

Advice.

How a Departed Mother's Spirit of Truth, Speaking Through Her Little Child, Becomes a Blessing and a Balm.

'Yes, I know that I need it badly enough. And I know that you could throw a lot of business my way, said Robert Creighton wearily. 'But what is the extra thousand for? You only paid your extra men five hundred for the search of each title in that plot. What's it for?'

'Why for the magnificent prestige of your name, your reputation, of course.'

Creighton was on his feet. 'Mr. Bailey, you know where I stand, you know that I'm in difficulties. But these difficulties do not give you any right to sneer.'

'Hold tight young man hold tight nobody's sneering, I meant just that. And Bailey, a big loose-lipped, overflowing sort of man, stretched out and pushed Creighton easily back to his seat. 'Here it is,' he went on. 'You can take it or leave it. Those other titles were clear to you see, I paid for having them searched. This one isn't. Your business is not to search too close. Now do you see?'

'No I don't,' said Creighton, 'your own lawyers could have been as blind as necessary.'

'Well, then, that's not all of it, the big man admitted. 'Old Peter McCarthy is putting up the money for the plot. He don't know titles but he knows men—so he says—and he won't take the word of my carter or his own. But he knows your father as he knows you, and he'll take your word. That's how it is.'

Creighton sat for a time staring vacantly at Bailey until the latter, becoming nervous, frowned over the other arm of his chair. Then Creighton shook himself and asked drarily, 'Mr. Bailey, do you suppose you could point out the thing that I've ever done that makes you think that I'd sell out my father's good name for a thousand dollars?'

'Oh, come!' the other protested, 'it isn't like that, you're not doing McCarthy any harm. He can't lose. The other people whoever they are, will never be able to prove a title—if there are any of them alive. All you've got to tell McCarthy is that there's a flaw in our title. There isn't—it'll never be questioned—is the same thing.'

'Come on up now and we'll talk it over. I'm going up to the Club. What do you stick down here in this rat hole till this hour for? Come on up where it's light, and clear your head out.' The big man was almost boyish in overflowing spirits, and he wanted to get Creighton away from sober thoughts into the lights and the crowd. There he could make him see things as other people saw them.

But Creighton only turned back to his desk, mulling about things to be done. Bailey hesitated a moment, then, thinking better, he went away without another word. So far he had won. Creighton had not refused. Better leave it so than risk more argument.

Creighton did not do any of the things he had mentioned. Instead he sat, head on hands, looking mentally, at himself. And the sight did not please him.

How far how very far he had gone since that night when he held his young wife's hand and seen her die! Almost to the last she had gently pleaded with him to be firm always, to be true to his best at all times. How well Monica knew him. She with the clear sight of those who are beginning to break through the veil of flesh, she had seen that it would not be principle or understanding that would need.

Those latter came with the fitness of his mind. Rather that he would need that certain stiffness of character that every-day bluntness of right, which breaks through evasions and distinctions, to get at the open face of truth. She had supplied that to him. In the light of 'what she would say,' when she was here to say it, there was no place for shades of right or wrong. She saw them one or the other.

This was the first time he had socially let people offer him money for a doubtful thing. But there had been other things, one after another: a little weakness here a little weakness there, a little lack of pliancy there. He was subdued and afraid of them all.

At first the memory of her held him. But the things of life are very real and they insist every day, and a memory is a memory.

Now in his shame and weakness he was almost blaming her for leaving him, for having gone away from his side. He was very lonely and he felt that things crowded and insisted and choked him. Also he pitied himself a little—that is always weakening.

In the end he put out the lights, roused the dazed elevator boy, and was let down and out into the cavernous, deserted darkness of William Street. The mood of helplessness, of desertion, went with him all the way up the crowded subway until he let himself into his own dark home.

Monica Vera had known for a long time that there was something wrong, but had not been able to say what. Now she knew that she was very lonely and had no one to go to. There was Ellen, but she was always

An Ancient Foe

To health and happiness is threatened as ugly as ever since time immemorial. It causes lumps in the neck, disfigures the skin, inflames the mucous membrane, wastes the muscles, weakens the bones, reduces the power of resistance to disease and the capacity for recovery, and develops into consumption.

