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CHAPTER VI

CHRISTINE

As Celia turned the corner at Brook Street, and, with home in sight, quickened her lagging pace, it is safe to say that she noticed few of the changes which the sixteen years had wrought. Yet Brook Street was changed. A stranger would have noticed at once that the entire character of the street had altered since that night when Celia had trundled the shabby go-cart home. Even at that time the neighbourhood had long ceased to be very desirable; now its aspect was distinctly forbidding. One by one the shabby houses had given place to tenement or "apartment" houses, whose ground floors were devoted largely to second or third class restaurants and eating-houses, together with the inevitable 1-rooms and corner saloons. From a shabby, quiet street, with an atmosphere of its own, it had become a shabby, noisy street with no atmosphere at all; from being merely undesirable it had become vulgar.

The house where the Misses Brown lodged had always looked out of place in this street, now its presence there was so strange as to cause continual comment. At a little distance it was a rather imposing place; when the setting sun beamed upon its many windows it might, at a little distance, have seemed a palace. Beside it was the only vacant lot on the long street. It was surrounded by a wall, and, at a