calls herself 'the other girl' had woven herself about your heart so that she was more to you than any of the others, dear as they all are? And that you hoped nothing would prevent you from having her with you when — Don't you see that it has planned itself with your comfort in view? 'The other girl' will be there, and your dear 'butterfly with immortal wings,' whom you so much feared you couldn't have, will be there, and good Mrs. Roberts, with her heart overflowing with love and gratitude, will be there to chaperone us all. Could it be better arranged? Wouldn't you like it, dearest, to be married in the little cottage? I should like it more than words will tell you. My heart goes out in affection to every board in its make-up.

“By this arrangement think what we

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should escape in the way of the world, the flesh and — It is true I am not intimately acquainted with Euston Square, but I know Portland Place, and I know Helena and Nettie and the irrepressible Alice; dear girls every one of them, but they love parade, and pomp, and ceremony, and all those things that you and I do not.

“ Couldn't we escape it all? Think of appearing at Euston Square together, after having been enjoined to stay together until — that next clause ought to be omitted in marriages like ours, there is no death that can part us.

“ But just let your heart get hold of the restfulness of it. A dignified married couple to be congratulated, instead of being danced over and fussed about, and assured twenty times an hour what 'they' do and don't do. Doesn't it delight you? Think of those lonely days and lonely evenings at Euston Square that you confessed to me. Is it egotism in me to believe that my being due there every evening as a matter of course, in the eyes of all the world, would make a difference?

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“ There is another reason, dear. From letters received from our Advisory Board since I last wrote, it seems almost probable that it will become my duty to run over to Oxford again, at the mid-year recess; it will take but a few weeks, it is true. I could probably be back early in March; but — the truth is, dearest, that to be in Oxford with you would be to me a delightful mid-year holiday, but to make that journey again so soon, alone, and to leave you at Euston Square alone would — In short, did a poor fellow ever plead more eloquently for a home than I am doing? Have I led up to the grand climax skilfully? Could not that incomparable Mary Jane of yours, beloved ‘ Miss Brown,’ prepare for two weddings instead of one? Could I persuade her, on paper, do you think, to aid and abet me? Oh, that I could make use of my tongue! Does she inherit the conversational powers of her interesting mother?

“ Nonsense aside, dearest, will you not agree to this plan? I am in grave earnest. A double wedding in that homelike

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room with our good Mrs. Roberts to superintend everything, and the responsible 'other girl' at hand to aid, and all of them in the seventh heaven of delight over their privileges, what could mortal desire more! It will be unconventional, I grant you, and if I have read my darling's nature correctly, that argument will instinctively commend it to your consideration. But I am sure I hear you say that it would be hard on the dear people at Number 14 Euston Square. I am prepared to controvert that. My uncle is not in usual health this fall — I think I told you — and all the bustle and hum of social functions over a prospective wedding, that those dear girls couldn't help getting up to save their lives, would be hard, not only upon him, but for my aunt, who is anxious about him. As for the girls — bless them — I would like nothing better than to steal a march on them. I owe it to them in return for the boredom they have made for me. We planned, you remember, to give them a surprise, by keeping silence as to our knowledge of each other; my plan is a

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million times ahead of that. Let me write to them that I will be at home on such a day with my wife! Can you imagine Alice when she reads that sentence? Ah, but, can you imagine her when she sees you! The child loves you, dearly; she is in despair over her belief that you are hopeless. Did you know that she so considers you? By the way, dearest, who is Richard Wade? Some enemy of Alice's evidently, who she thinks is a friend of yours and a formidable rival of mine. Still, since it is inevitable, she has already named your successor! In short, beloved—if one who has reached his fifteenth page may use that term—this is the twenty-third day of September, and the fourteenth of October falls on a day that will give us ample time to reach home for my first lecture, which is due on the twenty-eighth. Shall the fourteenth day of October be our marriage day? ”

The many pages fluttered to the floor again and lay there unheeded, while Mary Brown sat with hands clasped over her knees, lost in thought.

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Could she? Should she? It was all very different from her dreams — of course she had had dreams, what girl has not? It was very unlike what her dear conventional lady-mother would have planned; but her mother was not there to plan. She was alone in the world. Who should plan for her if not — As for those girls, especially that ridiculous Alice — “ Richard Wade, indeed! ” and her “ successor! ” it would be fun to outwit that child.

Then, that Oxford trip; from December to March, alone at Euston Square, with the ocean between them! It might have been the picture of those long drawn out days and nights in the old home alone, that turned the current of her thoughts into the channel of: “ Well, why not? ” Could there be a dearer place in which to be married than this same little room? How Nurse Borland would have enjoyed such a scene taking place in her own little home! She stopped thoughtfully over that.

