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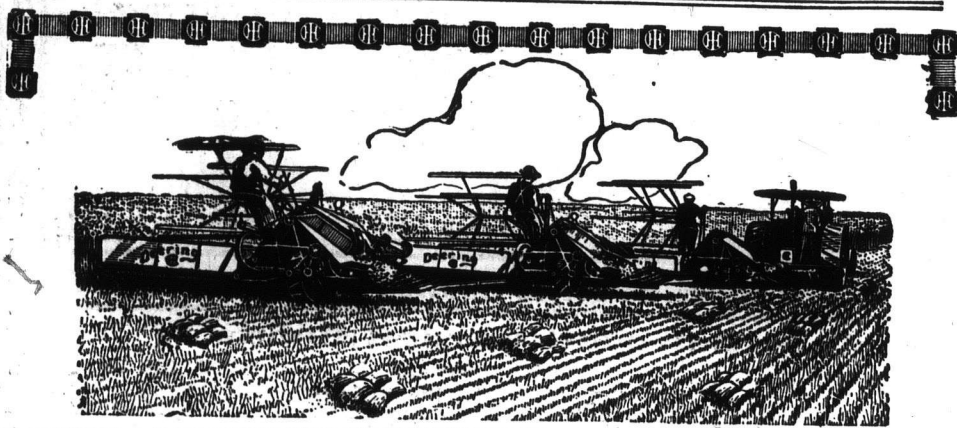
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These machines are built at Hamilton, Ont.



You'll pick it up," and she ran lightly down the stairs.

The days that followed passed rapidly for the Deans, burdened with long Christmas lists that kept them the greater part of the day in the shopping district. But to Maggie the time crawled slowly by. The very joy of the season, filled with homecomings and good cheer, accentuated her own isolation, while in spite of herself Eva's words had convinced her of the hopelessness of her quest. At times she gazed dully at the great throngs of people that poured down the avenue, and realized with a sick heart what it would be to search for James in Baltimore, in streets that Eva had told her were equally crowded.

This hope, that was slowly dying, had steeled her against her parents' lamentations and the priest's advice. She had never for a moment doubted her lover's truth nor his eventual success. Timid and patient by nature, she would, however, have contentedly awaited his summons in Ireland, if it had not been for the project of the priest to marry her to Patsy.

By hours of secretly working at her lace she had made the money for her passage and obtained her parents' reluctant consent to go to America, on the condition that she would join her uncle.

The Dean family, happy in their own reunion, did not notice that her face was red and twisted from weeping, as she bungled about the house. To interest themselves in the human side of Maggie had never occurred to them. The regretted Hedda and Christine had been as lacking in personality as the filter or the hot-water plant.

But in the democracy of their common work, Eva was keenly alive to the girl's distress. "Greeny," she said one late afternoon, "set by the table and watch me. I'm a-goin' to do something fer you. It's all I kin do, too,—I wisht it was more."

The speaking tube sounded. "Maggie," Miss Amy called with irritation, "come upstairs and finish your work. You have left my waste basket overflowing and have brought me no towels."

Maggie's heavy tread thundered up the stairs. Her childish imagination was filled with the happy mystery of Eva's words. She seized the waste basket and disappeared.

"It's less trouble to get the towels myself," Amy laughed in explanation to her mother, as she rummaged in the linen closet. "Mother, that girl is not only incapable, but unwilling. After every task she runs back to the kitchen to visit with Eva. Isn't it queer that she doesn't object to her color?"

"The worst of it is," Mrs. Dean sighed, "that I shall probably have to keep her. The intelligence offices hold out little hope of any one better before spring. I've bought her some good stout gingham aprons for Christmas. She hadn't any of her own. Do you think they will do? It isn't as if she had been here long."

Meanwhile, in the kitchen, Maggie sat eagerly by Eva's side, her eyes, that gazed dully at her mistress, now bright as stars. "Tell me who you are a-writin' to, Eva, that's a good gurl?"

But Eva, shaking with suppressed laughter, wrote slowly on, her glittering eyes rolling roguishly at Maggie. "Thar," she finished grandly, stamping and addressing the envelope. "Don't you wisht you could read?" She held the letter teasingly before her. "I'll tell you this much and you can guess the rest: it's to that yaller fellow that lives in Baltimore." She smiled kindly at the Irish girl.

