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A Deferred Call.

BY BERTHA GRUNNAUX WOODS.

It was at the close of the mission meeting. A pause had followed some pleading work of the young leader, and then all eyes had turned to the solitary figure that rose in response. It was a young woman, and the hands that clutched nervously at the bench in front were red and coarsened with work. Just an instant she stood, then dropped back into her seat, her weak little chin seeming to lose itself in the not very fresh neck ribbon.

"Nearer, my God, to Thee." What tenderness and love the girl in white seemed to put into that little piano! Then, as the soft soprano voice rose, the woman hid her face in her hands.

A few minutes more and the room was almost empty. Arabella was alone with the young man who led the meeting, the girl in white and the rough-spoken, but kindly, superintendent of the mission.

She looked at them with a little hysterical laugh and eyes reddened by gathering tears. The cheap red roses on her hat shook in unison with her quickened breathing. Just what had moved her to rise she only dimly knew. She had never felt before to-night that she cared particularly to be prayed for, and what she expected to follow the prayers she could hardly have told. She only knew she was shaken by this strange, new emotion. Perhaps mixed with it was a bit of almost unconscious elation at the nearness of this tall, slim creature in white, whom she had sometimes passed on the street with half-envious admiration, feeling to what a different, unattainable world she belonged.

Now the fair, high-bred face was looking into hers, with tender solicitude, but there was a touch of embarrassment in it, too. The young leader of the meeting said something to her in a low tone, and then they all knelt, and each in turn prayed for Arabella. The superintendent came first. He was a "convert" of the mission himself, and his words came with great earnestness. Then the young leader of the meeting prayed, and, after a few moments' pause, the girl in white, in a hurried, embarrassed voice, that told of unaccustomed effort, Arabella, who had waited tremblingly for that one soft voice, hid her face in her red, beringed hands with a quick, choking sob, and in the silence that followed the soft prayer of the girl in white she prayed for herself in a voiceless way. There was a strange mixture in her mind of the vague and the real, and her heart, reaching out faintly to the unseen Presence, at the same time clung to the sweet nearness of the seen.

They all took her hand as they arose, and the girl in white held it for a moment, touched by the wistfulness in the reddened eyes. "I'm coming to see you," she said, impulsively, "sometime this week, if you'll tell me where you live," and in a moment more Arabella had slipped quickly out into the warm summer night.

The young man who had led the meeting and the girl in white walked slowly homeward.

"You won't forget to go to see her, will you?" he said, rather insistently; "it is so easy for one to slip away from the influences of a meeting like that, and you could see she was all nervous and over-wrought to-night. Yes, of course, it was perfectly genuine, but I don't imagine any of her impressions are very deep ones—with that sort of a face. She is one of those who need to be looked after and encouraged."

"Yes," the girl assented. "Of course I'll go to see her." Somehow she was feeling miserably tired and shaken, and under it all was a little irritation that she had been so wrought upon in that mission meeting. It was a close, unrefreshing air that blew from the heated asphalt. Squalid families were gathered on the sidewalk in front of their wretched dwellings, and barefooted children, knowing no other playground, chased each other over the heated bricks. A clam man drew up his cart under one of the dirty gas lamps, and was speedily surrounded by boisterous children fortunate enough to have a copper grasped in their grimy little fingers. Now and then a rasping voice from the wooden chairs on the pavement called out a command or threat or a small, wailing voice from an inner room told the whereabouts of some tiny struggler for existence.

A sharp-faced little cripple was making his toilsome way down the street; his whole attitude drooping and dejected. They could hear his hoarse breathing as they passed. What a world it was, thought the girl, and clinched her hand till the nails pressed painfully into her palm.

"Do let's walk faster," she said, almost irritably; "I want to get home; this air chokes me."

He glanced at her in surprise, and a few moments later they had passed into another street, a narrow and very humble one, but the fragrance of honeysuckle came to them from fences hidden by the thick greenery, and the tinkle of an old piano floated to their ears.

"There!" she said, "this is a little better, isn't it? That girl lives somewhere on this street—only a block

further up. Poor thing, I won't forget about her." Then, in a moment, "I came perilously near being cross a few minutes ago, didn't I? But it wears me all out to see unhappy people."

It was the second week after that evening at the mission, and it was Saturday.

In the hot little "parlor," on a narrow street, Arabella sat stiffly upright. "She's had time to miss me," she was saying to herself. "She's got my number, and two weeks ain't long enough to forget all about a person." There was bitterness in her thought, but under it all a wistful, hurt feeling. "I guess she'll come to-night when she sees I ain't there," she assured herself; "why, she—she prayed for me." She had not yet gotten over the wonder of it. "She'll likely be along after the meeting—her and her beau."

Her eyes roved again over the stiff, tawdry little room which she had put in such careful order.

The bell rang shrilly. "That can't be her," she whispered, as she hurried to the door, and they were two very different faces that met hers—high colored faces under flaunting hats, not bad, but weak and silly.

"Well, Bella," they said, in noisy greeting; and then, "where've you kept yourself? We ain't seen you for an age."

Arabella murmured some answer, not very audibly.

"We're gettin' up a party for Webber's Garden," one of them continued; "we want you to go along. Jim and Charley 're goin', an'—there comes Will now. We was to meet him here." They laughed gayly, in Arabella's face as a young man in a plaid suit came up the low steps. "Come right in," they called out, "she's to home."

He accepted the invitation, hurrying up to Arabella's side with the exaggerated low bow that she had often found so fascinating. Why was it that he and these two girls seemed somehow different now? The young man in the plaid suit fingered his showy gilt chain and scrutinized her closely under that outward air of easy carelessness while he told her the evening's plan. "You'll come, won't you?" he said. "The music was real good last Saturday, but you took such a notion against going. What ailed you, anyway?"