'Two of my children had certain sores which kept growing deeper and kept them from going to school for three months. Ointments and medicines did no good until I began giving them Hood's Sarsaparilla. This medicine caused the sores to heal, and the children have shown no signs of recidivism.' J. W. McKinnon, Woodstock, Ont.

Hood's Sarsaparilla

will rid you of it, radically and permanently, as it has rid thousands.

busy, burying to get the work done and get out as soon as Monica Vera was in bed.

But this was not the real trouble. When one is not quite eight and is suddenly confronted by the fact that one is not fulfilling the duties of one's state in life, there is much to be thought of.

Coming out of church yesterday Monica Vera had walked quietly behind Mrs. Regan and Mrs. Blain, her neighbors—on across the street, the other next door on the left. Mrs. Regan was talking about Monica Vera's father, and Monica Vera had choked, but listened.

'He is not at Mass to-day.' Mrs. Regan said, 'nor I see him missis' often these last Sundays. He comes home that late at night dragging' one foot about the other and looking' all tired and' beat. And my man bears that he's in money trouble.'

'There's not much to come home to at night'—Mrs. Blain was willing to see excuse—'With the house all dark as a pocket, and that bludge of Ellen out, and the child asleep. Not a soul to say as much as come in' to him.'

'That's the truth an' it's the pettin' they all needs—every one in his own way, of course. There's Regan I'd get no good at all of him if I didn't give him a bit of talkin' to once in a while. He needs that. Others need other things, accordin' to the make of them. There all helpless together.'

'A man,' agreed Mrs. Blain profoundly, 'a man without a woman in the house, he's—he's—I'm sorry for him.'

Now when Monica Vera arrived home her father was in the dining-room mauling gloomily at some toast. The absent-minded quality of the morning glass struck Monica Vera for the first time. Once she had known kisses far different from this. But that was a long time ago and she had almost forgotten. She did not know what made the difference. But she knew that her father sometimes forgot whether he had eaten his toast or not. Now she thought that he might as easily forget whether he had kissed her or not. Then her father went away for the day.

Ostentation on Sunday stereotypes is not a joy for all girls. But to Monica Vera it came as a very welcome break in a long Sunday afternoon bounded entirely by the lonely empty house and just as lonely back yard. In Sunday-school Monica Vera attacked her problem, or rather it attacked her in a very determined way. The lesson was on the matter of the duties of one's state in life. Monica Vera knew both the questions and the answers—she could have conducted the recitation without a book, but neither the questions nor the answers seemed to fit her dimly.

The long part of the afternoon at home after catechism went away somehow and still there was no answer. She ate her dinner, Ellen serving, alone—her father insisted on this—and finally went to bed with her question. When she heard Ellen go out she cried a little before falling asleep. But whether that was just on account of the dark or the loneliness, or because she could not find the answer, she did not know.

In the morning one thing only was plain. Mrs. Blain had said that the real need was of a woman in the house. Monica Vera was obviously the woman of the house. Ellen, of course, did not count. Mrs. Regan had said that they all needed petting, of one kind or the other. Monica Vera had often felt the need of a little petting herself, though she had not known what it was. But she knew of no way of getting her father when he went away early in the morning and did not return till she had been long asleep.

She could not pet him over the telephone, he was always busy and worried anyway when you talked over the phone.

Her prayers that night were troubled. And Ellen worried her by coming twice to see if she was in bed. Ellen was in a hurry to go out.

Monica Vera did not know that the 'woman in the house' must be one to take her mother's place. She could not know how great was her father's need for just the unliking

course of right that was her own heritage from her mother. You could see it all already in the straight line across her brow, by the clear, steady way she looked into your eyes. But Monica Vera had been thinking very hard for two days—some people would say that all that thinking was not good for her—it might make her imaginative, I do not know.

She was sure that she was not asleep, and her mother whispered in her ear. Mother used to come often—just after she went away, but she had not come much for a year or more now. The other times were dreams, Monica Vera knew but this time she knew she was awake because she got right up and started down to see the lady in the alcove. That was what mother said to do.

