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panion. She did not feel frightened, only excited and curious, and before she could ask any questions they found themselves in a hall of white marble at the far end of which was a white marble staircase the top of which she could not see. Small figures were mounting the staircase, some near the bottom, others half way up, while others again had gone so far they were disappearing from view.

"Now," said her companion, "there you are, that is the way you must go." "Up those stairs," questioned Miranda, "why how easy."

"Not quite so easy as you think," answered her little guide. "But perhaps you would like to go nearer where you can see better."

A closer view of the staircase revealed to Miranda that the figures mounting its gleaming steps were in reality not small at all but ordinary sized men and women. It was only the great distance that had made them appear so small, and now that she was close to the stairs they seemed gigantic. Perhaps after all the climbing was not so easy as it had first appeared.

Miranda, however, was all anxiety to begin. "Can I go and try at once," she asked eagerly.

"Yes, the sooner you climb the first step the better for you," answered her companion. "Now, look," he continued as they drew still nearer, "I believe you are close enough to read the names on the stairs."

"Names on the stairs?" questioned Miranda, puckering up her forehead in her endeavor to see more clearly.

"Yes, every step has a name, now can you not read those golden letters on the first step?"

"H," began Miranda, "No, I cannot make it out yet, let us hurry, I am so anxious to begin."

At last she was near enough to see plainly. How immense the first step was to be sure towering away above her head, and how strangely small and easy it had appeared when viewed from a distance. Now at last she could read the golden letters, "Humility." What a strange name, thought Miranda, for the first step in the climb to greatness, and how much greater the step was than she had ever imagined. She could not even see over the top now that she stood immediately below it. She would never be able to get up it, there seemed no foothold on its polished surface.

"It is so very much more difficult than I thought," sighed poor Miranda. "I do not think that I am tall enough to climb it."

"That has nothing to do with it whatever," said her little friend. "No one is too small to climb that step."

"Well, I suppose I must try and make a spring, I think if I could get my hands on the top I could pull myself up."

But no, she found she could not spring nearly high enough, and she had several bad falls during her attempts, at last she sat down below it disappointed and exhausted.

"You are too heavily laden," said the little man, "whatever have you got in that knapsack on your shoulder?"

"Oh, that is one of my most precious possessions, I cannot possibly part with that, it is most valuable."

She unstrapped the knapsack as she spoke and drew out a large piece of glittering rock. "That is gold," she said, "pure gold. I must not lose that whatever I do."

"Nonsense," said the little man, looking closely at it. "You are quite mistaken, that is quartz, there may be a little gold in it, but it is precious little, and to think that you have been carrying that about everywhere with you, thinking it is valuable," he went on.

Poor Miranda looked very crestfallen. "Are you sure about it," she asked.

"Well," said her friend, "let us take it along to our refining works and we shall soon find out what it is worth."

Not very long after Miranda was gazing ruefully at the minute piece of gold that was all that was left of her treasure. "And I thought it was all valuable," she said.

"Do you know," asked the little man, "what is the name of that particular kind of quartz, it is called Self-confidence, and as a rule it contains very little pure gold, and quite a lot of other baser metals, such as Pride, Self-will, etc. We do quite a lot of this sort of thing at our refining works, and that old man whom you saw so busy there is Mr. Experience,

he is very, very old, no one quite knows his age, but he is always busy at work and ready to help people whether they ask him or not."

"And can I take this little bit of gold with me?" asked Miranda.

"Oh, yes, it is valuable to you, and you must not lose it. Now come and try again to mount that first step."

Once again she stood looking up at the polished step in front of her. Had she grown since she last stood there? Certainly it did not look so formidable, and now she noticed that the golden letters were so deeply engraved in the marble that they would afford her a foothold to help her in her climb. After one or two more failures she found herself at last on the first of the marble steps. Now she had time to look about her and found the step to be a vast expanse of white marble stretching away in front and on either side of her. It was only by walking from one end to the other that she was able to spell out the name on the next step of this wonderful staircase.

"Perseverance," she exclaimed as she arrived at the last letter, "I wonder if it will be as difficult to climb as the last."