"It's—it's Saturday night," faltered Arabella.

"Well—what if it is?"

"But we—we stay so late—it's morning before it's over, and to-morrow's Sunday."

"Well, I declare," said one of the gaily dressed girls, "what if it is? Your wings ain't sproutin', are they?" and Arabella joined helplessly in the laugh following this silly, while the young man in the plaid suit looked at her with puzzled eyes.

He hitched his chair a little nearer. "You'd better come along," he said; "it'll be real nice, and it won't be a bit pleasant without you."

"Well, I like that," and the women callers giggled, but with evident amusement, and with a consoling vision of "Jim an' Charley" doubtless looming up in the background.

Arabella made one more helpless effort. "I—I can't decide right off," she said; "I was expecting somebody—a lady," with a glance at the young man in the plaid suit. "Can't you come around just a little after nine, and if—if she ain't come—then I'll go."

The other girls looked at him and laughed. "Seeing it's a—a lady, I guess you won't mind leaving it that way, will you?"

"No," he said, but glancing at her a little doubtfully, "that's the way we'll leave it," and, under cover of the giggles of the two damsels, who preceded him down the steps, he added: "Now don't go back on it, Bella," and his face was bent anxiously toward her for an instant.

"All right," she said, and then the door was shut and her friends went up the street, the girls still giggling, but a little of the jauntiness seemed to have departed the young man in the plaid suit. Arabella, looking from the window, could see them jostling him facetiously, and once a high-pitched, rallying laugh floated back to her.

She looked at the clock on the shelf. They must be about half through the meeting at the mission now. Did they miss her, she wondered, and was anyone praying for her to-night? She guessed not, it all seemed so sort of far away now—all she had left in the mission room two weeks ago. "I guess I wasn't converted," she said to herself, "only sort of wanted to be, and—and—but I ain't a-goin' again. Some way I don't want to unless she asks me to."

Several blocks away, too far off for her to hear it, they were singing. "Throw out the Lifeline," and a girl in white moved restlessly on the hard bench. "When I come back in the Fall I'll go," she said. "I know I ought not to have put it off, but—of course I won't have time now before I leave."

Arabella sat at the open window all those minutes after 9 o'clock. She was watching the people as they passed

under the sickly light of the street lamp. Once she caught her breath sharply as a slender white figure turned the corner on the opposite side of the street. She was only vaguely conscious of all that that pretty grace and purity meant to her; she merely knew that she held her breath while she waited. The girl was with another man to-night. "She must have more'n one beau," thought Arabella. They were going very slowly down the street; once the girl's eyes turned for an instant toward the little house where Arabella sat in the window, but—she passed on.

Just a few minutes later and the garden party were at Arabella's door.

"Yes," she said. "I'm a-comin', just wait till I get my hat."

And the young man in the plaid suit looked after her curiously, there was such a high, hard note in her voice. —Congregationalist.

How He Won Out—A True Story.

The Indianapolis News of recent date tells the following singularly effective story, the truth of which, the News says, is vouched for by Oliver D. Loucks, a well-known millwright of North Indianapolis, as a genuine page out of his autobiography. He is a man who has rescued himself from the drink, and his climax of the fight with his appetite is here described:

It was two years ago the seventh day of June coming, my little girl Esther's birthday. I was getting ready to go to my work, when she came into the room where I was.

"I am ten years old to-day, papa," she said.

"Yes, I know it, little girl, and I've got just fifteen cents in my pocket. What will I get you?"

"I don't want you to get me anything, papa."

"Oh," I answered.

"But I want you to promise me something, papa," she said.

"Well, go ahead; let's hear it."

"I want you to promise me you won't drink any more. That will be my birthday present," she said.

"Oh, run along, little girl," I answered; "your mother has been talking to you."

I heard her go outside, and I slipped into the kitchen where my wife was and asked her why she had been talking to Esther about my drinking. She said she had not, and burst out crying. Then I got a little rattled. I never suspected that my children knew I drank. It is true that I reeled home many a night and that I scarcely ever drew a sober breath, but they were in bed, and by morning I was always over the worst effects of the liquor. I do not know how she learned it; possibly by instinct. But it was a shock to me and unnerved me. I went back into the sitting room and began to choke up. I tried to clear my throat by swallowing, but couldn't do it. My eyes were filling with tears, although I couldn't cry. I threw myself full length on the lounge and blubbered out a sort of prayer: "Lord, if you'll help me, I'll never touch liquor again." In a little while Esther came running in, saw me and said:

"Papa, you've made up your mind to promise, haven't you? I know it."

"Yes, I have, little girl. I am going to try never to drink again, and more than that, I am going to put a penny in your bank for every time I refuse a glass."

Do you know that in seven weeks I had two hundred and seventy-seven pennies in that bank? But election time came on, and one morning I found that some one during the night had rolled a keg of beer to my door. "That settles the penny proposition, Esther," I said, when I saw it. "I guess there are more glasses in that keg than I have pennies. Children, roll it over there on the commons." They did so, and it remained there a couple of days, but was gone the third morning. My old boon friends have given up trying to get me to break my promise. When I saw that man there in a saloon, last April, one of the men at the bar, to test me, put a \$10 gold piece in the bottom of a glass and told the bartender to fill the glass with beer.

"Do you mean it?" he said.

"Of course I do. Go ahead."

He did, and then my friend turned to me and said: "O! drink the beer and keep the gold."

"Not if you filled my pockets with gold," I answered.

Not long ago my five children were attacked with diphtheria. I lost a sweet little six-year-old girl. Before she died she threw her arms around my neck as I sat at the bed and said: "Papa, you kept your promise, didn't you?"

Will any sane man tell me I'll ever drink again?