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not require the same attention—it would spoil him; and Nurse Vallor was so very capable. Her own nurse. Yes, Eustace was growing, and growing day by day more like his father. She wished it had been otherwise. The resemblance reproached her—no, no, she did not mean that! It irritated her. At times it was too insistent; and on these occasions the mother avoided her little son. But he had everything the heart of child could desire.

The mother moved uneasily at the remembrance of two wistful eyes. Neglected? No one could accuse her of that—no one. During his recent illness—well, it was hardly illness. Eustace had been a little run down—she had given up several important engagements to be with him. It was good to know he was better. She had been rather anxious. That feverish cough, and the boy had grown thinner. Yesterday, however, he had been quite himself again, bright and merry.

She had not seen him today. The Follies had been so anxious for her to join their skating party at Prince's—and it had been delightful, too. Afterwards she had had to rest, and dress for the Cordingley affair. Yes, it had been a most enjoyable day. Now she would just have a peep at Eustace, and then—to bed.

Putting on her bedroom slippers she silently traversed the few yards separating the two bedrooms. The landing was in semi-darkness, but a shaft of light at the end of it indicated that the door of Eustace's room was ajar.

towards Eustace's father in this quarter, she paid no heed to it.

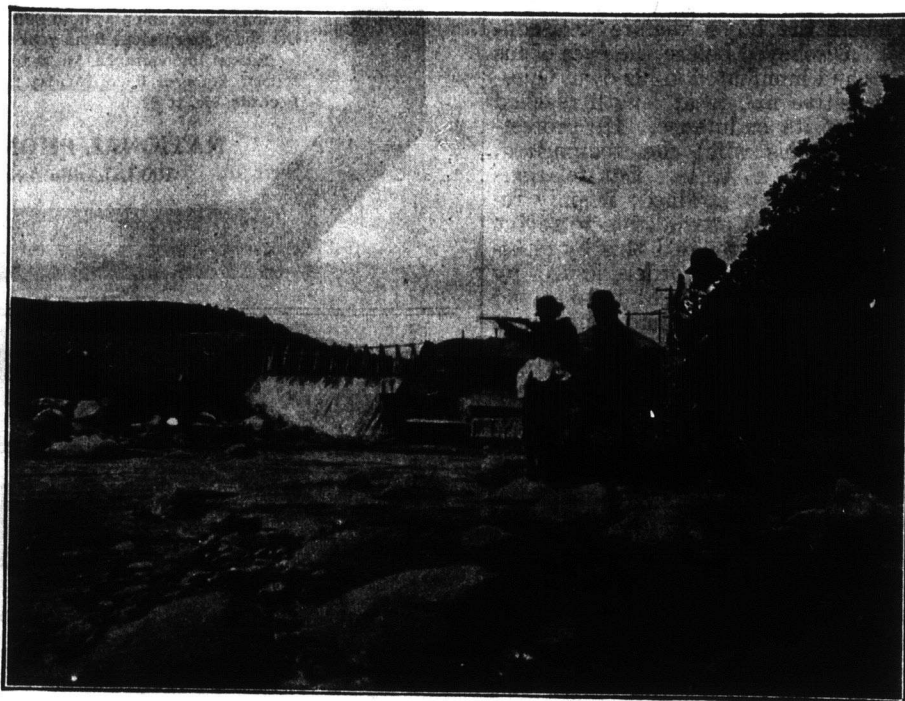
"The poor boy, the poor boy! When—how long?"

"I can't say exactly, nurse, but he cannot live long under the most favorable conditions. We must—why, dear me, it is nearly twelve! I must go at once. There is a case at Kensington which—"

But Olive Quesnay stayed to hear no more. She returned swiftly to her room, closed the door, and locked it. For a moment she swayed unsteadily, then sank into a chair.

Her hands were very cold. The light was too brilliant, it hurt her eyes. She rose and depressed the switch. That was better. She—who was that? Dr. Redwold. She could hear his retreating footsteps. She would hurry after him and ask him to explain, to tell her—but, no, she couldn't. She felt it was physically impossible. And it would be no use. He could only repeat—ah, how her heart was throbbing! It hurt, how it hurt. She could hardly breathe. The room—there was no air.

With hands pressed to her heaving bosom she stepped out on to the veranda. The air was soft and moist. Overhead a flying host of ragged clouds swept across the heavens, often obscuring the pale moon, which illumined their wild progress. Leaves rustled uneasily beneath the expiring breath of the gale, looking grey and ghostly as the wan light glinted on their rain-washed surface. Whenever the sighing breeze lulled, the faint drip, drip of elusive raindrops was perceptible.



Lower Dam, West of Brandon.

A few paces from the door Mrs. Quesnay halted abruptly—startled. First the unexpected light, now the sound of a voice. What was the matter? Vallor—no, then was certainly not nurse's voice. Dr. Redwold! There was no mistaking his Lancashire burr. Something must be wrong with Eustace. She—

"Yes, I soon saw that, nurse. The little fellow has been sadly neglected."

Neglected! Mrs. Quesnay remained motionless—seething with indignation. Neglected!

The doctor's voice rumbled on. "Has he missed his father?"

"He did at first, and fretted for him. But not lately."

"Ah, children soon forget. I thought the mother seemed very fond of him though."

"Oh, yes, doctor, she is—she is, indeed. But—"

"Humph. Well, she will have to be told the news tomorrow."

"It is dreadful. And is there no hope?"

"Unfortunately none." Both lungs are affected. Galloping consumption."

This, then, explained why Nurse Vallor had been so strange lately, pale and distraught. The woman's eyelids had several times been red and swollen, and she had avoided her mistress. Why had she not told? Because—did the woman distrust her? Mrs. Quesnay had been aware for some time of a vague reproach in her old attendant's manner, but, knowing there had been real attachment

Mrs. Quesnay gazed on the mournful prospect with wide, dark eyes. She held out her rounded arms. How white and smooth they looked in the moonlight! And her soft grey dress—almost unearthly. Everything was so pure, so cold—except herself. How her eyes burned and burned—and her head. If she could—oh, Eustace, Eustace! God in heaven be merciful! Eustace, my little son!

In her piteous agony the poor girl shrank into the friendly shadow and, sinking to her knees, stretched her arms upon the balustrade and hid her face against them. For a few moments her thoughts were a confused whirl until the inevitable question of those who suffer was evolved from incoherence. What had she done to deserve such suffering—so heart-breaking a loss? Why should fate make cruel sport with her life. To lose her husband—to lose her son. Was there no pity for ill-starred Olive Derrincourt?—no, Olive Quesnay. Ah, if she could only be Olive Derrincourt again—a happy, irresponsible girl. She wished she had never had a child—been born—that she might die now. But never been a wife. She had never, why should she grieve? What did it matter? Was it so dreadful after all? She would be free now to do as she wished—to enjoy herself with her friends. Her friends! The Cordingleys, the Arnolds, the Verschovles. She needed no thought. The names seemed random, her heart like so many swarms. How, how, how contemptible she was!

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