

wastefully in the broad daylight, as I thought, and pretended I did not hear him.

"Have you not forgotten to switch off the lights?" I enquired with sham concern.

"Yes, we did, but then, it's all right. We often do that."

It surprised me that, the neglect having been pointed out to him, he did not get up immediately and extinguish the lights. Instead he continued to address me in the most embarrassing manner.

"You speak English too well for a foreigner," he said, looking at me in a most annoying way.

"I am not a foreigner," I replied. "I was born in Glasgow, Scotland, and brought up in the province of British Columbia, Dominion of Canada."

"State of British Columbia," he corrected, looking at me with a most annoying interest and curiosity.

"No. Province," I persisted.

"You are at least old-fashioned," he said. "Of course it don't matter. But you have been a long time away from home?"

I was becoming more and more uneasy; but, to humor him, I agreed.

"Will you not come inside?" the Professor said suddenly. "You have had a long walk, and you look tired and hungry."

"I shall be delighted."

We rose and went into a beautifully furnished parlor. The ladies were already there, Mrs. Agnew knitting and her daughter crocheting. They rose when we entered and stood facing us for a few seconds.

Miss Agnew smiled sweetly; and, during those few moments when she stood facing me, I thought she was one of the most beautiful women I had ever seen. There was a rareness about her feminine attractiveness which I could not explain, but which appealed to me as something distinct from the ordinary. Her features were perfectly chisled, and her complexion seemed to me to leave nothing to be desired. The color of her cheeks I would say, was entirely her own; and, if artificial methods had been brought to her assistance they had been applied with extreme modesty and caution. At this first meeting some strange irresistible emotion seemed to draw me towards Miss Agnew even as a magnet will attract steel.

Mrs. Agnew was a rather stout person, and had been very beautiful in her younger days. Nature had gifted her with very pleasing and attractive features. She had most decidedly transmitted her face and manners to her daughter, for the resemblance between the two in those respects was remarkable.

The Professor was a man of medium height and build. Indeed, he was a man much about my own size in many respects. He was not in the least pompous, and he had more of that disposition that must be discovered than one that will deliberately give itself away. It was easily seen that the smile was not the one that Nature had intended to bestow on him; it was not natural, and I suspected that it had been artificially acquired for a purpose. It could come and go entirely at the Professor's will. I was satisfied from the first time I saw him that the smile was only used for purposes of propaganda, and illuminated the dungeon of his face only when occasion warranted. It certainly was not a smile that would be likely to encourage friendship or create fellow feeling.

In the parlor as well as on the outside electric lights were burning carelessly, and apart from the infinite beauty of Miss Agnew, this was among the first things to attract my attention on entering.

I was invited to be seated again; and, as I did so the ladies retired. The Professor sat down near to me.

"You must be extremely wealthy," I complimented the strange man, "when the matter of electric light cost does not worry you?" And I looked up and around at the apparent waste of money and the needless illumination.

"Wealth has nothing to do with it," replied the Professor. "Electricity costs us nothing."

"Costs nothing!"

"The initial expense of installation is the total outlay. We derive light and power direct from the air," continued the remarkable man.

"Direct from the air!"

My astonishment puzzled him.

"You must indeed have been many years in the back woods," he said staring at me as though I were a curiosity rarely seen.

"No, but I must be dreaming," I replied, by way of escape.

"Dreaming? You are nothing of the kind. This is the real thing," he said.

I had often heard suggestions that power might be derived direct from the air, and I knew experiments had been made along that line, but I never dreamed that the experiments had developed into actual scientific fact.

"You see," continued the Professor, "power is captured from the electricity in the atmosphere that we breathe by a little instrument called an 'electric antenna' stationed on a little tower above the roof. The power is transmitted to a generator and exciter located in the basement, and from there distributed by wireless electro-magnetism throughout the premises in the form of power or light whichever is desired. Each little globe of light contains an individual motor which derives its energy from the electric-laden atmosphere, and the light can be extinguished only at the source of supply, the electric antenna. You will understand, therefore, why we are so neglectful and leave them burning continuously."

"Wonderful!" I cried out in astonishment.

"The harnessing of Niagara and other great water falls of the world, and the electrifying of the air became an accomplished fact about the year 2000," added the professor. "And, since those extremely early times,——"

Just at that moment the ladies entered the room again with trays each containing bottles of beverage of some kind, and little glass preserve dishes filled with little tablets of various colors.

Miss Agnew, with much pleasing courtesy, offered me a bottle of the beverage and a tumbler, and then said:

"Try some of the pellets; you must be hungry."

I was indeed hungry, but I did not imagine that a pill would go far towards filling the vacancy. But perhaps they were mere appetizers.

I helped myself to one from each preserve dish.

"Perhaps you will not care for those," said the girl, referring to some pink ones. "They are just out."

I was at a loss just what to do, but I watched the others, and mimicked them. The custom was to throw a pill into the mouth and then wash it down with a drink of the beverage. And I had no sooner swallowed one of each color than my hunger was appeased.

They were tablets of concentrated food, but I did not dare ask any foolish questions lest I might create suspicions or betray ignorance in things which were common knowledge and ordinary practice.

When we had finished "eating," the process of which did not occupy more than five minutes, Mrs. Agnew relieved us of the empty bottles and glasses, and Miss Agnew rose and turned a switch in the wall at the side of a plate-like instrument. Immediately the air was filled with the sweetest of instrumental music as though it came from the masonry of which the wall was composed.

The young lady sang with a voice that seemed to me even sweeter than the music which was so mysteriously produced. The rivalry between the two was most decidedly in favor of Miss Agnew, according to my judgment, which I would not permit myself to believe was biased.

For fifteen minutes or more I sat in a sort of trance listen-