

The Deserter's Fate

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aunt. That lady was inclined to be provoked at times with Hester because she had not married a rich man, so she was not very sympathetic. "If you had married Peter Hughes, you could afford to have nervous prostration or anything else," was her cool answer. "As it is I don't know what you will do unless you look up your country relatives and visit them."

Hester grasped at the suggestion, for she had very little money at her command. Mrs. Daniels' advice had always been to "dress well and marry well," and her niece had obediently followed her instructions, only she could not bring herself to encourage some of the men her aunt approved of. Something inside her rose up instinctively at the thought of selling herself to a man whose only qualification lay in the fact that he had plenty of money. Within a week she had written to Emily asking if it "would be convenient to have her for a guest," and had received a warm and urgent invitation to come immediately. Hester's conscience reproached her for listening so long to the counsel of her selfish aunt, and she went out to buy some little gifts for the children, hoping in that way to make some amends for her conduct.

"Miss Blakesley?" said a voice at her elbow as she stood gazing about on the unfamiliar faces at the station. "You have forgotten me, of course, but I am related to you just the same."

"Is it possible that this is Ralph?" gaped Hester looking at the manly young fellow at her side. "Little Ralph?"

"Not quite," laughed the young man. "I am Mark Asbury and last June I married Emily. Doesn't that make us related?" He stood there looking so handsome and graceful that Hester could hardly believe that he was her lover, or at least wanted to be her lover, ten years before. "Emily is entertaining her club this afternoon, so I had to come alone. Ralph is in college, you know, and so are Grace and Edgar."

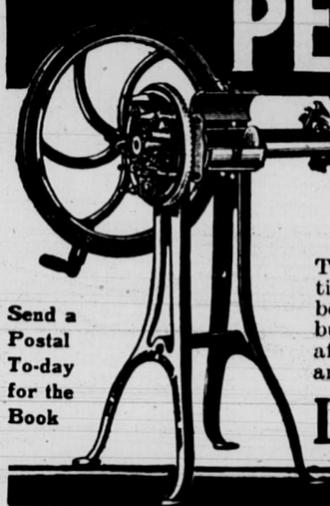
Chatting easily he led her to a waiting automobile and assisted her in, tucking the robes about her comfortably. It was in the fall and the roads were hard and white and dry, and the machine flew like a bird over the distance between town and the old home. But Hester would never have known the old home, for new buildings, fences, porches and improvements everywhere had transformed the shabby place. Hester said nothing until she was folded in her sister's arms, and then her questions broke loose.

"Yes, we have improved the old place," said the pretty mistress of the house. "I told you something of our plans when we paid you your share, you know." Hester had not the faintest idea what the plans had been, but now she saw them worked out in beautiful reality. "Shortly after you left we bought some good cows and began making first-class butter for market. Everybody helped and we soon had a reputation. We are not doing that now, for the children are in college—that is all but Rob, who is on his own farm. Yes, we have enlarged our borders a little," she went on modestly answering question after question. "We have been happy and are doing right well."

"And a great deal of the credit is due to Emily, Hester," said Mr. Asbury, finally breaking in. "She is trying to give you the impression that most of the land belongs to me, but she did very well handicapped as she was. Maybe I did bring a few more acres to the partnership, but she did more than I did, all things considered. But, girls, you must remember that the club ladies will be gathering in fifteen minutes, and you will not be ready to receive them. Hester, I'll carry your suitcase upstairs and you must be ready to meet our friends."

As in a dream Hester saw the modern bathroom and felt the heat from a steam radiator making the whole house like summer. The dainty, airy room, the space, the light, the comfort all made a profound impression upon her, for she was used to the cramped city flat, but she scarcely said a word. Emily flitted up in a few minutes with a dainty lunch, urging her to eat and dress quickly, and then they went down to meet the ladies Hester had gone to school with, as well as some newcomers into the neighborhood. There was a bright little program followed by a social hour, but during the whole afternoon Hester sat thinking over her sister's life

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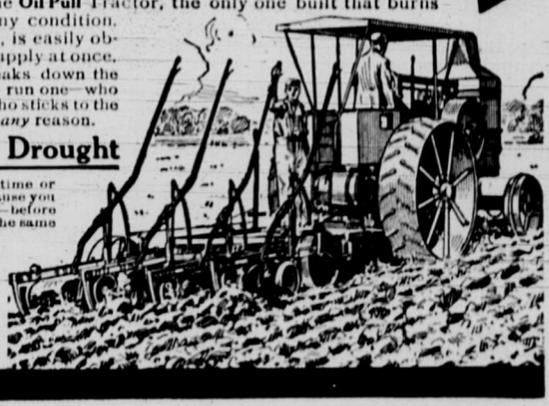
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and her own. Emily, flushed and happy, secure in the love of a manly husband, looked the picture of health and she welcomed the guests with a pretty dignity very becoming to her. Later she read a paper that showed thought and research, and Hester was forced to see that though she had stopped going to school at a very early age she had not been idle since.

"How long do you expect to be in the country, Miss Blakesley?" asked a guest politely.

"Perhaps six or eight weeks," said Hester. "My position is open to me that long, and I expect to be completely recovered."

"Well, I hope you will enjoy every minute of the time," said the lady. "City people usually find the country very dull in winter, but we like it."

"Thank you, I think I will not get lonely for the city," said Hester. Then to herself she said as the guest joined another group, and the talk ran along briskly upon school, children, house-keeping and topics foreign to Hester, "I suppose I have no right to rail at fate. I deserted my post of duty and this is my punishment. O, well, life is disappointing at best, so I'll have to make the best of it." But just then she caught sight of pretty Emily in the dining-room beyond serving the dainty refreshments her own hands had prepared, and she knew that life was only a disappointment to those who closed their eyes to duty and received the due reward of the deserter.

Protection---Destroyer of Life

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of the collapse of the roof of a building and the crushing out of the lives of two workmen. The responsibility, however, should be carried back one step further. Without the protection of the tariff, which in the case of cement is 51 per cent. of the value, no merger could be formed so

as to absolutely control the market and force consumers to pay high prices and use inferior products. Mergers might be formed which would bring about economy of production and distribution, which might be a good thing for both producers and consumers, but if they were required to compete with the producers in other countries they would not only be compelled to sell their products at fair prices but would be compelled also to supply an article of good quality. As the prospectus of the Canada Cement Co. stated, "cement is a product which, owing to its weight, will not stand much expenditure in the shape of freight," and if Canadian manufacturers of cement cannot produce it in the midst of the market at the same cost as their rivals in England can sell it here after paying transportation charges, it would be good policy to conserve our natural resources until such time as they can be worked profitably without the necessity for practising extortion and compelling builders to use cement of poor quality, thereby destroying human life.

The Germans are under no illusions concerning their sacred tariff. They understand that it is added to the cost of commodities and that the consumer must pay it. In recognition of this plain economic fact and with the purpose of reducing the high cost of living the Berlin Chamber of Commerce and the Merchants' Guild have petitioned the imperial government to cut the duties on grain, fodder, etc., in half for the relief of the people. Of course this will enrage the great German landlords and they will rend the heavens with their protests. But it seems probable that the German government will yield something to the popular demand. Socialism is thriving marvelously on the economic conditions which the high tariff has bred, and the emperor is not blind to the fact. To save himself he may feel it necessary to sacrifice the landlords.—Johnstown Democrat.

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