

A HOME-COMING.

'You don't realize how dull my life is. Really, you don't.'

'And you don't realize how hard I work.'

They faced each other, their eyes for the moment meeting, hostile, opaque from the hardness in which the heat of their dispute had suddenly ended.

The day had begun with disappointment. Certain things had been promised her by certain other things went through. At breakfast he had told her reluctantly that he had not 'made good,' so she would have to wait for the new suit and fur—

an announcement that had been the point of departure for a series of differences, culminating in a contest of their mutual disappointment and weariness.

'If you work so hard,' she cried, 'you don't get on faster—there's Carrie's husband, just your age, and she has her motor, and her subscription seat at the opera—'

She paused, suddenly terrified by her own words. Never before had she broken the reserve, the margin of silence which separates—she knew this even while she spoke—the gentle woman from the nameless crowd who push and jostle and vociferate in their scramble for their rights; but the very act had become a wall barring her return.

James Worthington flushed. 'I do the best I can—and you know it.'

'It might be better.'

'Of course it might be worse,' she cried, catching the ball that he had tossed. 'I might have to do with even one servant, and make all my clothes instead of buying a few ready-made at the department stores—oh, there are lower depths!'

Silence fell between them. A darkness that was not of the gloomy day seemed to pervade every corner of the little apartment, shutting from their eyes the things in it which had been precious to them, because they had gathered them trophy by trophy—the symbols of their mutual tastes and interests.

The very barrenness, the spaces waiting for something really good and significant, had been symbolic of their willingness to possess their souls in patience until they could afford the beauty and rarity that they both loved to such a marked degree.

He was the first to take refuge in speech. 'I wish,' he said, 'that Carrie Masters had never looked you up. You've been dissatisfied ever since.'

SCOTT'S EMULSION. It is taken by people in tropical countries all the year round. It stops wasting and keeps up the strength and vitality in summer as well as in winter.

have leisure for many pleasures and incidents. Money was needed for that. The imagination might do much, but the facts were facts. Until they had more money, they must, therefore, miserably remember it.

What did it avail to be beautiful if one were perpetually hidden like a lovely robe in a dark closet? Through the mark of her mood she saw herself yellowing year by year in the little circle of their mutual obscurity.

Recalled to the outside world by the shriek of a ferry whistle, she found that her wanderings had brought her near the ferry from which one took train to Oakdale, whose summer colony included Mrs. Jack Masters. She wondered if Carrie were still in the country, lingering on fashionably for the sake of haunting. Her husband's recent criticism of her friendship pushed her now perversely to a plan for the afternoon. She would go out to Oakdale—it was not a long run—have a cup of tea with her friend, and forget her own deprivations for a time in Carrie's triumphant home, the kind of home which suggests that the whole world is wealthy and living just that way. It would be good to shut out the November world by the glowing woodfire glow to be burning on the broad hearth in Carrie's make-believe library—the gayest fraud of a library, all white and gold and rose—called so because there were no books in it.

It would be good to enter victoriously even for half an hour, Carrie's imperious world of well-being.

When she had reached the other side of the river she found she would have to wait nearly an hour for her train; but she was not deterred from her purpose. Anything was better than going back to the apartment.

The air of the waiting-room oppressing her, she went out to the broad platform, where people were hurrying to their trains, or standing in expectant groups. Absorbed in her own reflections, she began to pace up and down, taking a kind of comfort in the sense the vast chilly place gave her of far-off scenes, broad landscapes and distant cities.

Suddenly something touched her—something small and soft that clutched her knees with a gurgle of delight and a cry of rapture. Her mood of hostility isolated even babies, and she looked down impatiently, preparing to detach herself from the clinging beads, but the rosy circle of the upturned face was disarming. The blue eyes with their dark lashes lagged into hers; the soft curls escaping from the close Dutch cap invited Isabel's fingers to touch. Impulsively she knelt before the baby, from whose dainty cambric, spreading out her silk coat, came a faint perfume of eris.

'Runaway!'

The baby's mother was standing over her, together with the baby's brother and sister, a boy about twelve and a younger girl. They were all smiling, as if this incident were but one of a beautiful series in a long, sunny day. It was clear to Isabel that they wanted the little thing back among them, and yet they wanted this stranger to have her long enough to grasp fully her perceptions—not, indeed, to miss one point.

'I'm so sorry. She will run away,' the mother said. 'I'm so glad I didn't upset her. She is such a darling.'

A little proud smile fitted for a moment over the mother's face. She held out a hand to the baby, who showed her dimple and continued to cling to Isabel's skirts.

'Please don't take her away.'

manner, was radiantly happy, so happy that all her life for the moment was held in a bush of joyous expectation. A vague envy stirred her, mingled with impatience. Certain types of women did not know enough to be discontented. The baby's mother was, probably, without keen perception, or the wide vision which creates desire.

They were held, therefore, together by the baby's interest in Isabel. The mother supplemented the little boy's explanation.

'I am here to meet my husband,' she said shyly. 'He has been away in the West for nearly eight months. The train is late, so we've been waiting for some time.'

'The western trains are always late,' Isabel commented. She did not feel at her ease with these strangers in their community of pleasant anticipation; their full acceptance of joy, more likely imaginary than real, or exaggerated by the narrowness of their little round of existence with its bread and butter standards. She would like to have moved away, but the baby continued to address her very pointedly and personally with soft, engaging little sounds.

'Has she always looked as well as she does now?' Isabel asked, perversely probing for the flaw that she would like to find.

'She has been perfectly healthy ever since she was born. She has grown so in the past eight months that we think her father will scarcely know her.'

'She's one surprise,' the boy said gaily, 'and there are two others—aren't there, Mummy?'

His mother smiled and turned a confidential, apologetic face to Isabel. 'We've each tried to have a surprise. The baby could only grow fatter and rosier; but the other children—she paused and turned to them.

'I've cooked a pudding for father's dinner tonight,' said the little girl. 'And I'm in Virgil,' the boy said, modestly.

'Puddings and Latin!' Isabel echoed with a laugh. 'She was no longer resisting the rosy warmth of happiness that surrounded the little family in it, instinctively holding out her hands to the glow of their hearthfire. She tried to picture their home; it would be sunny and bright, she thought, and there might be times when one would find the baby's doll on the floor of the very widest room.'

'Has it always been so with you—I mean everything just happy and bright?'

The other woman's face grew grave. 'Ah, no!'

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