

DAYS AND DOLLARS

Tekla, who was seventeen years old, felt very important indeed, for a surprising thing had happened. It was only five days since she had graduated from the high school, and here she was with a working knowledge of the real estate business already at her finger-tips—literally, because her business was principally concerned with the typewriting machine in the office of Armstrong & Wolfe. The knowledge, perhaps, did not extend far beyond her finger-tips, because most of the letters she wrote at the dictation of her employers conveyed absolutely no meaning to her mind; but this did not trouble Tekla or anybody else.

Her copy was neat as well as accurate, and there was nothing about the completed letters to indicate that the typewriting young person was as innocent as the typewriter itself of the difference between the east half of lot fifty-seven and the north-west forty in Skandia township.

"You're wonderfully fortunate," said Geraldine Pease, who was four years older than Tekla. "I've always wished I could work for Armstrong & Wolfe—it's such a good place. How did you ever happen to get it?"

"Oh," returned Tekla, overlooking Geraldine's somewhat uncomplimentary emphasis, "Mr. Wolfe and I knew I'd have to do something to help mother out, and so when Miss Dodd's sick father telegraphed for her to go East, Mr. Wolfe came to me. I'm to have thirty dollars a month."

Mr. Wolfe, who was almost sixty, but looked younger, was a large man so well proportioned in every way that his great height did not impress one until he stood looking down upon some ordinary "six-footer." His shoulders were broad, his hands and feet huge, his good-natured mouth was wide, his mild eyes stood wide apart.

Everyone loved and respected him because of his kindly ways. He had few enemies. No unfortunate person ever appealed to him in vain, yet in spite of his amiability he was seldom imposed upon.

Tekla was conscious of no desire to impose on him; but she was young, it was summer time, often there were no letters to be answered, and she found idleness irksome.

The baseball match between the teams of her own town and of Ironwood was the beginning of her fall from grace. The office closed at four on Saturday afternoons and at half-past five on other days, and work was supposed to begin at half-past eight each morning. It seemed to the restless girl that two hours' playtime on Saturday afternoon ought not to make much difference to the firm, and she asked if she might be excused.

It is probable that she would not have enjoyed the game so well if she had suspected that Mr. Wolfe, whose large, blunt fingers did not lend themselves gracefully to typewriting, had been compelled to answer at considerable length and with much discomfort two important letters that had arrived in the three o'clock mail.

Mr. Armstrong, the other partner, had not learned to use a typewriter, and always had enough to do, besides in his own special department. The ball game, however, was only the opening wedge. Tekla was popular, and her friends and classmates were having a glorious time that summer.

At first, indeed, the girl stood out bravely, refusing all daytime amusements; but after that baseball game Tekla found it so easy to ask and to obtain leave of absence for part of Monday morning, all of Tuesday afternoon, or every bit of Wednesday, that Mr. Armstrong, an irascible, wiry man, with nervous dyspepsia, feared Mr. Wolfe was in danger of being compelled to do all the typewriting.

One forenoon Mr. Armstrong observed Tekla, who had arrived three-quarters of an hour late, looking at her watch with more than her usual irritating frequency. When she was not occupied with this futile employment, she was casting impatient glances at a visitor who had, in her opinion, already stayed too long. Mr. Armstrong knew what her impatience portended. The door had barely closed behind the visitor before Tekla had taken the intruder's place beside Mr. Wolfe's big desk.

"Oh, Mr. Wolfe," she said, in her bright, pretty, pleading way, "should you mind very much if I were to go home a little earlier? It's almost eleven, you know. I'm going to a party to-night, and I want to try on the new gown mother's making for me. It's just the prettiest dress—"

Mr. Wolfe glanced over the papers in his big hand to the office clock. "This letter—" he began.

"Couldn't I do it the first thing this afternoon?" pleaded Tekla, eagerly. "You see, mother can't do a thing more to the waist until I've tried it on."

"Well, if that's the case, I suppose—"

"Oh, thank you!" cried Tekla, hurriedly, darting away.

