

know, but I wish you'd come and see him. I've nobody else to turn to,—won't you, Jack?"

"Come! of course I'll come, Corinne,—now,—this minute, if he's home, or to-night, or any time you say. Suppose I go back with you and wait. Garry's working too hard, that's it,—he was always that way, puts his whole soul into anything he gets interested in and never lets up until it's accomplished." He waited for some reply, but she was still toying with the handle of her parasol. Her mind had not been on his proffered help,—she had not heard him, in fact.

"And, Jack," she went on in the same heart-broken tone through which an unbidden sob seemed to struggle.

"Yes, I am listening, Corinne,—what is it?"

"I want you to forgive me for the way I have always treated you. I have—"

"Why, Corinne, what nonsense! Don't you bother your head about such—"

"Yes, but I do, and it is because I have never done anything but be ugly to you. When you lived with us I—"

"But we were children then, Corinne, and neither of us knew any better. I won't hear one word of such nonsense. Why, my dear girl—" he had taken her hand as she spoke and the pair rested on his knee—"do you think I am—No—you are too sensible a woman to think anything of the kind. But that is not it, Corinne—something worries you," he asked suddenly with a quick glance at her face. "What is it? You shall have the best in me, and Ruth will help too."

Her fingers closed over his. The touch of the young fellow, so full of buoyant strength and hope and happiness, seemed to put new life into her.

"I don't know, Jack." Her voice fell to a whisper. "There may not be anything, yet I live under an awful terror. Don't ask me—only tell me you will help me if I need you. I have nobody else—my stepfather almost turned me out of his office when I went to see him the other day,—my mother doesn't care. She has only been here half a dozen times, and that was when baby was born. Hush,—here comes Ruth,—she must not know."

"But she must know, Corinne. I never have any secrets from Ruth, and don't you have any either. Ruth couldn't be anything but kind to you and she never misunderstands, and she is so helpful. Here she is. Ruth, dear, we were just waiting for you. Corinne is nervous and depressed, and imagines all sorts of things, one of which is that we don't care for her; and I've just told her that we do?"

Ruth looked into Jack's eyes as if to get his meaning—she must always get her cue from him now—she was entirely unconscious of the cause of it all, or why Corinne should feel so, but if Jack thought Corinne was suffering and that she wanted comforting, all she had was at Corinne's and Jack's disposal. With a quick movement she leaned forward and laid her hand on Corinne's shoulder.

"Why, you dear Corinne,—Jack and I are not like that. What has gone wrong,—tell me," she urged.

For a brief instant Corinne made no answer. Once she tried to speak but the words died in her throat. Then, lifting up her hands appealingly, she faltered out:

"I only said that I—Oh, Ruth!—I am so wretched!" and sank back on the lounge in an agony of tears.

Chapter XXVI.

At ten o'clock that same night Jack went to the station to meet Garry. He and Ruth had talked over the strange scene—unaccountable to both of them—and had determined that Jack should see Garry at once.

"I must help him, Ruth, no matter at what cost. Garry has been my friend for years; he has been taken up with his work, and so have I, and we have drifted apart a little, but I shall never forget him for his kindness to me when I first came to New York. I would never have known Uncle Peter but for Garry, or Aunt Felsa or even my darling."

Jack waited under the shelter of the overhanging roof until the young architect stepped from the car and crossed

the track. Garry walked with the sluggish movement of a tired man—hardly able to drag his feet after him.

"I thought I'd come down to meet you, Garry," Jack cried in his old buoyant tone. "It's pretty rough on you, old fellow, working so hard."

Garry raised his head and peered into the speaker's face.

"Why, Jack!" he exclaimed in a surprised tone; the voice did not sound like Garry's. "I didn't see you in the train. Have you been in New York, too?" He evidently understood nothing of Jack's explanation.

"No, I came down to meet you. Corinne was at Mr. MacFarlane's today, and said you were not well,—and so I thought I'd walk home with you."

"Oh, thank you, old man, but I'm all right. Corinne's nervous—you mustn't mind her. I've been up against it for two or three weeks now,—lot of work of all kinds, and that's kept me a good deal from home. I don't wonder Cory's worried, but I can't help it—not yet."

They had reached an overhead light, and Jack caught a clearer view of the man. What he saw sent a shiver through him. A great change had come over his friend. His untidy dress,—always so neat and well kept; his haggard eyes and shambling, unsteady walk, so different from his springy, debonair manner, all showed that he had been and still was under some terrible mental strain. That he had not been drinking was evident from his utterance and gait. This last discovery when his condition was considered, disturbed him most of all, for he saw that Garry was going through some terrible crisis, either professional or financial.

