

"What in the world brings you people here?" she exclaimed.

"Why we came to the city especially to attend the Musical Festival, of course," they replied. "You are going, surely?" they asked.

She had heard of the great concert to be given by the Society that night, but was usually tired enough to go straight to her lodgings and to bed when her duties at the store were finished for the day. She had not given the affair another thought.

Her friends at last persuaded her to get a holiday for the rest of the day and to accompany them. This was easily obtained, as she had been attentive and consistent to her duties, indeed, the manageress said she could go at once, and a substitute was found in her place for the rest of the day. She invited her friends to go home with her, hoping they would refuse, and was glad when they claimed prior arrangements, but Phil offered to accompany her, and as soon as she was ready they would join the others at a certain point in the city. As she showed him into the little dingy parlor of the boarding house, she felt a little ashamed. She knew her present surroundings were in great contrast to her old home. The greater part of her pleasure at meeting her old friends was lost by the thought that she could not entertain them as she wished. Her wardrobe was only scanty, as she did not go into company. A dress or two for church was all she had except cheap shop dresses. Of course, her friends would notice that she was not as well dressed as they, but would be too polite to mention or even notice the fact, nevertheless, it only irritated her. Then, she had never met Phil alone since their memorable parting when she decided the issue, and was not a little puzzled by his stoic appearance, but she determined to put on a brave appearance, and had he again asked her the old question, he would have been told that her decision was the same,—to remain in the city.

The youthful merriment was contagious, and she had not been with them long till she was feeling happier than she had been for years. They told her of the changes that had taken place in the old home—there were not many—and chatted away in such an animated manner and were so very pleasant that she was very happy indeed. They visited every place of attraction for which they had the time, and Kitty dared not tell them that she had experienced more pleasure in that single afternoon than in all the four years she had lived in the city.

After an excellent supper at one of the best hotels,—which was to her a far greater treat than the rest of the young people,—they attended the concert, after which they all returned to the hotel, Phil insisted that she should go with them, and as they had not seen her for so long she should spend the night with them.

The next morning, they all accompanied her to the store, it being on their way to the station. As soon as her friends had left her, Kitty felt the old longing return for her old home and friends more than ever before. She had at first been secretly thankful to Phil for his not alluding to the old subject. He had been as pleasant as the rest of them, and had not even shown either by word or deed that there ever had been any difference between them. At the last he had shaken her by the hand without the least sign of tremor to remind her that she was more to him than any of the rest. This made her wonder. For she had wished that he would, at the last, show her in some way that he cared for her still. Try as she would, she could not shake off her melancholy feeling. Her work seemed more tiresome than ever. It seemed as though she could not satisfy her customers, or that the customers themselves were more exacting than ever before.

At last the evening came, work being finished for the day. Everyone seemed to be in a hurry to leave. None of her fellow-workers had a word for her and she longed for a friend to whom she could confide her secret thoughts, but there was no one among her acquaintances who could respond with ready sympathy. As soon as she had finished her supper, which was simply a pretence of eating, she retired to her room, and was seated in the lounge-chair that it contained, lost in meditation, when she was interrupted by a knock at the door. A maid

entered, saying: "There is a gentleman in the parlor who wishes to see you, Miss Kitty."

Her astonishment knew no bounds when upon entering the room she saw Phil seated by the window. As she advanced, he arose and came towards her, saying: "Kitty, I hope you will excuse me, but I had to come back. I started back home with the rest, but made an excuse about some repairs I had forgot, and left them a station or two down the line, then took the first train to the city. The life you are living does not appear at all suitable to you. I do not like to see such a change in you. The close confinement together with the long hours in that store have told on your health, and a boarding house life does certainly not agree with one who has been used to the comforts of a home such as you left. You have now been in the city for four years, and I would like to hear you honestly say whether the life was the same as

you expected or not. I think you will say it was not. I had fully made up my mind not to say anything to you on this matter, as you made the choice. But you know my power of intuition is quick, for yesterday and the last night there were moments when I read you, despite your outward appearance. The very thought of your discontentment makes me want you more than ever. My love for you has never changed. Your father and mother want you back again. We all want you there. Have you anything here that has a stronger claim on you than ours?"