Mr. Armstrong, who had suffered in silence for six weeks, rose and slammed the door.

"That girl's the limit!" he snapped. "If I had my way, I'd fire her so quick she wouldn't know what happened."

"In that case," said Mr. Wolfe, "she probably wouldn't realize why she was fired, and the experience wouldn't do her any good."

"It would do me good!" declared Mr. Armstrong. "She's utterly impossible."

"No," said Mr. Wolfe, "there's good stuff in that girl. It means something in this business, where figures count for so much, to have a girl who is absolutely accurate—"

ers as he sat down at Tekla's typewriter. "If they weren't built so like sausages—I wouldn't mind, but it seems to me that I hit everything within six inches every time I aim for a key. Look at that! Figure 2 for 'A' every time. But hard as it is, it's more legible than my handwriting."

"Why don't you give the girl a good talking to if she's worth talking pains with?"

"Well," confessed Mr. Wolfe, inserting a fresh sheet, and with one heavy forefinger laboriously ticking off the date, "to tell the truth, I have. I went around there one night about three weeks ago and talked to her like a grandfather. You know you can't be right down hard on a little light-hearted thing like that. Her mother doesn't seem much older than she is, and they certainly do need the money. I talked to them both. They—they seemed pleased."

"Humph!" exploded Mr. Armstrong, indignantly. "I'll talk to her."

"No, you won't," said Mr. Wolfe, resting his large, calm eyes for a long moment on his partner's perturbed countenance. "Talk just rolls off that girl like salad dressing from an iced tomato. Some sort of a kindergarten method might work better. I'm willing to take a little pain with her because of her father. Mighty nice chap was old Samuel Bliss. Now don't you worry, Armstrong. She'll be trying to work thirteen hours a day, the way you do, before I'm done with her. I haven't quite figured the way out yet, but I think I see light."

Nothing on paper had ever looked quite so beautiful to Tekla as the check she had received at the end of her first month's sadly neglected work. The envelope, addressed to Miss Tekla Bliss, and placed on her table, had greeted her the morning she was so disgracefully late from oversleeping at Mildred Hull's coming-out party. For three days afterward Tekla had experienced, at breakfast time, something surprisingly like a sense of duty. It hurried her to the office and kept her there until closing time. But the glamor of the check and the unprecedented sense of duty flickered out together after the afternoon of the fourth day when Tekla succumbed, at half-past two, to temptation in the form of a naphtha-launch picnic.

Mr. Armstrong noticed that his partner frequently paused in his work to lean back and regard Tekla with puzzled, almost remorseful eyes. Sometimes, while so engaged, he scribbled something in a little book that he carried in his waist-coat pocket. Toward the end of the month the puzzled expression departed, but the sorrow remained. Mr. Armstrong could see that although the kind-hearted old man had made up his mind to deal with Tekla, he was far from happy over the prospect. She herself had no misgivings. She continued to arrive late, to go home early, and to absent herself whenever she happened to feel like it.

"You do have an easy time in that office, don't you?" said Geraldine Pease, meeting Tekla one noon in holiday attire. "I don't ask for a day off once in six weeks."

"Oh, I'm not afraid!" returned Tekla, airily. "Mr. Wolfe isn't the scolding kind. He says I'm the neatest typewriter he's had—when I'm there. Mr. Armstrong looks like a thunder-cloud all the time, but Mr. Wolfe lets me go any time I ask."

"But," asked Geraldine, curiously, "haven't you any conscience in the matter?"

"Not a scrap," laughed Tekla.

"I should think," said Geraldine, "that you'd like to feel sure you were earning your salary."

"As long as I'm getting it," returned Tekla, "I'm satisfied."

Pay day was approaching and Tekla was glad. Just before that important date Mr. Wolfe said, one morning, "Never mind Miss Bliss's check, Armstrong. I'll attend to it myself."

It was the thirty-first of August, and for the first morning in two weeks Tekla was not late. After hanging up her hat, she turned expectantly toward her table; but no white envelope greeted her. A moment later Mr. Wolfe rose from his chair and laid a large, oddly lumpy envelope before her. As Tekla picked it up, Mr. Wolfe turned suddenly to his partner.

