

is mercenary. He is no weakling either, and could at any time make his own way. It has been my will and not by his that he is in the position he is. You will find him as eager in this search as if he were my own son."

The detective snapped his notebook shut again. "Well, I'll take your word for him, and you'll excuse my questions. I don't come across many such disinterested young men—not in my business. Let me know when he arrives and we'll keep him busy. And don't you worry—er—more than you can help. You know," he added awkwardly, "I don't believe that there is anything in that—er—threat, you know. If the young lady is alive it is quite possible that she may be—er—supporting herself. But, bless me, there's no disgrace in that. Lots of young ladies do it. Doesn't hurt them at all; does them good. You can take it from me that there's nothing in the other—er—suggestion."

Adam Torrance shuddered. "How do we know?" he asked. "How can we be sure? Such things have happened. If she is alone and helpless—"

"Now, don't think of it. Such things have happened. But they don't happen anything like they might. If you were in my business you'd be surprised. Yes, sir, you'd be surprised how seldom such things do happen—everything considered. And blood tells. Don't you ever believe but that good blood tells. Yes, sir, I've seen it too often not to know."

The miserable man looked at him gratefully. "Yes, I have thought of that. It is my best hope. Her mother's daughter—surely her mother's daughter—"

"Don't you ever doubt her mother's daughter," said the detective cheerfully. "Wherever she is, she'll pull through."

But as he left the house behind him he looked very grave.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE sun, which in these autumn days was getting lazier each morning, was well up and shining cheerily through the curtains of the House of Windows when Celia woke upon the day which was to see Christine return to the Stores. They had told her about it the night before, and it had seemed to Celia, then, that somehow life had cheated her. Ada and Christine and Tommy had urged, explained, and entreated. They were all against her and, perforce, she had given in. Their victory had been the more easy in that Celia herself had few arguments to support her opposition. She did not herself understand the reason for the stand she had taken, she only knew that she had fought for it, given herself for it, lavished on it every energy of heart and brain. To be defeated at last was bitter. She looked back slowly, heavily, through her sixteen years of struggle and realized how impossible they would have been had it not been for the hope which had upheld her. To give Christine what she had missed herself, to hold back with frail hands the Juggernaut which had crushed her own youth, and to see Christine free, healthful and beautiful. This had been the one sustaining purpose of her life. She had lost all sense of proportion, of course; and when they explained to her that Christine's work at the Stores was but a temporary expedient, she had no real sense of their meaning. She could not realize the calamity as a partial one. To her the fact of Christine's entering the Stores at all was defeat open and avowed.

Yes, life had cheated her. It had whispered to her to work on and on, and then, when the goal was within sight, it had allowed her to be stricken down, drained of strength, a helpless, useless being, too weak to raise a hand to avert the overthrow of her one hope. They had all been so kind, she felt no resentment against anyone, but not one of them had understood. She knew that they considered her unconquerable opposition stubbornly unreasonable—lacking in common sense.

She awoke, to find the autumn sun bright upon the wall and Christine standing before the mirror pinning her pretty hat over her bright hair. Celia could see the face in the mirror thoughtfully smiling. The hat was being adjusted very carefully, with a slow sliding in of the long pins.

Christine gave the hat a last adjusting pat and turned to her. "Oh, you are awake, dear!" she said, slipping her round young arm under Celia's head, in order to kiss her more thoroughly. "Isn't it a scrumptious morning? I am starting early, so that I may walk all the way. I don't believe they ever have weather like this anywhere else in the world."

Celia managed to smile faintly, but Christine's eyes were sharp enough to see the effort. Immediately she abandoned her idea of walking to the Stores and sat down comfortably upon the bed.

"Cissy," she said, using the old baby name which had been the first word she had ever said. "I don't believe you are a bit resigned in spite of all our efforts. You do not look resigned, so I am going to tell you the other part of my plan. Tommy and I have been talking it over. When you are quite well and have had a good holiday and are strong again, I am going to leave the Stores at once and take a special business course. Tommy is going to lend me the money. I think I am just as proud as you are, dear, and you can trust me that it will be a strictly business proposition. The amount needed will not be large, and Mr. Brindley has guaranteed me a good position as soon as I can take it. Then I can pay Tommy back. We won't insult him by offering him interest, and of course no one could ever pay back his kindness, but, otherwise, we shall be business-like to the last degree. You know, he wants to give me the money to go to the university, but I couldn't take that. The time is too long and the risks too great; but the other proposition seems reasonable. What do you think?"

"Yes," said Celia vaguely. There was no use in disagreeing. But she had no faith in the plan. It would never be carried out. The Stores would see to that. They would never let her go, this ignorant young thing, sitting there so confidently, planning impossible things with level brows and smiling lips.

"Christine," called Ada's voice from the sitting room. "You will be late—"

Celia turned her face away, and Christine, thinking that she wished to sleep, drew the blind quietly and went out.

"You'll have to take the car now, dear," said Ada. (She had all the wonderful time-sense of the blind). "But before you go look at the letter behind the clock. It came yesterday when you were out. It is only a circular, I suppose."

"From the directory, I suppose," said Christine. Her cheeks were flushed and her hand was trembling. The letter had come then, after all.

"Is it a bill?" asked Ada anxiously.

"No, dear,—it's—oh, nothing. I'll take it with me. I must run. Good-bye."

"I must tell her," thought Christine, as she sped down the steps. "I feel like a conspirator. I'll—I'll get Tommy to tell her. No, that would be cowardly. I'll tell her myself. I'll read her the letters. She will enjoy them. There's nothing in them



that anyone might not see—only I don't seem to want anyone to have the chance." She laughed in amusement at herself. Somehow the world seemed a specially pleasant place this morning. The crowded car was flooded with autumn sunshine, but she did not realize that it was she herself who brought some of the glory with it. She only noticed tired faces looked up at her brightly, and that one fatherly old gentleman beamed upon her broadly as he made room for her in the corner.

