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their daily needs that she had lost all interest in anything outside her home. What was there wrong about it? He knew that Edith prided herself on being like her mother. But Judith had always found time for her friends. He himself had been more as Edith was now. How quickly after Judith died he had dropped all friends, all interests. "That's it," he ruefully told himself, "Edith takes after her father." And the same curious feeling which he had had with Laura, came back to him with her sister. This daughter, too, was a part of himself. His deep instinctive craving to keep to his family was living on in Edith, was already dominating her home. What a queer mysterious business it was, this tie between a man and his child.

He was thinking of this when Baird arrived. Allan Baird was not only the doctor who had brought Edith's children into the world, he was besides an intimate friend, he had been Bruce's room-mate at college. As he came strolling into the room with his easy greeting of "Well, folks—" his low gruff voice, his muscular frame, over six feet two, and the kindly calm assurance in his lean strong visage, gave to Bruce and Roger the feeling of safety they needed. For this kind of work was his life. He had specialized on

women, and after over fifteen years of toilsome uphill labor he had become at thirty-seven one of the big gynecologists. He was taking his success with the quiet relish of a man who had to work for it hard. And yet he had not been spoiled by success. He worked even harder than before—so hard, in fact, that Deborah, with whom through Bruce and Edith he had long ago struck up an easy bantering friendship, had sturdily set herself the task of prying open his eyes a bit. She had taken him to her school at night and to queer little foreign cafés. And Baird, with a humor of his own, had retaliated by dragging her to the Astor-Roof and to musical plays.

"If my eyes are to be opened," he had doggedly declared, "I propose to have some diamonds in the scenery, and a little cheery ragtime, too. You've got a good heart, Deborah Gale, but your head is full of tenements."

To-night to divert Bruce's thoughts from his wife, Baird started him talking of his work. In six weeks Bruce had crammed his mind with the details of skyscraper building, and his talk was bewildering now, bristling with technical terms, permeated through and through with the feeling of strain and fierce competition. As Roger listened he

had again that sharp and oppressive sensation of a savage, modern town unrelentingly pressing, pressing in. Restlessly he glanced at Baird who sat listening quietly. And Roger thought of the likeness between their two professions. For Bruce, too, was a surgeon. His patients were the husbands in their distracting offices. Baird's were the wives and mothers in their equally distracting homes. Which were more tense, the husbands or wives? And, good Lord, what was it all about, this feverish strain of getting and spending? What were they spending? Their very life's blood. And what were they getting? Happiness? What did most of them know of real happiness? How little they knew, how blind they were, and yet how they laughed and chattered along, how engrossed in their little games. What children, oh, what children!

"And am I any better than the rest? Do I know what I'm after—what I'm about?"

He left them soon, for he felt very tired. He went to his daughter to say good-night. And in her room the talk he had heard became to him suddenly remote, that restless world of small account. For in Edith, in the one brief hour since her father had seen her last,

there had come a great transformation, into her face, an eager light. She was slipping down into a weird, small world which for a brief but fearful season was to be utterly her own, with agony and bloody sweat, and joy and a deep mystery. Clumsily he took her hand. It was moist and he felt it clutch his own. He heard her breathing rapidly.

"Good-night," he said in a husky tone. "I'll be so glad, my dear, so glad."

For answer she gave him a hurried smile, a glance from her bright restless eyes. Then he went heavily from the room.

At home he found Deborah sitting alone, with a pile of school papers in her lap. As he entered she slowly turned her head.

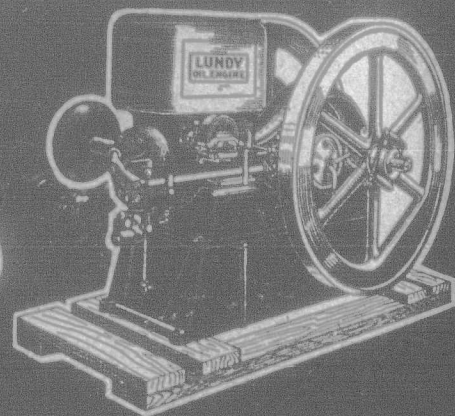
"How is Edith?" she asked him. Roger told of his visit uptown, and spoke of Edith's anxiety over getting the children up to the farm.

"I'll take them myself," said Deborah. "But how can you get away from school?"

"Oh, I think I can manage it. We'll leave on Friday morning and I can be back by Sunday night. I'll love it," Deborah answered.

"It'll be a great relief to her," said Roger, lighting a cigar. Deborah re-

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