"Armstrong," said he, "you remember that appointment with Johnson at the bank?"

Thus considerably left alone, Tekla opened her large envelope. Inside were twenty-seven smaller envelopes, on the outside of each of which was printed "\$1.11. Please count immediately." Besides this, each small envelope bore a date, one for every day in August, the Sundays excepted. Tekla, wondering what this meant, opened one of the envelopes, spread the inclosed coin on her table, and counted.

"Why," exclaimed Tekla, "I must have made a mistake! I'm eighteen cents short."

But the second count brought no better result. Ninety-three cents was all the packet contained. Laying it aside for future consideration Tekla opened the next tiny envelope. Something was wrong with that, too. It contained only seventy-eight cents. Three packets contained the full amount, one dollar and eleven cents. These, however, were offset by two others, holding respectively nineteen and fourteen cents, while a third inclosed, absolutely nothing but a large Canadian penny. Tekla gasped, and looked at the date. It was Aug. 10.

"Now what," mused Tekla, beginning to see light, "was I doing on Oh, yes, that was Elizabeth Button's birthday. I telephoned Mr. Wolfe that I wouldn't be down, because I was invited to help Elizabeth celebrate."

Tekla, with a flush creeping into her cheeks, counted her money. It amounted to fifteen dollars and seventy-five cents. A slip of paper attached to the nearest of the dollar bills caught her attention. She read the words, "An honest day deserves an honest dollar."

"An honest day—an honest day," repeated Tekla, regarding with misty eyes the heap of silver and copper coin. "Does he mean that the other days weren't honest?"

An hour later, when Mr. Wolfe and Mr. Armstrong returned, Tekla's cheeks were red, her eyes were resolute, the machine was giving forth short, sharp, metallic clicks, and all round the industrious girl were neatly typewritten pages, for Tekla was doing an honest day's work.

She did not have a relapse to her old, easy-going habits. Nothing was said, but when pay day came again Tekla received two checks, Mr. Arm-



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strong's for thirty dollars and Mr. Wolfe's for fourteen dollars and twenty-five cents. Choosing a moment when Mr. Armstrong was absent, Tekla laid the second check on Mr. Wolfe's desk.

"I didn't earn it," said she, briefly.

"Not last month, perhaps," said Mr. Wolfe, pushing the slip toward Tekla and smiling, "but you've more than made up for it since. Mr. Armstrong says you're worth two Miss Dadds. That's a good deal from Mr. Armstrong, you know."

"Oh, I'm glad!" breathed Tekla, fervently. "That's worth all the picnics I've missed."—Carroll Watson Rankin in the Youth's Companion.

TO A POET—TWO VOICES

First Voice.

I.
Strong watcher o'er the night wolds,
Where we but faint and cover,
Sing not to us of stars and peaks,
Your far, prophetic dower,
Beneath our feet the grasses wave,
Lend us the hope and trust,
That our dead loved ones' spirit forms
Soar o'er their mouldering dust.

II.
The cressets on your mountain flame,
Your hills are hid in smoke,
As when from Sinai's thundercloud
The hidden Godhead spoke,
Your Delphi of the clouds and stars
A timid heart forsakes,
Teach us to staunch the tear that flows,
To bind the heart that breaks.

III.
Who heeds the blind old Paritan,
A slave in Pluto's hall,
When here the human Shakespeare
holds,
The hearts of men in thrall?
Above the stars grim Dante shook
A wavering wing that fell
To stronger poise when his hot tears
Rained on the nether hell.

IV.
Out from the black root, hellebore,—
Drug of the maddest woes,—
From the iron-chained and frosted
ground
Gleameth the Christmas Rose,
Sing it, or speak it, mountain Seer!
Out from the blackened earth
Soareth to immortality
The flower of our second birth.

V.
When the great giant, Antaeus,
Battled with Hercules,
The strength of God suffused his limbs
Couched on his mother's knees;
But soon Aemena's royal son
Swung his assailable free
Into the thin, blue ether,
Stiffing his energy.