And the corner of a crowded street car is as good a place as another for the reading of a letter. Truly one's toes may be trodden upon and one's hat crushed, but there is something delightfully private about a crowd. One may blush and smile at will, quite hidden by the broad party who hangs upon the strap in front of one.

Christine's letter was shorter this time. Her correspondent frankly confessed a falling off. "I do not seem to be able to write for nuts any more," he wrote despairingly. "I don't know why. I always thought I was rather a dab at writing. And all the time I am thinking such jolly things to say, but when I sit down I can't think of them, 'not if it was ever so.' Thank goodness I shan't have to be here much longer. On Monday we start up the Coast. In another month I'll be back, and then I'm coming East, uncle or no uncle. I have absorbed enough atmosphere and assimilated impressions sufficient to satisfy a cannibal."

"We start up the Coast next week in a tug called the 'Shuswap.' According to Macgregor it is a fine name, and 'byondinar' lucky." No one, he assures me, has ever been lost off a 'Shuswap.' No 'Shuswap' has ever been wrecked, but all have come to a natural end in their beds, or, to be more exact, their scrap-iron heap. All names are either lucky or unlucky, it seems, some much more so. For instance, there are some names which simply fly in the face of Providence and are disciplined accordingly. There is in the harbor, now, a trim looking yacht with shining brass and dainty cabin. It is rumored that she carries silver plate and hand-embroidered linen, but no one will buy her because her name is 'The Davy Jones.' Already she has sent two successive owners to join her namesake in the 'locker.' Macgregor seems to think that it served them right. I suggested that the name be changed, but he shook his head. 'I doubt if there's paint made thick enough to hide a name like yon,' he said. Then he told me tales until I declare he made me wonder if there might not be something in a name, the immortal Bill to the contrary notwithstanding.

"Last Sunday we took out a picnic party on the 'Shuswap.' There were Miss Jane and Miss Marian and pretty Miss O'Hara (and don't forget the O). For men, we had Mr. Rickman and Mr. Macdougall (whose folks in Scotland have a real, live piper to assist digestion, and who is revered accordingly), Macgregor and myself. I had an instinct that I was supposed to devote myself to Miss O'Hara, and I did. I don't think it was my fault that I happened to be devoting myself to her in the bow when a big wave came over and soaked us both. It was entirely Rickman's fault, for insisting on steering through the tide-rip in the Narrows without knowing his business. It also was not by any want of devotion on my part that there were no curling tongs on board. I scarcely see how Macgregor and I could have foreseen their necessity; but it is certain that Miss O'Hara appeared to blame me for the whole catastrophe."

"But this was the only unpleasant incident of the day, and even it was not without its good effect. Macgregor, who was gloomy in spite of himself, as he felt uneasy about going 'pleasuring' on the Sabbath, quite cheered up after it. He seemed to think that we had got what was coming to us and could now call quits."

"Vancouver is very American in taking its Sunday lightly. That morning the Narrows were quite gay with bobbing pleasure craft of all kinds, launches, excursion steamers, yachts, and little rowboats with a single sail. Even the water was unruly. But when we had steamed into Howe Sound, Sunday came upon us unawares. It is a wonderful stretch of water, walled in by mountains, dotted with quiet islands. I don't know where all the dancing little pleasure boats went, but in half an hour we had lost them all. Five minutes more and Macgregor and Macdougall were arguing predestination, Marian and Mr. Rickman discussed esoteric Christianity as expounded by Mrs. Besant, Jane and I had agreed that whichever died first was to haunt the other, just to prove that it could be done, and little Miss O'Hara had accepted the fact of no curling tongs with a beautiful and Christian resignation."

Later on, we quoted poetry, though, when it came to my turn, I could think of nothing save

"Far and few, far and few, are the lands where the jumbies live, Their heads are green and their hands are blue, and they went to sea in a sieve."

"Miss O'Hara surprised me by quoting Keats. She does not look like a Keats person. Rickman said he didn't know any but patriotic pieces, but he knew so many of them that he had no call to feel shy. He informed us in many different ways and at much length that in spite of all temptations to belong to other nations he remains an Englishman. And then Macdougall told us about the flowers o' the forest which are a weed awa'. (Don't know what it means.)"

"By this time we were all horribly hungry, so we took the 'Shuswap' in to a place where a single house is perched upon the hillside and partook of soft-boiled eggs and hard-boiled tea with fixings. I never saw anything more peaceful than that place. It had a beach of colored pebbles and water as clear as if it weren't so gorgeous that Macgregor shook his head at it as being too perfect for a Sabbath evening. As usual, when every prospect pleased, only man was vile. The owner of the house was all and complained bitterly that the peace of his surroundings at before he lost his license."

"Coming home (there were no waves now) Miss O'Hara con-tug boat. Steam, she said, was so soothing after the eternal chug-chug of the launches. (Rickman owns a launch.) I said for so laudable a purpose, but the reply did not seem to please her, for she went over and talked to Macdougall about Celtic poetry."

"Have I bored you with all this scribbling. I know that at least I have not said anything that I wanted to say, or that I really thought I might be able to say. I wanted to tell you all that I could not do it. Thoughts seem so pretentious, so pompous, so affected when written down. Are they really so, I wonder, or is it a kind of false shame that keeps us always on the surface, ashamed to speak of deep things, so terribly afraid of provoking a smile?"

"When I come East again and you and I meet (as you have promised) shall we discuss anything and everything save the

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