Her heart was very tender toward

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Nurse Borland, and one of the sorrowful reflections now had to do with the things she might have done for her, and did not. Then a look of gladness tinged with awe flowed over her face, and she changed the tense of her thought: "How much Nurse Borland *would* enjoy it! Perhaps they knew; who could be sure that they did not? *He* might tell them about it."

It certainly was strange that every little detail should seem to be arranged for them. Dear Mrs. Roberts to *mother* her. And what a delight a real wedding for which she could help to plan would be to the darling butterfly, Ailene! As for "the other girl" — she stopped to laugh, a rich glow flushing her face the while. That "other girl" had been far-seeing, and shrewd, from the time that she asked her first pertinent question:

"Is he one of the acquaintances you wanted to make without having money come in?" She had not tried to press any confidences, but her keen eyes had evidently understood the situation. It would be a pleasure to have her at hand.

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The end of it was, or the beginning — or at least the middle — that she sprang to her feet with a sense of the need for haste upon her. If she really meant to plan for two weddings it was desirable that all the prominent actors should at least be notified. She had meant to have a talk with Mary Jane that very evening; she decided that it must be with John, instead. She could talk best to him; and he could arrange it with Mary Jane.

“ They understand how to do it, these men! ” she said, and laughed.

XXVIII

THE JOHN BROWN CARPENTERS AT HOME

A DIM memory of John Jackson's movement toward the kitchen door, just as she went into oblivion over that letter, having returned to her, she made her way thither.

Mary Jane was polishing the tiny range, and singing cheerfully:

“ Since Thou hast died, the pure, the just,
I take my homeward way in trust.”

Her mistress paused to listen to the strain, feeling little thrills of gladness over the fact that the singer meant every word. She had recognized with heartfelt joy the tie that bound her to these two who were serving her; they were loyal, cheerful servants of her newly found Master. Having had few evenings in their meagre life to spend together, neither of them had

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seemed to think for a moment of borrowing one from their mid-week prayer-meeting.

“ Yes’m,” Mary Jane had said proudly when she questioned: “ John always goes to prayer-meeting, unless something comes up about the freight or something of that kind, that hinders him. He ain’t exactly his own master, you know; but it don’t happen very often; the men he works for understand about him, and they’re real good; they kind of try to plan for him, though they don’t go to meetings themselves, ever. He ain’t missed but two prayer-meetings in a year; one of them the freight-house door wasn’t fixed right and he was afraid to leave; and the other time was when the little boy where he boards was dreadful sick and wanted him. The little fellow died in his arms, ma’am.”

There was a kind of grave pride in her tones, and the other Mary Brown had sympathized heartily with her thought. Also, she respected John Jackson for his fidelity to the mid-week prayer-meeting. She had now been twice to the dreary little

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Thursday evening meeting with her handmaid, being duly escorted home by the faithful John. But first, she had heard him pray; and she knew that he could join heartily in her handmaiden's song:

“ Since Thou hast died, the pure, the just,
I take my homeward way in trust.
The gates of heaven will open wide
When here I may no more abide.”

“ I thought Mr. Jackson was here,” she said to the singer.

“ Oh, no, ma'am; he stopped in to say good morning when he brought over your letter, but he's been gone this age.”

And then Mary Brown remembered that the letter had been long, and that she had waited to think it all over; it was really nearly noon.

“ Did you want him, ma'am? I could hail the butcher boy — he is over at Caswell's now, and he goes right past the station. Will I yell to him? ”

Miss Brown reflected, hurriedly though, out of respect to the butcher boy.

“ No, Mary, thank you; it will do this

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evening. I want to have a business talk with him. I'll send the little Caswell boy over to the station with a note, and ask him to stop on his way home to-night and take his dinner here, to save time. You will be willing to have him take dinner with you, will you not? Be sure to plan something that you know he especially likes." And she went away smiling over the light in Mary's eyes, and reflecting on what trifles it took to make people happy. Little things that she might have been doing all her life, and had never thought of.

John Jackson was as prompt as the six o'clock steam whistle would allow.

Oh, yes, he could give her the time as well as not; the whole evening if she needed it; he had got his figgering all done, and was free until to-morrow.

Mary Brown rejoiced over this. She could dispatch her part of the business quickly; but she felt certain that there would need to be much more "figgering" done over that nice little dinner which was waiting for him in the neat kitchen. Mary

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Jane had done her best, aided and abetted royally by her mistress, who had eaten hers already in order to be out of the way.