VI.
O poet, lean on Mother Earth,
There shall you find your power;
Forth from her bare and rugged
breast,
Springeth the wild mother-flower,
That blows but for her favorites
Binding her children's brow,
Steeping in light their visions fair,
Pledge of their vestal vow.

VII.
Read well, read right, your brothers'
hearts,
Study your sisters' tears;
There is your world, this singing
globe
Of joys and sighs, and fears,
Leave angels to their raptures,
Leave dreams to those who sleep;
O watcher, tell us who wake
The secret songs you keep.

VIII.
Does the night pass? Has yet the
dawn
Purpled the mountain-tops?
Has Nature's magic mother hand
Loosened the organ-stops?
Of bird, and sea, and heart of man
In one wild burst and free?
O great Interpreter, translate
To us the mystery!

Second Voice.

I.
Stand high above the herd if thou
wouldst reign,
And turn their wondering faces un-
to thee;
And if thine own be smitten with the
pain,
Or furrowed from a life-long agony,
Be sure their pleading faces will re-
spond,
To thee a tear, to thee a sigh of
love,
And thou to them wilt be a god be-
nign,
Paying back a deed of mercy for
their love.

II.
But go not down, nor mingle with
the throng,
Let them not touch thy garments,
Nor thy hair;
Nor hear from thee a jest, or Lydian
song,
Nor breathe with them a soft Ca-
puaean air.
Thy brethren are iconoclasts. They
deem

Those of their stature even such as they.
They see not on thy brow the Sinai gleam,
They only watch to tread thy feet of clay.

III.
It is not good for thee to venture down
From the cold, lofty summit of thy state;
It is not right for thee to lay thy crown
At the soiled feet of men insatiate
Of that dread rapine which would level all
To one coarse medium of gold or worth,
In sunder break the battlement wall
That grids and guards the Holy ones of earth.

IV.
Yes! it is cold far up upon the heights,
The sun strikes bleak and level on thy brow,
And 'tis the time when age to rest invites,
And but the voice of duty can arouse
The soul to its high calling; and far down
In the deep valleys is there warmth and light
But men's rude grasp thy forehead will discrown,
And snatch the aureole of the Infinite.

V.
Yes! go not down, for if thou once should fall
From the hushed splendors of the Elysian Mount,
Wherewith no Maenad's rage, but voices call
As waters spring from an eternal fount,
And trumpet their wild way towards the sea,
There would be no returning, for the leap
Is but for winged angels, not for thee.
Once fallen, henceforth doomed to crawl and creep.

VI.
Yes, I know well the craving and the thirst
For something human in its sympathy;
Nay, the sad pity over souls accurst,
That once were leashed in brotherhood with thee,
Still more, the yearning after fellowship
With the choice spirits of a race or age,
The soul that speaketh through the trembling lip,
The spell that might demoniac rays assuage.

VII.
The gathering and the falling of a tear,
More frequent than tongues of Rome and Greece,
The silence of an overmastering fear
That Love, as strong as death, in death should cease;
Dreams that make ever deeper the sad sense
Of all our littleness, and are yet the gauge
Of all the greatness, which Omnipotence
Hath wrought within us for our earthly stage.

VIII.
It matters not, and thou must not descend
Nor leave thy sacred calling. The reverse
Of high vocation is the basest end;
Angels become but fiends, and im-
merse
Their blinding splendors in some nether
halls.
So should it be. Then, let the pleading voice
Call its compeers. With thee it shall be well,
When thou obeyest God's beckon,
and thy choice.

IX.
I have seen slaves on horseback; and beside
Kings and their Counsel in the mire to walk;
I have seen giants pigmied in their pride,
And pigmies, grown colossi, stride and stalk.
The worst is aye corruption of the best.
The highest angels lowest devils be.
Yes, go not down. Obey the hidden
best,
Nor barter glory for tranquility.
—P. A. Sheehan in Irish Monthly.

X.
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