As the two advanced toward the door of the station on their way to the street, the big, burly form of McGowan, the contractor, loomed up.

"I heard you wouldn't be up till late, Mr. Minott," he exclaimed gruffly, blocking Garry's exit to the street. "I couldn't find you at the Council or at your office, so I had to come here. We haven't had that last payment on the church. The vouchers is all ready for your signature, so the head trustee says,—and the money's where you can get it at."

Garry braced his shoulders and his jaw tightened. One secret of the young architect's professional success lay in his command over his men. Although he was considerate, and sometimes familiar, he never permitted any disrespect.

"Why, yes, Mr. McGowan, that's so," he answered stiffly. "I've been in New York a good deal lately and I guess I've neglected things here. I'll try to come up in the morning, and if everything's all right I'll get a certificate and fill it up and you'll get a check in a few days."

"Yes, but you said that last week," there was a sound of defiance in McGowan's voice.

"If I did I had good reason for the delay," answered Garry with a flash of anger. "I'm not running my office to suit you."

"Nor for anybody else who wants his money and who's got to have it, and I want to tell you, Mr. Minott, right here, and I don't care who hears it, that I want mine or I'll know the reason why."

Garry wheeled fiercely and raised his hand as if to strike the speaker, then it dropped to his side.

"I don't blame you, Mr. McGowan," he said in a restrained, even voice. "I have no doubt that it's due you and you ought to have it, but I've been pretty hard pressed lately with some matters in New York; so much so that I've been obliged to take the early morning train,—and you can see yours—lf what time I get home. Just give me a day or two longer and I'll examine the work and straighten it out. And then again, I'm not very well."

The contractor glanced into the speaker's face as if to continue the discussion, then his features relaxed. Something in the sound of Garry's voice, or perhaps some line of coloring in his face, must have reached him.

"Well, of course, I can't go long," he exclaimed in a softer tone, which was meant as an apology, "and if you're sick that ends it, but I've got all them checks paid."

"Yes, I understand and I won't forget. Thank you, Mr. McGowan, and good-night. Come along, Jack,—Corinne's worrying, and will be till I get home."

The two kept silent as they walked up the hill. Garry, because he was too tired to discuss the cowardly attack; Jack, because what he had to say must be said when they were alone,—when he could get hold of Garry's hand and make him open his heart.

As they approached the small house and mounted the steps leading to the front porch, Corinne's face could be seen pressed against a pane in one of the dining-room windows. Garry touched Jack's arm and pointed ahead:

"Poor Cory!" he exclaimed with a deep sigh, "that's the way she is every night. Coming home is sometimes the worst part of it all, Jack."

The door flew open and Corinne sprang out: "Are you tired, dear?" she asked, peering into his face and kissing him. Then turning to Jack: "Thank you, Jack!—It was so good of you to go. Ruth sent me word you had gone to meet him."

She led the way into the house, relieving Garry of his hat, and moving up an easy chair stood beside it until he had settled himself into its depths.

Again she bent over and kissed him: "How are things to-day, dear?—any better?" she inquired in a quavering voice.

"Some of them are better and some are worse, Cory; but there's nothing for you to worry about. That's what I've been telling Jack. How's baby? Anybody been here from the board?—Any letters?"

"Baby's all right," the words came slowly, as if all utterance gave her pain. "No, there are no letters. Mr. McGowan was here, but I told him you wouldn't be home till late."

"Yes, I saw him," replied Garry, dropping his voice suddenly to a monotone, an expression of pain followed by a shade of anxiety settling on his face: McGowan and his affairs were evidently unpleasant subjects. At this instant the cry of a child was heard. Garry roused himself and turned his head.

"Listen—that's baby crying! Better go to her, Cory."

Garry waited until his wife had left the room, then he rose from his chair, crossed to the sideboard, poured out three-quarters of a glass of raw whiskey and drank it without drawing a breath.

"That's the first to-day, Jack. I dare not touch it when I'm on a strain like this. Can't think clearly, and I want my head,—all of it. There's a lot of sharks down in New York,—skin you alive if they could. I beg your pardon, old man—have a drop?"

Jack waved his hand in denial, his eyes still on his friend: "Not now, Garry, thank you."