She had planned what she wanted to say to John Jackson, and plunged at once into business.

“ I need not take much of your time, Mr. Jackson, but you and Mary will need the entire evening, I presume.

“ My plans have changed somewhat, since I came. At least there are reasons why I have made changes in dates and — and other things.

“ The truth is, I am about to be married; and instead of going to my other home for the ceremony, as I had originally planned, we shall be married here, in this little room.”

John Jackson's eyes were pleasant to see. They shone with sympathy, yes, and with satisfaction. He believed in his generous soul that this woman, who was a very unusual person according to his standard of women — and he had had much to do with them in the way of business, — would be certain to plan it all so that he and

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Mary Jane could "see the thing done." And a rarely beautiful sight John believed it would be.

"That's fine, ma'am," he said heartily. "The little house will be tickled over it; and it doesn't seem as though you could find a more homelike place on this earth than it is; at least that is the way it looks to me. Well, ma'am, if there's any earthly thing I can do to help, either before he gets here or afterwards, I'm ready; and so is Mary Jane."

"Thank you," said Miss Brown, smiling over thoughts that he could not possibly guess. "I felt quite sure of you. I have already written to Mr. Br— to Dr. Carpenter what excellent helpers and advisers I have found here."

"He ain't a railroad man, then," said John, a trifle disappointed. "I thought maybe he was, and if he was, maybe I could —"

Miss Brown laughed, a sweet glad laugh. The dear fellow was actually planning to offer some of the courtesies of the railroad to her friend!

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“ No,” she said, “ he isn’t a railroad man; he is a teacher. But he will like to talk with you about railroading, and all sorts of things; he is one of the men who is interested in whatever is going on.

“ The special business that I want to talk over with you now, has to do with this little house. I am very much attached to it; it is as you say, homelike; the most so of any house that I have lived in for years. I want to keep it looking as much like a home as it does now, in memory of my dear old nurse who gave it to me; and I want to be sure of having it filled full of true happiness.

“ The flower garden with all the old-fashioned flowers must be kept abloom every season, and Nurse Borland’s grave kept aglow with them. I want a tenant who will see to it that all this is done, and everything kept up as it should be. Besides, the house itself needs a caretaker, of course; some one who understands how to keep it up, and who loves flowers, and will keep them always in their season on this table under Nurse Borland’s picture.

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It means a good deal of work, you see; and it also means tenants whom I can trust. I am sure you must see what I am planning. If you and Mary Jane could be here together, looking after my interests, it would be the best possible arrangement. Don't you think so? "

Small need to ask what he thought. She had never seen a more hungry longing flash over a face than his expressed. But there was anxiety also, and he spoke quickly.

" Why, ma'am, that would be the best thing this side of heaven for Mary Jane and me, of course; and it don't seem very far this side of it, either; but there's no use — I couldn't, not now, manage to raise any more than five dollars a month for rent, anyhow I could fix it. I've figgered that out, forty times, if I have once, and I know I couldn't be honest and put on a cent more; and of course I know that's nonsense; I know as well as any man in this town does that the fruit and the garden stuff on the place and the poultry yard and all the rest of it is worth more

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than that, a month, to say nothing of the house. And besides — ”

But Miss Brown would not wait for “ besides.”

“ You don’t quite understand, Mr. Jackson,” she said. “ I don’t want to rent the place in the usual way; I shall never rent it. What I am in search of is one who, in return for living in the house, and making what he can out of the fruit and the garden, will take such care of it, and of everything else, as I am sure you and Mary would do. The care and the rent balance each other, don’t you see? I don’t want to leave the house vacant, for even an hour; it would make me homesick to think of it left alone. I should like to leave you two in charge. I am to be married on the fourteenth of October, and I thought perhaps you and Mary would like to make that your wedding day, also, and be married in this room just before we are. Then we could go away at once, as soon as the wedding breakfast was served, and leave you two at home. Could you plan for that, do you think? ”

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She was not prepared for the effect she produced. John Jackson was a large man, tall, heavily framed, and well proportioned. Stalwart was the word that came naturally to one's lips in describing him. Moreover he was of an unusually cheerful disposition, with a pleasant look that was almost a smile nearly always on his face, and with a whistle or a song in his mouth. Such men do not easily lose self-control. But John's eyes suddenly dimmed and his features worked so visibly under the power of his emotions, that he turned his back to the lady, and she stood quite still, waiting respectfully while he battled with his tears.

