

flushed face in cold water. "It's time I went to Harold now," she said; "but how am I to tell him. I daresn't raise his hopes on so small a ground. I must let him imagine that I want to go into the country for a day. Dr. Harvey meant more than he said when he advised a change of air. If he only knew how hopeless it all is. I could have screamed when he said, 'Your brother hasn't any chance of getting better in this dark room'—just as if I didn't know it, and just as if even I, who am not artistic, didn't find myself crying sometimes for a breath of country air, for the sight of rain on a turnip field, for the blue haze over the dear woods.

In Harold's room Helen tried to talk naturally and brightly; she told him that she had made all arrangements with Mrs. Larkin for his removal the next day to the front room.

"And, dear boy, I want a breath of fresh air. I wonder if you would think me very selfish if I went into the country for a long day, the day after to-morrow. I would gather you some real country flowers, and bring back a whiff of the country in my clothes; could you spare me, dear?"

"Why, Helen, how rich you have suddenly become! How can you manage it? Spare you?—of course I could; I'd be a selfish brute if I couldn't, after all you've done for me. Now sign something, dear, for I'm too tired to talk."

Helen did not admit that she felt too excited and overstrung to sing, but instead she drew her chair near her brother's bed and sang softly some quaint nigger ditties, with a droning, sleepy refrain, and in less time than she had expected Harold was fast asleep.

The next morning Helen saw her brother safely moved into the front room. It made her heart ache, and filled her with a horrible sense of loneliness when she saw how weak he really was. Mr. Larkin had to carry him in his arms like a child from the one room to another. It was then Helen realised how little she had on earth to cling to, and how urgent was the necessity of getting her brother into a more bracing atmosphere. When he was comfortably settled, and had fallen into a quiet sleep, Helen dressed herself hurriedly and started off to the studio to keep her appointment as model. She took a number of her brother's sketches with her, to show the artist for whom she was sitting if a suitable opportunity occurred. "He will give me a candid opinion, I feel sure, for he is delightfully outspoken," she said to herself with a smile. The walk to the studio had brought a brilliant colour to Helen's cheeks, with the result that when her double knock was answered with a short "Come in," she entered in her usually buoyant fashion, looking like a veritable young Hebe. The artist gazed at her in only half-concealed wonder. Her elastic step, and her smiling radiant face, was such a direct contradiction to her penniless position. She was just the sort of girl who looked as if she wore old clothes from pleasure, not from necessity.

"I hope I'm in good time, sir. I've been so busy all the morning, and the time has flown." Helen made a point of addressing him as "sir," as she desired no footing of intimacy between them.

"You are in good time, Miss Churchill, and you look as if your work had been pleasant. What a comfort it is to meet a happy fellow-worker, and not a grumbler; but let us get to work."

At the end of twenty minutes' standing, Helen had an interval of rest. She was glad of it, as her arms were beginning to ache horribly, for the position necessitated her

holding them out. She sat down in a comfortable easy chair, and was soon lost in thought. The artist watched her keenly, and was astonished at her power of concentration. When she was standing, her whole attention had been given to her work as his model, and now that she was at rest, she appeared scarcely conscious of where she was. Her mind was so deeply engrossed in her own concerns. He tried to draw her into conversation about herself, but it was useless. What she meant to tell him, she would tell him of her own accord, and rather abruptly, it must be admitted, she unfolded her brother's sketches on her knee, and asked his opinion on their marketable value.

"Who has done these—not you?"

"No, my brother; but why not I? Do you think I couldn't sketch?"

"I'm sure you couldn't; you're too practical. You lack the nervous temperament of the artist who has done this." He tapped the sketch he held in his hand with his palate knife.

"What does your brother work for?"

"Nothing," was the faltering answer; "that is why I showed them to you. Do you think he could get work?"

"That depends on what sort of a man he is. He can certainly do good work, but that is no criterion that he will get it; that's where the artistic temperament comes in. You must get it for him."

"How do you mean, sir?"

