

sweet dignity that always enveloped her. Unconsciously they were trying to imitate the things which they felt made up this dignity: her exquisitely modulated tones, her erect carriage, her air of quiet decision. No wonder that they were anxious for her good opinion, and poor Ada felt convinced that she was likely to lose it.

She had not gone very far when an idea popped into her fertile brain. Ada had always felt rather proud of being a person of ideas, and this one seemed to her unusually brilliant. Perhaps if the walk had been longer, she would have found time to question its brilliancy, but she found herself at the door of Miss Fleming's lodging-house before any doubts arose in her mind. A moment later, and she was proceeding to put her rapidly-conceived plan into execution.

Had she not been so full of her scheme, she would have noted that Miss Fleming had taken her arrival with the clothes-basket as a matter of course, but she gave herself no time for that.

"Your laundress' little girl is ill," she began in tones as smooth as Miss Fleming's own. "so I brought the basket over for her this evening."

Miss Fleming was a woman of quick decisions, but she hesitated just a moment before she replied. In a flash was revealed to her Ada's silly pride, her more foolish shame. For these things the older woman could have had a kindly tolerance, but the appearance of wishing to obtain credit for a kindly action, which was indeed no kindness, the deceit of it, fired Miss Fleming's indignation. Nothing could have put the girl in a more unfavourable light.

"I am very sorry to hear that your little sister is ill," she said, coolly and steadily, turning her searching gaze on Ada. "Beth is a very great favourite of mine. I hope she will soon be better. How much do I owe your mother, if you please, Ada?"

Ada was so overwhelmed that she could scarcely answer. The hot blood rushed to her face and the tears started to her eyes. No reproaches could have shown her how completely she was understood, as did the quiet utterance which completely ignored the fiction she had tried to establish.

She stammered an answer, and Miss Fleming turned to get the money. Like a sudden revelation, at that moment there came to Ada a picture of the scorn with which this quiet, forceful woman must regard her. The tears overflowed at the thought, and she turned to wipe them furtively away, just as Miss Fleming faced her again.

Miss Fleming could not help being a little touched at the girl's evident misery. After all, her sober second thought told her, Ada was one of her girls, and if she could do a thing so con-

temptible, so much the more did she need her help. Her detaining hand was laid gently on the trembling girl's arm.

"Ada," she said, "wait a moment, and let us understand each other, dear. Were you going to prove yourself unworthy of a brave mother and a dear little sister by trying to disown them?"

It was a little while before Ada could compose herself to tell the story. At last she sobbed it out: all her shame at knowing that her mother did washing, her dislike to carrying the clothes, her particular reluctance to having Miss Fleming know that she was a washerwoman's daughter.

"And you fancied I should think less of you for that?" Miss Fleming said. "How little you know me, Ada! Why, I am a working-woman myself."

"But your work is so different," faltered Ada.

"In one way, yes. But your mistake is in thinking that any kind of labour is degrading. It is only work ill-done which can lessen our dignity. Your mother does her work in the most satisfactory way, and she has a right to feel proud of it. And I am sure her daughter, who is supplied with the comforts of life by means of her toil, ought to be the last one to be ashamed of her."

"I'm not ashamed of my mother, Miss Fleming," Ada found voice to say. "But I was ashamed of her work."

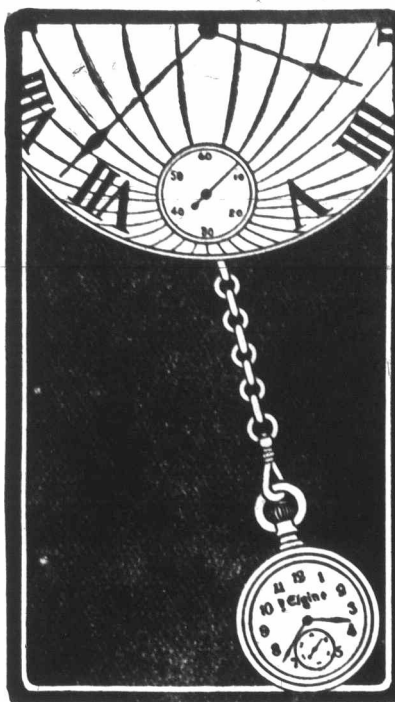
"Every good workman puts so much of himself into his work that it is pretty hard to draw the line between," Miss Fleming said, thoughtfully. "I believe it was thoughtlessness, Ada, but you were in effect disowning your mother and sister by your remark to me. And I might fairly accuse you of trying to pose as their benefactress at well."

The red spots in Ada's cheeks grew deeper.

"I didn't mean to do that, honestly, Miss Fleming."

"No, I do not believe you did. But you see how much worse an opinion I might easily have formed, worse even than you deserved."

There was a long talk which



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followed, and Ada almost forgot that supper was ready and that her work was waiting. When she went home, the tears were dried, but a little red spot still burned in either cheek.

"Isn't Miss Fleming sweet?" croaked Beth. "What did she show you that you stayed so long?"

"Some things that you've always seen," was Ada's rather ambiguous answer. Then, as if realizing that Beth was entitled to a better answer, "We were talking. She said to tell you that she was coming to see you to-morrow. Yes, she is lovely."

Her mother came in just then. "I do dislike to ask you Ada," she said, "I intended to take this other

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