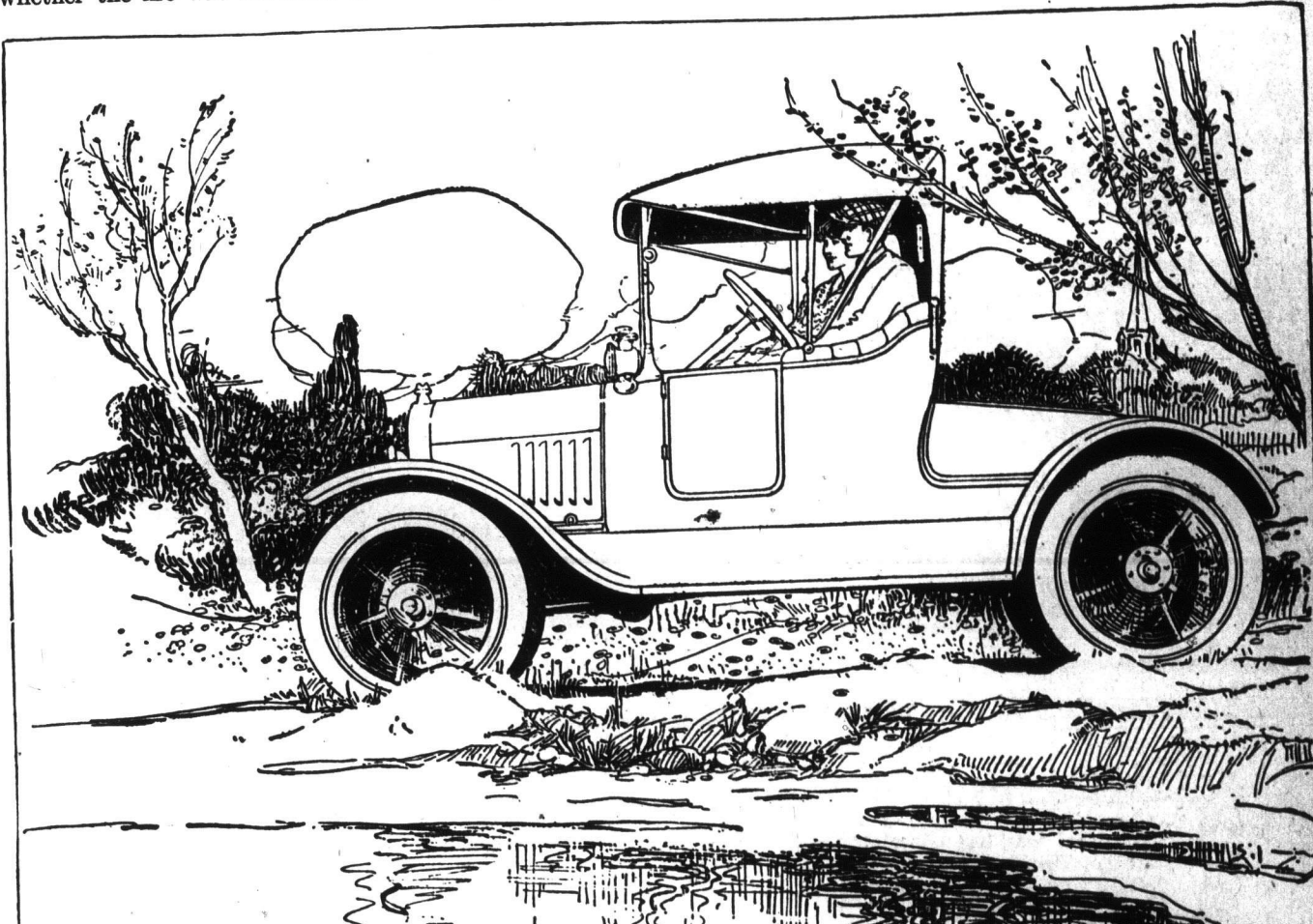
By this time he had taken both her hands and looked down at her, well knowing the answer. The frank earnest appeal, together with his fine vigorous appearance broke down any resolutions she tried to make.

Her answer was very simple: "There is nothing here and very much there."

Oh, take me home, Phil. I have loved you all the time, but have been wilful, and am tired of this life."

She fell sobbing into his arms.

A short time later they stood before a minister and were made man and wife. When the news reached home surprises were never more general. The party of young people had given both Kitty and Phil the closest watchfulness, and all had arrived at the same conclusion, namely, that neither cared for the other except as friends. Phil's excuse for leaving them was plausible, so when he walked into church the next Sunday leading his bride, both were subject to an unusual 'stare'. The reception Kitty received quickly fed the starved heart of the past and years afterwards she said: "I left home friends and the truest love that a woman ever had, only to find my delusion. Fate has been more kind to me than I deserve."



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