

advised Paterson. "You won't see very much of him after this."

From the first trifling remark the conversation went on until it developed into a conspiracy to persuade Peter that he was doomed to live in a land of gray skies and unfailling rains, and it succeeded well enough to send him to his last sleep on the train feeling unusually depressed.

Yet when they came to the end of the journey it was the mock-pessimists who took him to the window of the depot waiting room to show him the glory of earth and sea and sky by morning light.

The rose flush of early morning tinged the mountain peaks and made luminous the innocent white clouds drifting carelessly to diffusion. Blue-black shadows lay hiding on the lower slopes until the sun should conquering rise and banish their mournful hues.

It was Peter's first glimpse of the sea and never before had he seen nature in such an entrancing mood. He stood like one enchanted and his smiling companions bent to catch the tribute which escaped his parted lips.

"Gosh!" said Peter Freeman.

Later that morning, after entering the L. and C. Benton Company's store he suddenly felt more humble and less positive of his ability to measure up to the high standard of that establishment. From every point of view—stock, fixtures, display and convenience—it was equal to the best he had known in the East and far above what he had expected to find.

"Mr. Beamish went to Victoria yesterday and will not return until next week," he was told when he went to report to the Superintendent. "Is there anything I can do for you?" asked his informant—an alert young lady who acted as stenographer for Mr. Beamish. "Oh, so you are Mr. Freeman. Mr. Beamish told me that you might be here this week-end." She went to the telephone in the inner office, and on her return said to him: "Please go up to the General Office. Mr. Benton is home again. He told me to send you up to him."

"Mr. Benton is very busy. He has only just come back this morning from his trip East," said the young lady who came to ask his business. "Perhaps—"

"I was told to come up here to see Mr. Benton. I think he expects me," said Peter, a touch of importance in his tone.

"Oh, pardon me," said the young lady. "I'll tell him that you are waiting. What name shall I give?" She came out of the private office again and beckoning to Peter ushered him in, closing the door after him.

As Peter stood within the threshold of the office he saw bending over a desk in the centre of the room a figure which looked vaguely familiar. A moment later the surmise became a certainty for Peter confronted the steady gaze of Mr. "Darcy." A very long second of silence followed.

"Good morning, Mr. Freeman—right on the job—eh! That's the stuff." The keen eyes under the shaggy brows looked with disconcerting steadiness at Peter whose self-possession was further disturbed by a rapid-fire volley of questions. At the end of the interview he was in a chastened frame of mind.

"Well I suppose you want to begin right away? Want to find out how many mistakes the other man made, eh? Well, I think you can afford to put off all that until next week. Spend the rest of the week getting settled." A smile flickered over Mr. Benton's face as he observed Peter's meek expression. "You'll get on here all right, Freeman. I know you'll do your best. I'll back you up."

"Thank you, sir," said Peter quietly. "Good morning."

He was on his way out of the office when he heard Mr. Benton speaking again. He turned about and waited.

"Oh—Freeman—I saw that picture—you remember—on the train. Better hurry up and get those youngsters out here. This is a great country for children. Bring them out and get settled down. You'll work all the better when they are here with you. I want to meet your wife and tell her what a ladies' man you are."

Peter had not recovered his self-confidence and he looked doubtfully at his new employer.

"I think I can forgive you though for taking full possession of Mrs. Mercer on the way out. She was a dear old soul and I was very pleased to see how attentive you were to her. Well have a good look round the city during the week end and report to me here on Monday morning. Good morning."

The smile with which Peter was dismissed carried full assurance that all was well. Peter was himself again. He nodded and smiled at the young lady who had answered his enquiry then suddenly remembering something he turned and spoke to her.

"Mr. Benton," he began—"Mr. Benton—I thought I heard someone call him Mr. Darcy. I-I met him on the train."

"Mr. Benton's initials are D. R. C. and most of his friends call him Darcy for short," she said, smiling.

"Oh, I see," said Peter thoughtfully. "Thank you."

Peter was himself again. On his way out of the store he passed through the department which was soon to be given up to his supervision. On second thoughts he felt that there was considerable room for improvement. Yes—in that corner two cases silent enough—but not salesmen. He would attend to that the very first thing on Monday morning after he had reported to Mr. D. R. C. Benton.

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