

"I wonder, Henry, if you could not do something to help this drive!"

"I'm sure I don't know of anything. I'm no talker."

Alice turned to a topic always acceptable to Henry—his daily walk. Irrelevantly, as she thought, he stated his opinion that boys were "much more impudent now than when he was a boy." It leaked out, however, that he had in mind a couple of boys whom he had met in Evergreen Park. One of them had asked him if he was the game warden, the other boy exclaimed, "Oh, he just comes over here to show himself. Thinks he looks good, I guess."

The incident amused Alice. It annoyed Henry.

"Most likely the boys have often seen you. I suppose they thought you might be doing something more useful than walking around the Park every day." Alice paused to bite the end of her thread. "Really, they were not so very far out of the way, Henry, after all," she added in significant tones.

"What do you mean?" sharply.

"Well, dear, if you cannot work, there are things you could do."

"What things?"

"You could help others." Her voice hardened a little as she went on. "You are trying to regain health, but you're going the wrong way about it."

"I do everything I know of," plaintively. "It's strange—all the doctors have said that my heart and lungs are strong, yet I don't get well. Doctors don't know anything, anyhow."

"You began at the wrong end, Henry, and you're still on the wrong tack. A convalescent who goes back to his counter or desk sooner than his doctor advises is more successful in regaining health than you are."

"Why?"

She let fall her sewing, observed him intently, and emphasized each word as she uttered it, "Because he forgets himself."

Henry spread out his hands; Alice almost shivered at their thinness and transparency.

"I don't expect you to work—not yet—" Lightly placing a hand on his knee and looking him full in the face, Alice spoke earnestly: "You know what it is to be ill, you know what it is to be"—she was going to say "unhappy," but she checked herself and said, "discouraged. You could," she continued, "spend some of your time cheering others who are ill, and who have perhaps more to make them discouraged than you have."

"How could I? Whom could I cheer?"

"Lots of people," decisively. "If you don't know, perhaps I might be able to show you how to begin." Henry surveyed his wife blankly. Alice went on: "These are days for service. Can you expect to get well if you think only of yourself?" She drew back and resumed work. "Long walks and gymnastics are all very good, but they haven't got you anywhere yet—and," she gathered force with her words, "they never will unless you combine with them some of the vitalizing spirit of service."

A cloud other than cigar smoke came between husband and wife. In her anxiety to break the silence, and with a single conviction in mind, Alice told of two men she had passed near the public market—one, a cripple, propelling himself in a chair; the other, a partially paralyzed old man, dragging one foot and tugging at a flour sack full of food stuff. Both of them wore Victory Bond buttons.

Henry puffed slowly and wondered if she were trying to give him the blues. Somewhat before his regular time he disappeared for the night.

As soon as Alice noticed that the sleeping room was dark, she went in. The light that poured through the open door gave a clear outline of the face on the pillow.

"Henry," whispered Alice, bending over him, "you know I love you and try to help you." He turned his eyes upon her, pressed her hand, and answered, "If it hadn't been for you I'd have been dead long ago."

Alice opened the window and lingered. From the crest of the hill on which stood the four-story apartment building, countless lights danced ahead and each side in gradual descent, and dwindled in the far distance. Over the city was thrown the glow of the full moon. Stars dotted the dark blue canopy away to the cloud bank, which Alice would have mistaken for the mountain range had she not known the contour of that range so well that she could draw it from memory. All this she saw with her physical eye. Her spiritual eye saw a man's profile on a white background. For his recovery her soul created a prayer so fervent that a winged thought-form, more delicate in color and more beautiful in radiance than anything she could conceive, floated to and enfolded him in a mantle of peace throughout the night.

Yet Henry did not settle to sleep immediately. He was studying what Alice meant by service and the rest of her preaching. He did not altogether understand her; indeed, he never had understood her. Nevertheless she was the best, the dearest wife in the world.

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Next morning at a quarter to eight Alice began, with characteristic punctuality, her daily tramp downtown. Walking two miles to and from Benton & Ludlow's store was a habit which had originated as a little economy incidental to the previous Victory Loan campaign. From a hardship it had developed into a pleasure. In the morning it gave her a chance to meditate and start the day in harmony with the Creator and the universe: in the evening it rested her and crowned her day.

Alice had learned that even slight variety of route is salutary, though there was one part of her course that she never changed. Always she passed and scanned admiringly a lofty-spired, sward-gird church reared on a slope, because she was conscious of a benign influence while within the radius of its vibrations. Frequently, she also passed a church set back from the street, but she had never given it a second glance until that particular morning, when she noted its open door. A hasty reference to her wrist watch, a moment's uncertainty, and she turned in toward the unpretentious frame building. On the announcement board at the end of the path was the invitation, "Always open." As if in a dream, Alice traced on the corridor wall the familiar words, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." Beyond the corridor she stepped into the sanctuary where she offered her morning sacrifice of worship, and in her meditations she included not only her husband but all humanity, all creation. Coming out, she paused to re-read the words; the rest of the way to town she pondered their meaning. Quickening her pace, she was able to punch Benton & Ludlow's time clock before it left the eight twenty-five mark.

There was to be a Victory Bond parade at noon. Quite early Alice managed to phone her husband and ask him to come downtown. He replied that he did not care to come to a parade unless he wore a button or felt prepared to own one. She suggested that he might meet her at half-past five and eat dinner with her in town, after which they might see some of the special screen showings for the Victory Loan. He was not, however, open to persuasion.

Arrived home at the usual hour, Alice produced her Victory Bond button and her Victory Bond window card. It was pay day, and she had made the first payment on her new Bond. Thus early in the campaign, Benton & Ludlow were able to report to the Pay-Roll Bond Division one hundred per cent. sales.

There was much to tell Henry about the handsome floats in the parade; the patriotic community singing; and the slacker who was hung in effigy and left dangling on a street corner telephone pole attached to a placard announcing that "He didn't buy Victory Bonds."