Garry dropped the stopper into the decanter, pushed back the empty tumbler and began pacing the floor, halting now and then to toe some pattern in the carpet, talking all the time to himself in broken sentences, like one thinking aloud. All Jack's heart went out to his friend as he watched him. He and Ruth were so happy. All their future was so full of hope and promise, and Garry—brilliant, successful Garry,—the envy of all his associates, so harassed and so wretched!

"Garry, sit down and listen to me," Jack said at last. "I am your oldest friend; no one you know thinks any more of you than I do, or will be more ready to help. Now, what troubles you?"

"I tell you, Jack, I'm not troubled!"—something of the old bravado rang in his voice,—except as everybody is troubled when he's trying to straighten out something that won't straighten. I'm knocked out, that's all,—can't you see it?"

"Yes, I see it, and that's not all I see. Is it your work here or in New York? I want to know, and I'm going to know, and I have a right to know, and you are not going to bed until you tell me, not will I. I can and will help you, and so will Mr. MacFarlane, and Uncle Peter, and everybody I ask. What's gone wrong? Tell me!"

Garry continued to walk the floor. Then he wheeled suddenly and threw himself into his chair.

"Well, Jack," he answered with an in-

drawn sigh,—if you must know, I'm on the wrong side of the market."

"Stocks?"

"Not exactly. The bottom's fallen out of the Warehouse Company."

Jack's heart gave a rebound. After all, it was only a question of money and this could be straightened out. He had begun to fear that it might be something worse; what he dared not conjecture.

"And you have lost money?" Jack continued in a less eager tone.

"A whole lot of money."

"How much?"

"I don't know, but a lot. It went up three points to-day and so I am hanging on by my eyelids."

"Well, that's not the first time men have been in that position," Jack replied in a hopeful tone. "Is there anything more,—something you are keeping back?"

"Yes,—a good deal more. I'm afraid I'll have to let go. If I do I'm ruined."

Jack kept silent for a moment. Various ways of raising money he help his friend passed in review, none of which at the moment seemed feasible or possible.

"How much will make your account good?" he asked after a pause.

"About ten thousand dollars."

Jack leaned forward in his chair. "Ten thousand dollars!" he exclaimed in a startled tone. "Why, Garry,—how in the name of common-sense did you get in as deep as that?"

"Because I was a fool!"

And again there was silence, during which Garry fumbled for a match, opened his case and lighted a cigarette. Then he said slowly, as he tossed the burnt end of the match from him:

"You said something, Jack, about some of your friends helping. Could Mr. MacFarlane?"

"No,—he hasn't got it,—not to spare. I was thinking of another kind of help when I spoke. I supposed you had got into debt, or something, and were depending on your commissions to pull you out, and that some new job was hanging fire and perhaps some of us could help as we did on the church."

"No," rejoined Garry, in a hopeless tone, "nothing will help but a certified check. Perhaps your Mr. Grayson might do something," he continued in the same voice.

"Uncle Peter! Why, Garry, he doesn't earn ten thousand dollars in three years."

Again there was silence.

"Well, would it be of any use for you to ask Arthur Breen? He wouldn't give me a cent, and I wouldn't ask him. I don't believe in laying down on your wife's relations, but he might do it for you now that you're getting up in the world."

Jack bent his head in deep thought. The proposal that his uncle had made him for the ore lands passed in review. At that time he could have turned over the property to Breen. But it was worthless now. He shook his head:

"I don't think so." Then he added quickly: "Have you been to Mr. Morris?"

"No, and won't. I'd die first!" this came in a sharp, determined voice, as if it had jumped hot from his heart.

"But he thinks the world of you; it was only a week ago that he told Mr. MacFarlane that you were the best man he ever had in his office."

"Yes,—that's why I won't go, Jack. I'll play my hand alone and take the consequences, but I won't beg of my friends; not a friend like Mr. Morris; any coward can do that. Mr. Morris believes in me—I want him to continue to believe in me. That's worth twenty times ten thousand dollars." His eyes flashed for the first time. Again the old Garry shone out.

"When must you have this money?"

"By the end of the week,—before next Monday, anyhow."

"Then the situation is not hopeless?"

"No, not entirely. I have one card left, I'll play it to-morrow, then I'll know."

"Is there a chance of its winning?"

"Yes and no. As for the 'yes,' I've always had my father's luck. Minotts don't run under and I don't believe I shall, we take risk and we win. That's what brought me to Corkleville, and you can stand I have made myself. I'll