

"What is it, mother dear? Is it my great success that has so upset you?" asked Deborah wonderingly.

"Partly that, and more that you need never do it again. You need not sell your talents, like just a common working-girl, my Deborah. Such a wonderful thing has happened. Mr. Rowden, your father's partner, you remember, has been to see me, and I don't understand it all, but it is really true that poor Tom left a good deal of gold behind him, and Mr. Rowden is such a good kind man. He means us to have just the same as if your father had lived till now, and we shan't be rich, but we shall have plenty to live upon without working for our living. Oh" (throwing up her hands), "how I have hated my life and dreaded my old age, and it is all over, and we are to have some good luck at last."

Deborah sank into a chair, white and trembling. Was she so very glad after all, she wondered? Yes; glad and thankful for her mother, who was not fitted for a fight with poverty. But for herself?

Her foot was on the ladder of fame. Must she kick it away from her just when she felt tolerably certain of reaching the top?

It seemed hard upon her, for her mother, she knew, was weakly averse to earning her own living, neither did she particularly like the line Deborah had adopted. She could not bear seeing her daughter's name in the advertisement sheets of the newspaper, nor carried about by sandwich-men in the street; but to Deborah her profession had become the chief joy of her life. Would it be her duty to give it up? It was too big a question to decide at once. She must keep her brain clear and cool for her *début*, and let everything else slide until it was over, so she pulled herself together, kissed and congratulated her mother, and then, under the pretext that she must go off to her dressmaker to have one final fitting of the dress in which she was to appear on the 15th, she effected her escape. Once out in the air she could breathe more freely. Her visit to her dressmaker accomplished, she took a 'bus to her friends the Norwoods. A talk to the professor would steady her nerves a bit. To her great disappointment neither he nor his wife was at home, but "they will be here very soon, miss," the servant declared. "I know my master wanted to be home by five o'clock for something particular."

"Very well, I will run up to the nursery," said Deborah, tossing her hat on to a stand in the little hall. "I will

have a game with the children." And judging by the screams that shortly issued from the nursery, the game was a very lively one.

She had no easy part to play. She was on all-fours, with the baby of two years old on her back.

"You are the carriage, you see," declared the eldest girl, "and you must take care and not drop baby, and Clara and I are the ponies, and shall run you about." And Deborah was run about accordingly, until her pretty hair was all streaming down her back, and she had scarcely breath enough left to expostulate.

"Hush, hush!" she cried at last, hoarse with laughing. "I hear father coming. Ponies, unharness yourselves! Baby and I will make up a lion between us, and we will hide behind the door and roar at father when he comes in and frighten him dreadfully."

"Oh, what fun!" cried the ponies, scuttling off to hide themselves in the window curtains and watch the effect of the practical joke, an effect which was certainly as startling upon the joker as upon the one upon whom the joke was played. The manly footstep came nearer; the door opened, and Deborah, on all fours and shaking her mane terribly, sprang, with a terrific roar, upon the in-comer, to discover in the moment that followed that the visitor was not Mr. Norwood at all, but David Russell, who drew back in considerable dismay.

"Oh," cried Deborah, springing to her feet, and depositing the baby on the floor, "how did you get here, and what made you come up to the nursery?"

"Chiefly because I heard you were here," said David, recovering his self-possession more quickly than Deborah could.

It was a funny meeting after seven years of separation, but it started them at once on the old terms of intimacy. Then they both shook hands and laughed.

"Have you seen the professor?" was Deborah's next question.

"No, I came at once to ask about you, for as I walked along the streets, I saw your name advertised for an entertainment on the fifteenth. I was scarcely prepared to return to find you a public character, and I determined to come and ask old Norwood how you had done it, and instead I have the good luck to find you."

"I'll come and give an account of myself if you will go down to the drawing-room," laughed Deborah. "They have pulled my hair down between them, and I feel like a rag doll. I must put myself tidy."

"Don't," said David emphatically; "you look much nicer as you are. Shall you wear your hair down on the fifteenth?"

"Go down-stairs, do," said Deborah imperiously, "or I will roar at you again," at which threat there was a giggle from the curtain.

So the professor and his wife came in to find Deborah and David Russell talking as if no years had intervened since their last meeting, and after all Deborah found no time to tell her friends of the expected change in her fortunes, nor of the likelihood of her having to give up her profession. When she rose to go David rose too.

"May I see you home," he said, "and then I shall know where to find you?" and Deborah assented as simply as she would have agreed to such an offer in the old days.

By mutual consent they walked, although the walk was a long one, but there was much to say on both sides, and almost before she knew that she had done so, Deborah had confided to David the story of her father's money coming at last, after so many years and her own intolerable disappointment.

"I think your mother is right, Deborah," said David. "A public life is a very bad one for a girl, especially if she is young and good-looking."

"But I am not," protested Deborah, almost angrily. "Mother always says it's a pity that I am plain."

"Mothers don't always know," remarked David sententiously.

"Have you lost sight of Monica?" he asked, rather abruptly turning the subject.

"Yes—no," stammered Deborah. "To tell the truth, my childish infatuation died a sudden death when I was about fourteen, and I have purposely kept out of her way ever since. She and her husband are quite kind to me when we meet, which is not often."

"Are you given to throwing up your friends all in a minute for nothing particular?" inquired David, a little anxiously. "Shall I find myself cold-shouldered to-morrow, for example?"

The question was more or less playful, but Deborah took it in deadly earnest, and coloured almost painfully.

"That is not very kind of you. Did I not promise to be your friend always when you went away last time? And I threw over Monica for something very particular indeed."

"And that was?" questioned David.

"Something I may not tell you," replied Deborah, with tears in her eyes.

(To be concluded.)