"I ask your pardon," he began, presently, in a muffled voice, still without turning around. "I don't know what come over me; Mary Jane will tell you that it ain't like me, ma'am, this giving way and acting like a baby. But it all come over me so sudden and unexpected; Mary Jane and me have been waiting so long; and it looked as though we'd have to keep on doing it. And since mother died there

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hasn't been any one to really care; and — I don't know what to say, ma'am, nor how to say it, but — ”

“ Never mind saying it to me, Mr. Jackson; go and talk it over with Mary. She is waiting for you. I shall understand without further words that you accept my offer; and I am more glad than perhaps I can put into words to leave my dear little cottage in such hands. Don't be troubled about showing your heart to me; I can see that you love Mary in the way that a man ought to love the woman he marries, and I like you the better for being moved at the thought of having her for your own a little sooner than you had hoped.”

“ It wasn't only that,” he struggled to say: “ The thing that got hold of me was your planning like an angel from heaven, and — ”

But she laughed and would not listen. “ Go to dinner,” she said, opening the door for him. “ We can plan the details later.”

There was no hilarity in the kitchen that evening. By and by there was the soft

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clatter of dishes, and there was, all the evening, the murmur of voices in earnest conversation; but they took it gravely, almost with awe; and this she came to understand, later. The plan which to her had been so simple, and matter-of-course, came to those two as a great gift straight from heaven; almost too great at first for belief.

“Fact is,” John said a few days later, “I have to pinch myself every once in awhile to make sure that I ain’t asleep, dreaming about heaven.”

But on that first evening he ventured no more words to her. When, punctually as the clock at the station began to clang ten, he appeared at the sitting-room door to find if she had any errands for him, there was a kind of solemn joy on his face that dignified it wonderfully.

Busy days followed. Mary Brown had spent that first evening in planning them. The shopping part, she decided, was easily settled. Very little personal shopping need be done until she reached home; but she had certain choice plans for Mary

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Jane. A wedding-dress that should be fine enough to rejoice the heart of the girl's mother, yet not too fine to be worn much afterwards, was her heart's desire. And there were other things, oh, a good many of them! Mary Brown had enjoyed one shopping excursion in her life, and meant to enjoy another. She rejoiced that she knew of a good department store so convenient to Circleville. Only — "the other girl" ought to be there to wait on her. That dear other girl! and she had stopped to think over the scene at their first meeting, which now seemed ages in the past. Did she half like that tardy uncle's appearance on the scene to spoil her plans? Still, as John said, there were some reasons why it would be better for Jennie, and of course there were hosts of other things to plan for her. Manifestly the first one was a bridesmaid's dress. How convenient it was that the same measurements answered for both. That had been proved before she left Mount Hermon, when the wardrobe that had been purchased for "the other girl" was

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passed over to her, with many objections on her part. Mary Brown smiled as she recalled the difficulty she had had in explaining that she could not make the outfit useful in Euston Square.

They went together, mistress and maid, to the department store in the city, Miss Brown resisting, for her maid's sake, the temptation to take the voluble and excited mother with them. She knew that she would have enjoyed the good woman's running commentary on all things; but she foresaw that Mary, who loved her mother with the kind of love that had made her life, thus far, a steady cheerful sacrifice for her sake, would be troubled by her ways in public. Mary Jane knew, as her mother did not, that it was not good form to talk to people in general about one's own or one's daughter's affairs, nor to address shop men or girls familiarly, nor indeed to talk loud enough anywhere to be overheard.

Mary Jane was propriety itself. Her neat dark skirt and gingham waist were severely plain and eminently respectable;

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so was her manner. She was an alert watchful maid who had accompanied her mistress on a shopping excursion solely for the latter's convenience; that was what her manner told the public. And all the while under Mary Jane's demure exterior, her heart was bounding with a joy too great for words.

It was an exciting day. Much had to be done under cover of secrecy. Miss Brown had once more to seek a confidential shop girl to explain surreptitiously that her maid was soon to be married and she wanted her to have thus and so. And although she did not find another Jennie Brown, she was pleased and touched to note the instant bond of sympathy, and to see how heartily and intelligently she was helped.

Mary Jane's own purchases were modest in the extreme. Not a penny more than she could help, did she mean to spend of the sacred little hoard that had been slowly accumulating against the day when she might possibly go to housekeeping.

She steadily refused to look closely at

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“ a real sweet hat ” such as her mother had volubly urged her to buy when she thrust into the girl’s unwilling hands that morning a five dollar gold piece.