"Well, I'll tell you. I'll give you a letter of introduction to a man who is starting a new weekly illustrated paper. He wants work like this; you must take some of your brother's work and show it to him. He's a very exacting man, and he likes having a say in the matter. He fancies he knows a bit about art; but he is a good chap and has asked me to recommend him some fresh work. Don't lose any time about going, for these sort of things get filled up directly."

"I'm sorry, I can't go for a day or two, sir! I have some very important business to do; but I'll go directly I can."

"What a busy person you seem to be!" he said, smiling. "You quite put me to shame! But pray don't thank me so much; I'm really doing nothing but granting the request the editor made to me. I'll send him these sketches if I may as specimens of work which I think will just suit, and I'll let you know the result as soon as I can."

With more thanks and charming smiles unconsciously born from happiness at the bright prospect, Helen said good-bye, and this time the artist did not forget to pay her. So, with a light heart and a fuller purse, she hurried home.

"Seven-and-six for a morning's work isn't bad," she said to herself; "but what trying work it is! My arms felt as if they would break."

When she got home it was time for their frugal mid-day meal, so she busied herself in laying the table, and this prevented Harold questioning her as to where she had been.

Directly after lunch she made herself as neat as her poor wardrobe would admit, and started off to see her cousin. When she was shown into his private office, he looked up from the pile of letters that lay in front of him and smiled condescendingly.

"My dear Helen, you here again? What a ray of sunshine you are in a dismal office! Please sit down!"

Helen writhed inwardly at every word of his flowery speech and remained standing.

"I shall only interrupt you for one moment," she said in her coldest voice. "I have once more come to ask a favour."

"Which, my dear cousin, I hope is in my power to grant."

"I should not ask it otherwise, sir. May I go home, to your home, I mean" (there was a quick little catch in her voice almost like a sob of pain when she corrected herself), "and get something I left there—something that as a child I hid there, and now I want it."

"Perhaps you forget that when I took over the house I took over all that was left in it. What you left there as a child now belongs to me."

This was said half in chaff, half in earnest, and Helen answered in the same spirit.

"No, it does not. Forgive me for contradicting you, but what I left there was given to me by my godfather; it could not be sold without my permission."

"Then why did you not take it with you?"

"Because I forgot it was there."

"Then it cannot be of much value."

"Then I may go and get it?"

"I am glad the request was one I could grant so easily, pretty coz. Yes, you may go and get it; but, pray, where is this treasure? I have never seen it."

"It is between the floor of the lumber-room that was my play-room and the ceiling of the pink bed-room. Do you remember our old hole in the floor?"

Her cousin roared with laughter.

"I should think I do, don't I just! On a wet day you would go and put your hands in as far as ever you could reach and pull out all sorts of treasures, and when they came out I made you shut your eyes and offered you a penny or twopenny for whatever you had found. It was a regular treasure-trove. I remember the day I hid Harold's best pocket-knife in the hole, and the next day when he went to see what had been swept into the treasure-trove he pulled out his knife wrapped up in paper. I bid twopenny-halfpenny for whatever he had in his hand, and I'll never forget the rage he was in when he found it was his knife."

Helen's eyes were flashing.

"You remember it all," she said, "how you bought everything we possessed—we had never seen money until you came. I sold you all I had for eightpence-halfpenny to pay for the rabbit with the red eyes."

"Not quite everything, dear coz, if you are going there to-morrow to get something. Stop, I've half a mind to come too and see what it is."

"You will be sadly disgusted. It is not beautiful."

He groaned.

"I suppose not, or I should have had it long ago. You were always a trifle mercenary, Helen."

Helen winced.

"You never bought it from me, because I hid it from you. I determined never to part with it, because my godfather left it to me, so I laid it in a box and put it in the hole in the floor. I lay face downwards and pushed the box as far back as I could with father's walking-stick, beyond the reach of your arms or the nursery pocker. But I am keeping you; I will not interrupt you further. Good-bye."

She held out her hand and smiled.

"Thank you for granting my request. I am really grateful!"

When she was safely out of the office her heart began to beat naturally again, and she hummed a little tune under her breath.

"It's always darkest before the dawn," she said, "and I believe our dawn is breaking." If Harold could get a change of air he'd be able to work, and if the box is still there the clouds will indeed have broken!

(To be continued.)