

Winnipeg, May, 1910.

stocking from the pile at her sister's elbow and began to work.

"I asked him how he was getting on," Molly continued. "He said that Dr. Finsbury was awfully good to him, and treated him almost like a son. He asked very particularly after you; and when I told him you were coming home he said that he should try and manage to come over and see you. But he is evidently beginning to be rather important and he can't get away very easily. He asked a good many questions about you, and wanted to know if I thought you were happy and well."

"I see." Again the absence of interest in Phyllis's tone was so marked as to be almost unnatural.

Molly dismissed the subject with a far better executed air of indifference. "Are you really going to marry Earl Wyverton," she said. "How nice, Phyl! Did he make love to you?"

"He didn't!" ejaculated Molly.

"I didn't encourage him to," Phyllis confessed. "He went away directly after. He said he should come tomorrow and see dad."

"I suppose he's frightfully rich?" said Molly, reflectively.

"Enormously, I believe." A deep red flush rose in Phyllis's face. She began to tremble again in spite of herself.

must be a way of escape somewhere. Of that she was convinced. There always was a way of escape. But for the time at least it baffled her. Her own acquaintance with Wyverton was very slight. She wished ardently that she knew what manner of man he was at heart.

Upon one point at least she was firmly determined. This monstrous sacrifice must not take place, even were it to insure the whole family welfare. The life they lived was desperately difficult, but Phyllis must not be allowed to ruin her own happiness and another's also to ease the burden.

But what a pity it seemed! What a pity! Why in wonder was Fate so perverse? Molly thought. Such a brilliant chance offered to herself would have turned the whole world into a gilded dreamland. For she was wholly heart free.

The idea was a fascinating one. It held her fancy strongly. She began to wonder if he cared very deeply for her sister, or if mere looks had attracted him.

She had good looks too, she reflected. And she was quick to learn, adaptable. The thought rushed through her mind like a meteor through space. He might be willing. He might be kind. He had



"Oh, poor darling!" Molly said. "Poor, poor darling!"

Molly suddenly dropped her work and leaned forward.

"Phyl, Phyl," she said softly; "shall I tell you what Jim Freeman said to me that day? He said that very soon he should be able to support a wife—and I knew quite well what he meant. I told him I was glad—so glad. Oh, Phyl, darling, when he comes and asks you to go to him what shall you say?"

Phyllis looked up with quick protest on her lips. She wrung her hands together with despairing gesture.

"Molly, Molly," she gasped, "don't torture me! How can I help it? How can I help it? I shall have to send him away."

"Oh, poor darling!" Molly said. "Poor, poor darling!"

And she gathered her sister into her arms, pressing her close to her heart with a passionate fondness of which only a few knew her to be capable. There was only a year between them, and Molly had always been the leading spirit, protector and comforter by turns.

Even as she soothed and hushed Phyllis into calmness her quick brain was at work upon the situation. There

was a look about his eyes—a quizzical look—that certainly suggested possibilities. But dare she put it to a test? Dare she actually interfere in the matter?

For the first time in all her vigorous young life Molly found her courage at so low an ebb that she was by no means sure that she could rely upon it to carry her through.

She spent the rest of that day in trying to screw herself up to what she privately termed "the necessary pitch of impudence."

At nine o'clock on the following morning Lord Wyverton, sitting at breakfast alone in the little coffee-room of the Red Lion, heard a voice he recognized speak his name in the passage outside.

"Lord Wyverton," it said, "is he down?"

Lord Wyverton rose and went to the door. He met the landlady just entering with a basket of eggs in her hand. She dropped him a curtsy.

"It's Miss Molly from the Vicarage, my lord," she said.

Molly herself stood in the back-

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