“ Mother has been all summer laying it by in five and ten cent bits, to buy some winter flannels, and things, that she needs,” Mary Jane explained to Miss Brown’s hint that possibly her mother might be disappointed. “ She’s just *got* to have some things, and I’m going to buy them for her this very day. Mothers, you know, won’t ever do things for themselves. This two dollar hat will do nicely for me; I can fix the trimming a little different, I guess,” she said, surveying the ugly creation gravely. Then, a cheerful smile as she added naively: “ I don’t care so much for the five dollar hats since I’ve seen that eight dollar one over there, so I may just as well have this.” The logic of this satisfied her, and the purchase was made and dismissed from her mind.

It may have been weakness in Miss Brown; but she had been bored by many shopping excursions and she meant to

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have her pleasure in this one. Mary Jane was none the wiser for the swift telegraphic signals exchanged between her and the confidential attendant, which told her, as plainly as words could have done, to pack the eight dollar hat in the box brought for the two dollar one and add the difference to her bill. In no suggestion from Mary Jane's lips that day had extreme good taste and good judgment shone more conspicuously than in her instinctive choice of a hat. The materials were excellent, and would furnish Mrs. John Jackson with several hats in the seasons to come, if she so willed.

“Just to think of it!” said Mrs. Roberts as she bustled skilfully about the little kitchen.

“You and me at work together again, in a kitchen! and Mr. Brown,—O dear, no! I mean Dr. Carpenter writing letters in the sitting-room! I never shall get used to calling that man ‘Dr. Carpenter.’ You could have knocked me down with a feather when he first told me; and me

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hearing him give a splendid lecture at Carmen College and thinking all the while of the things I'd said to him when he was picking over berries and shelling peas, for me!

“ And to think of you and him being married to-morrow morning! That didn't surprise me so dreadful much, though. Somehow I felt all along that you two were meant for each other. And I wasn't so awfully surprised, either, to hear that you were a grand rich woman and could do what you pleased. I told Mr. Br— Dr. Carpenter, that if he had said you were King Edward's niece and were going over to be married in the palace, I wouldn't have been much astonished. There was a kind of an air about you, you know, — I always said so.

“ But isn't it all wonderful and splendid? That nice Mary Jane! — she knows that she's tumbled right into clover I tell you — she talks to Ailene. Think of my Ailene being away out here, — and me too, for that matter, mortgage and all — and sitting up-stairs with her this minute, sew-

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ing lace on her wedding sleeves. I'm thankful they aren't Ailene's wedding sleeves; though that is coming, sometime, I'm afraid. Don't you think that ridiculous boy — well, he's splendid, anyhow; I can say that with all my heart. You remember him, don't you, Kendall Brown-ing? Yes, of course you do. But I tell them they are both children and will have to wait years. Still, he keeps planning. He is going to have his mother and father out to Mount Hermon next year, and Mr. — *Dr.* Carpenter says he is going to bring you, and Jennie, and lots of other people out there for the summer; fill up my house, he said. Won't that be lovely! And Kendall thinks, — but I told Ailene that she must wait until the mortgage was paid; and she giggled and said: ' I'm afraid I'll be gray! ' ”

Mary Brown laughed appreciatively; she loved to hear Mrs. Roberts talk; and she wanted to hug her delicious secret about the cancelled mortgage, a little longer. That was to be one of the wedding-morning memories.

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At No. 14 Euston Square the Harper family, at least the younger portion, were gathered in the library in various stages of excitement. They were in momentary expectation of the arrival of "Doctor" with his bride, and the father and mother were already in the hall below.

"Don't let us all rush down upon them like lunatics," said Nettie, the quiet one. "It will be enough for father and mother to meet them at the door; the rest of us can be here, waiting."

"Oh, no!" said Alice the irrepressible. "I can't. I want the very first glimpse of her. I've forgiven her, I think, but — O dear! Say, girls, do you know I'm glad, after all, that Miss Brown hasn't got home yet. If I were to see her, just now, I am afraid — and of course I want to like Doctor's wife better than anybody else. O dear! Why couldn't he — if he had *only* waited until he got home! Richard Wade, indeed! I like him real well, but — as though he could be mentioned the same day with Doctor! Oh, there's the

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carriage! I'm going down, Nettie; I can't help it." And she went.

And there was, presently, a wild shout.

Nettie groaned. "That child! she can never do anything reasonably." Then she heard:

"Girls! Come here! Come quick! It's *Miss Brown herself!*"

"Alice!" said Dr. Carpenter, catching her in his arms and holding her fast. "Take that back, at once. It isn't so. She is not 'Miss Brown.' She is Mrs. John Brown Carpenter forever and ever."

THE END.