"They say the Irish and the colored folks can't get along, but I've seed dogs an' cats a-eatin' out o' the same saucer, when they couldn't do better. I'm 'bout the only friend you've got, greeny, hain't I?" and her guttural laugh rang good-naturedly through the kitchen.

Early Christmas morning, before five o'clock, Maggie, her shawl over her head, crept down the stairs, past the sleeping family, on her way to mass. From the fireplace in the silent living room two thick-ribbed stockings, suggestive of the boys' chubby legs, dangled expectantly. Piles of gifts awaited the family. The outline of a Christmas tree showed black and irregular in the wan light. The house was icy cold, comfortless, forbidding.

Maggie slipped quietly into the street and walked rapidly along in the bleak darkness toward the shadowy bulk of the church that loomed in the distance, its gold cross silhouetted against the sky. From every house in the block dark figures were emerging from the back doors and walking rapidly in the same direction.

Maggie crept into the warm shelter with

a glow of the heart to find in a world where no trace of the old life was left that the church awaited her, familiar, unchanged, welcoming—a great rock in a thirsty land.

The pungent smell of evergreen, the flicker of many candles, the star of light that gleamed over the main altar, the white robes of the three officiating priests, the thirty altar boys in flaming scarlet capes touched with gold; the stealing odor of incense, the full orchestra and the great choir chanting the responses, filled her soul with beauty—comforted her weary heart.

At this same hour, for the first mass was earlier in her own land, her mother and father across the sea were reverently muttering the same prayers, and James she pictured wistfully kneeling somewhere in Baltimore. They were all poor, humble and obscure, part of the great body of the church, a living rosary that stretched about the world.

She bowed her head and prayed to meet her lover and to find him true, and ended with the promise that if the Virgin would only smile upon their love she would work a cloth, all of Irish lace, for her blessed altar.

As the mass ended and she moved toward the door, refreshed and comforted, she caught sight of her uncle and his family and shrank back into the crowd. Her cousins glanced consciously the other way, but Jerry O'Connor limped to her side, his face wrinkling into a kindly smile.

"Merry Christmas to you, my gurl; I hoped to find ye at mass." He fumbled in his coat pocket, glancing furtively in the direction of his family. "Here's a little money fer ye, Maggie; ye're to buy a hat wid it." Then he slipped a small box into her hand: "I guess ye're a young enough gurl to loike a ring." He beamed happily at her radiant face, as she slipped a heavily chased band on her forefinger.

"I thought ye'd be loikin' of it, Maggie." He cleared his throat in embarrassment. "Air ye not goin' to take dinner wid us to-day?"

"I must work," she said simply, glancing proudly at her ring.

"Well, well, so be it," and the old man conscious of having done his duty, limped after the girls, who were attended by the devoted Mr. Finley.

Maggie sped happily homeward, feeling from time to time to see if her ring was still in place. She could scarcely wait to show it to Eva. With all her crying necessities, no gift could have pleased her as did this gold band which had no purpose but adornment. She refreshed her eyes continually with its luster.

"I'm thinkin' my luck is changin'," she breathed ecstatically.

As she opened the back door of the Deans', sounds of horns and trumpets greeted her ears, a phonograph metallically sang a popular song. The boys, their stockings half empty, greeted her hilariously as the only one down:

"Hi there, Maggie, see what I got! Have some candy, Maggie? What did you get?"

She showed her ring, smiling broadly, and the boys gave her gift unstinted admiration.

"Lemme try it on, Maggie. Gee! it fits my thumb just fine. Can't I wear it to breakfast?"

Eva soon appeared and handed the girl a handkerchief with a gay border. The household awoke one by one. Gifts were being exchanged on every side. The good will and peace to men, which the day before seemed in their fatigue a mere mockery, had become an unaccountable reality, they scarcely knew how.

The little boys were perhaps the main-spring. They ran to and fro with gifts of their own making in confident expectation of giving pleasure. They had painted book marks for Maggie and Eva, and watched with glee their faces melt to laughter when they unwrapped the tiny packages. They flew to and fro between the kitchen and the house democratically all the morning. They were glad to take the letter to Maggie that the postman brought and watched her with open curiosity, while Eva read it aloud.

"Maggie's got a letter," they confided to the family. "I think it's from her beau; he sent her some money and she's a-cryin' on the kitchen table."

Amy Dean raised her face from the brooch of pearls she was contemplating. "Isn't it strange how in that class," she mused, "they will take money from their lovers?" Then, with a start, she remembered the aprons.

"Mother, I hate to give those aprons to