

From Thanksgiving to Thanksgiving.

[A story in four chapters. By Anison North.]

CHAPTER IV.

During the next few days Helena Wayne lived, it seemed to her, through years of experience. At first she walked to and fro from her work in a sort of dumb pain. Her bright vision had faded. The realization had settled heavy on her heart that between a little talent and the genius that could make its mark on the world, lay a great gulf, and that she, poor child, with her little aptitude for music and her sad lack of opportunity for developing even such talent as she had, must forever stand on the nether side and look across to that fair mountain-top which had been the land of her dreams. The one absorbing aim, that had bound her to the life in which she found herself, gone, the disagreeable things began to obtrude with painful persistency. She began to hate the little, dreary hall-bedroom with its one north window looking down upon the stiff little grass-plot; she began to hate the monotony of granolithic sidewalks and brick walls; to hate the days spent in selling bits of rag and feather, things that must be cast aside after a little, despised and forgotten. Even, quite unreasonably, she began to avoid the little pleasures and recreations that might have been hers during the long fall evenings, and, instead, to lie on her bed, hour after hour, with her hands shut tight in nervous tension, and her eyes fixed on the gas-light with that strange fascination that often draws the gaze when the thoughts are busy. At such times the call from the old home tugged at her heart; but she had the blood of a hundred unyielding Scottish ancestors in her veins, and she would not "give up." No, she would not "give up," foolish child. She had come here practically in spite of them all, and she must make good somehow.

But how?—that was the question. Little by little the whole road lay plain and clear before her. She could advance enough to take second-rate concert-work, that was clear,—if she stayed long enough. It would be a dreadful collapse of her ambition, but then it would be still to cling to her beloved music. And then, who knew?—perhaps some day the magic thrill, the magic touch would come, all unannounced. Such things had happened. It was a fragile hope, not enough to carry her away with the old enthusiasm, yet enough to screw her resolution to the staying-point. Yes, yes, she must go on. She must not give up.

But could she endure the long years of plodding to and from work, the long years of hard sidewalk and brick walls, and chatter of the girls in the shop, chiefly about their beaux and new dresses?—Yes, again, why should she hate these things so? Others about her, in the very same environment, seemed to be happy enough. Was it due to some lack in herself that she failed to see the romance and the pathos that must be in these lives about her? Yet how could she come into closer touch with it. She had thought, sometimes, of engaging in charitable work and visiting of some sort, but usually in the evenings she was so tired, so tired, too tired, after her hour's piano practice, to do anything but just lie down and stare at the gas-light, and think about home.

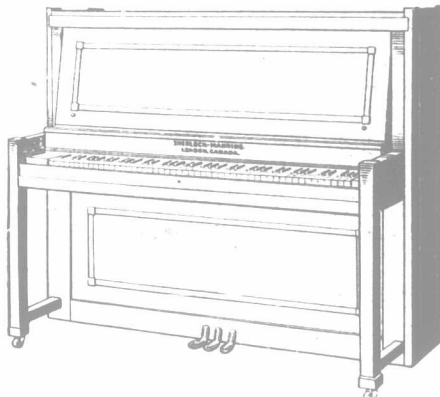
But she must not "give up." . . . And so she continued to get up in the mornings listlessly, and to walk to her work listlessly, and smile mechanically all through the day, and creep to her bed with a dull ache at her heart, of nights.

At last it was just two days before Thanksgiving, a beautiful day, soft and sweet as a day in June. Helena could not stay in that evening, even to practice, and cast about as to where she should go. Her aunt's?—No, she had come to her aunt's but little, of late, for the folk there were so taken up with a new interest that they had almost forgotten the little country relative in Miss

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Giles' millinery shop. Honore was to be married soon to Claude Clement, and for weeks there had been little care for anything but gauzes and laces and talk of the great coming event.

"I suppose I'll go to the library," she decided, "I'm not in talking mood," so directly after dinner she set out, making a little detour, as she often did, to walk through a bit of a park that lay somewhat between. Her way to it lay through a little back street, lined with cottages, the homes of working-folk living simply within their means. Through the darkness the light from the open doors gleamed hospitably, and here and there Helena could see within little home-

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scenes, tables at which parents and children sat chatting brightly as they ate their evening meal, somewhat belated, for it took father some time to reach home and wash up before dinner could be served. "After all," thought Helena, I believe they are happier than the people who live up about aunt's at Elmhurst."

Walking on she came to one whence, through an open window, came the sound of a woman's voice, singing. It was a wonderful voice, deep, and rich, and filled with a vibrant emotion. Involuntarily she stopped to listen, and discovered that, through the window she could see the woman rocking her baby to sleep. The face, bent toward the little one as