The alcove was at the end of the hall on the second floor. Mother had outlined off a space, and within the curtain there was a tiny altar with a lamp on it and two large kneelers and a very little one for a little girl of five. At night it is a long time since one was five, many things are forgotten. But Monica Vera had not entirely forgotten how father and mother used to kneel on the large kneelers and she on the very little one, for a baby of five. And after mother had gone away father used to bring Monica Vera to kneel with him. But one evening when Monica Vera was sleepy and wanted mother she had spoken right out loud to the lady in the alcove and had asked for 'murver' and when she was coming back, father had risen and shivered, just as you do when you are cold, and gone away and they had never come to the alcove again.

Ellen, for her own reasons, having to do with thunder storms, kept to the lamp and matobes at hand. Monica Vera did not take the very little kneeler, but the one that was mother's.

As the little deep-red lamp glowed up it showed a very wonderful lady in the alcove. She was looking down into the eyes of the baby and adoring. But if you look long into the eyes of this Mother of Consolation you could see that they also looked into the eyes of every troubled child on earth, and understood her trouble and would help her to be the 'woman in the house' and to fulfil the duties of her state in life. And when she had finished all her prayers she did not think of going to bed. Instead she knelt looking into the understanding eyes of the lady in the alcove.

Robert Creighton dragged himself slowly up the dark stairs of his home to the hall on the second floor. His spirit was numb with weariness, but his heart sobbed dully in the desolation and desertion of the house. His soul moaned for the presence of her who had made this house a home.

As he mounted the last step he stopped and gripped the banister desperately. A little ribbon of soft light ran down the middle of the curtains at the end of the hall. His heart leaped back to the many nights he had come slipping into the house and up the stairs to see that light, just so, and to find his girl wife kneeling there within that certain saying her eight rosary before The Lady.

Then his desolation settled around him again as he thought: Of course, Ellen had lighted the little lamp and forgotten it.

As he pulled aside the curtain the vague soft light on Monica Vera, kneeling there on the other Monica's place, had brought out a little trick of the curve of her neck, a little tinge of her wrist as it lay on the kneeler. The resemblance was so painfully true that for an instant he had thought—

He lifted Monica Vera very tenderly and turned her face to the light. He was looking for the long, straight line across the tops of the eyebrows—the 'truth line' he used to call it in the face of the other Monica. It was there so clear and so wonderful in the miniature that he was kissed it in wondering reverence.

Monica Vera stirred at the kiss and began to awaken. But her first words came out of a dream. Or some long forgotten words that she had once heard to read up to the surface of her mind, for, as she opened the big unblinking, glassless eyes that seemed to Creighton to look into his very soul, she said:

'You are very late to night, Rob.' Creighton almost dropped the little bundle from his arms. Then he held her very close. The words, caught back from some time when she had heard them, the curve of the little lips, the wonderful mother eyes of her struck him dumb with a mysterious bewildering joy.

In his misery he had almost asked her to come back. And she had answered, in this little body and soul, that she had never left him.

Then Monica Vera became full awake and found that she was very happy. She did not know truly she had become in the moment the 'woman in the house,' but she was being petted exceedingly and that was very good.

Even when she was back in bed she did not wish to go back to sleep because it was so nice to feel her father's arms stretched under the pillow.

Finally, when she slept soundly her father stole away very softly. Then it occurred to him that he had forgotten something. Oh, yes, two things.

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He called down to the telephone and wanted Bailey's club. In the truth line and in these eyes he had found another again, and his soul was lightly unafraid.

'I guess, Mr. Bailey,' he said when he recognized the voice on the wire, 'you'll have to use your own lawyers on that title matter. I can not do it for you.'

'Can't? Come back in mumbling penance.' 'Can't? What's the reason you can't?'

'Well, then, to put it clearly, I've had, well—advice, he said, half laughing to himself, 'on the matter, and I will not do it.'

He hung up the receiver and went up to the alcove—on matters of his own.—Richard Amerle, in Barrister's Magazine.

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