It seemed an almost endless business the mounting of this second step, but her little friend urged her on, until reaching the top of it she lay down for a while quite exhausted and sighing to herself, "I shall never, never see the top of the staircase."

"Come, you must not despair," said the little man kindly, every step you take is bringing you nearer to your goal. You will feel better about it all when you have climbed the next step."

Miranda roused herself and toiled across the weary expanse of the step she had just climbed until she stood below the next one. She was tired, and the step looked very formidable as she stood there below it. The sun had ceased to shine and the letters looked hard and dull as she slowly spelled out the name Patience.

"Dear me!" sighed poor Miranda, "Is it possible that all the great men and women have had to toil up this staircase?"

"Yes," said her little guide, "they have all had to climb it sometime or other, and very often when some of them have been nearing the top they have slipped and had to begin all over again."

How long and weary the climbing of this step proved. Again and again when she thought that she had succeeded she missed her footing and fell back; and when at last she did reach the top it was only to be confronted with a step that appeared harder and higher than any of the others.

"This is the great step of Knowledge," said her guide, "it will take you years to climb it."

"Oh, how glad I shall be to know I am at the top," sighed Miranda.

"Perhaps you will never know it if you get there," replied her little friend. "Many people never find it out; but come it is getting late."

The little man's voice seemed to have changed, she felt a hand on her shoulder and looked round. The marble staircase and her little guide had disappeared, it was her mother's hand that lay on her shoulder, and her mother's voice repeating, "It is very late, and quite time you were in bed."

Miranda rubbed her eyes sleepily, "Why, mother," she cried, "I believe I've been dreaming," and she began to tell her mother the story of her strange dream adventures. When she had finished her mother kissed her fondly. "If my daughter really climbs that staircase," she said, "she will be truly great, for the truest greatness is in going where duty leads you, and learning the lessons of humility, patience and perseverance, and the knowledge of all that is useful and good."

\$200,000 in a Waste-Basket

Sophia Holmes was a free colored woman, the wife of a slave owned by Colonel Seaton, who lived in Washington at the beginning of the Civil War. The husband was with the army, and lost his life at the Battle of Manassas; so his widow, who had ten children to care for, applied to General Spinner, then Treasurer of the United States, for work. She was given the task of sweeping, dusting, and emptying waste-baskets at a salary of \$15 a month.

One day, after the clerks had all left the rooms, she discovered that one of the

boxes in which waste paper was thrown was almost full of big bundles of crisp, new money! Some of the bills were as high in denomination as \$1,000. They were all neatly packed, and enough litter to hide them was spread over them.

Sophia hastily covered up the treasure, and continued her work as if nothing had happened. The watchman, making his last rounds, asked her why she lingered so late. She pretended to be busy, and the man kept on, and left her undisturbed. Sophia feared to tell the watchman what she had found. "He might er tuck the money hisself, and then laid it on me," she afterward said.

Now Sophia knew that it was the habit of General Spinner to spend the night in his office. So great was his anxiety at this time that he slept in a little room that adjoined his main office. In a jacket and slippers, he would rest most of the night, although he would get up frequently to make a tour of the building, and satisfy himself that everything was in perfect order.

So Sophia waited. She sat on the box of money and nodded. The hours slipped by, and still she failed to hear the tap! tap! of the old slippers coming down the stone halls. But at last she heard the familiar footsteps approach her door. As General Spinner was about to pass, he stepped forward.

"Jest step in here and see what I done find!" exclaimed Sophia, in a mysterious voice. Then she took the litter from the top of a big box, and showed to the startled man the bundles of new money within.

General Spinner sent at once for some of the Treasury officials; the money was counted, and found to amount to over \$200,000. Meanwhile he sent Sophia home in a carriage to her waiting little ones.

No one ever found out who put almost a quarter of a million dollars of newly printed money into a trash-box. The mystery remains unsolved to this day. As a reward for her honesty, Sophia Holmes was appointed to a position that paid her more than fifty dollars a month. She died thirteen years ago at the ripe age of seventy-nine years.



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