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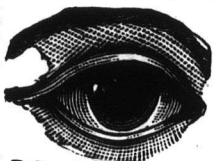
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trouble." She glanced at Mrs. Dean's daughter, who waited for her mother at the door.

"Yes, my two perfect servants, Christine and Hedda, have shown themselves both ungrateful and heartless. They walked out of the house yesterday without warning, just because I had invited guests for the holidays—my son and his family. They were afraid of doing extra work and objected to the children." She glanced in her daughter's direction. "Amy had planned to entertain also—indeed she had the cards engraved for a little dinner dance, but Christine and Hedda cared little for that!" she flushed indignantly. "I have a cook who is to come in by the day, but I can't get another girl at this season. The minute you say 'guests for the holidays' they retreat. What are we coming to, Mrs. Baxter?"

Mrs. Baxter shook her head in her inability to account for the incomprehensible, gave her order and left the grocery.

With some hesitation, Jerry limped toward Mrs. Dean.

"Wad y' be willin' to try my niece from the ole country, mum? She's green, but willin', and could come to ye at wance."

Mrs. Dean hesitated. With three in her family, she had been accustomed to pick and choose from the intelligence offices, but the holiday season, her son and his wife and their two lively boys, made the chances of getting a servant almost impossible, and with a sigh of surrender Maggie was engaged.

When Maggie found herself at the Deans', in the servant's room on the third story, she looked about her with a feeling of relief. The bare little room, with an old-fashioned motto of "Home Sweet Home," which had been carelessly hung upside down, had no ironical significance for her. Those four walls stood for liberty; and she was glad to escape the malignant glances of her uncle's family at any cost. If the fine lady would only teach her the new work, all would be well.

In spite of her inexperience, Mrs. Dean had promised her four dollars a week. Twenty dollars to Baltimore where her "fri'nd" dwelt; surely it would not take long.

She thought of him with great longing and saw him round and ruddy, in rough clothes, as he had looked when he had left Ireland. "Good-by, Maggie," he had said solemnly, "I'm a-goin' to make a home for you in Amerikay. I'll be a-sindin' for ye wan foine day."

He had never come back. Two years passed in the dull village, broken only by letters that grew farther and farther apart. The kind old priest read them to the illiterate girl and wrote for her in return, but at last, after much thought, he refused to write again. He became convinced that James would never send for Maggie, and he offered to arrange a marriage between the girl and Patsy Mullane, who owned three pigs.

Twenty dollars to Baltimore; surely it would not take long. She crept timidly down the steep stairs, walking backward, as though the flight had been a ladder.

The new cook was a negress and Maggie started back in terror from the dark face and the glittering eyes that rolled inquiringly in her direction as she entered the kitchen.

"Feared o' me?" the woman laughed good-naturedly and gave her some rough directions about setting the table. As she watched Maggie's clumsy efforts she showed her white teeth in a broad smile.

"No, greeny, that hain't de way. You des over f'om de ole country? What brought you here? Have you any friends in de city?"

Maggie turned away her head and her voice was muffled. "I come to me uncle, me own father's brother; 'twas he got me the place."

"Weren't they pleased to see you? I'm a-fixin' to go down to Tennessee after Christmas myself, to see my brother."

The girl turned her head away. "Me uncle is a foine rich man; he owns a store, his daughters wear silk and play the piano."

"Too grand for their cousins, were they?" the cook said with quick comprehension. Her voice, soft and slow and vibrant with sympathy, moved Maggie to tears. "I wish y' were my colah, I'd take y' home with me to-night. I'm a-goin' to the theayter."

"Will she let you?" Maggie gasped,

motioning meaningly toward the house, where the mistress's voice could be heard.

"Let me! I do as I please. I'd walk out on her, with her visitors here, if she said anything to me. I ain't a-goin' to stay long. I told you I was a-fixin' to go to Tennessee."

"Have you ever been to Baltimore?" the girl asked wistfully.

"No, I hain't ever been there yet. I knew a colored gent'man, a nawful nice yaller boy, that went there to live. Do y' aim to go there?"

"Is it a large place? Wad I be able to find a fri'nd?"

"Do you know his address?"

The girl paled. "I ain't got his address; the priest at home kapes it fer me. Would n't they know him by name? He's a foine boy." Her eyes dimmed. "Tall and foine, wid a hearty laugh. His name is James Cahill and he's makin' a home fer me."

"Dis yaller fellar said Baltimore was a big city, most as large as this yere," the negress said sympathetically, as she looked up from her potato peeling. "Y'd best stay here till y' hear from the priest. When y've heard from him you can go."

Her rough kindness warmed the wanderer's heart, but unconsciously increased the terrible nostalgia that tore her soul. Through eyes dimmed with yearning, she saw in fancy the village with the dirty, straggling cabins, and the field where she had watched the cows. With an aching heart she thought of her father and mother, bent with toil; of the little brother, who at the moment of parting had clung to her and cried, "Maggie, Maggie, don't l'ave me," and of the old priest who had sorrowfully watched the departure of the boys and girls from the village, in spite of all his warnings, looking for nothing but fortune and happiness in the New World.

Maggie had met her first disappointment early; in her ignorance she had peeped out eagerly from the folds of her old shawl at the crowds of people who poured to Ellis Island to meet the ship, in the expectation of seeing James Cahill among them. The great extent of the country had only gradually penetrated her consciousness as the tourist cars swept her on and ever on until she reached the Prairie City.

In a world unaccountably callous to her suffering, Eva, the black cook, had been the first to hold out a helping hand, and with difficulty Maggie tore herself from her genial presence to answer the first summons of the new mistress.

Mrs. Dean, with recollections of Hedda in her neat uniform, looked despairingly at Maggie as she trembled before her, then gathered courage for the endless instructions which she must begin; and Maggie, unhappy and homesick, looked appealingly into her new mistress' face in the hope of human understanding.

She listened duly to her mistress' directions: "Get the dishes from the slide, present each one to me, then go in regular order about the table. Have you no black dress?"

"No, mum, I've just the wan you see on me back."

"Very well, to-morrow you must buy some clothes. I'll let you have some money in advance. I furnish the aprons. I hope you have no objection to one with a bib, and to wearing a cap. It's a point I insist upon."

"Mum?"

"Will you wear whatever I wish you to wear?" with rising impatience.

"I'll do as ye say," and she squeaked to the shelter of the kitchen and black Eva's protection.

"Was she m'aning I was to buy clothes wid my first earnings?"

"Yes, y' can get de dress ready-made. I won't be a-goin' to Baltimore so soon thin, will I?"

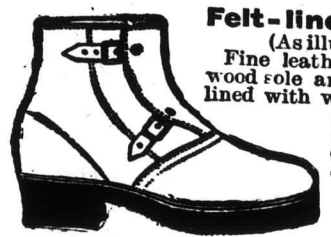
"Say, greeny, y'd better forgit Baltimore; y'd be lost there afore night."

Maggie started to the table with the soup; her coarse hands trembled, her coarse shoes squeaked at every step. She saw dimly a blur of faces at the table—Mr. Dean, who reluctantly laid down his newspaper; Mrs. Dean, who nervously watched her progress; Miss Amy; the son with his wife, and the two little boys, who grinned openly.

Maggie's red hands shook as they offered each dish; her frightened "Mum," hoarse with agitation, came explosively from her twitching lips. She jerked the

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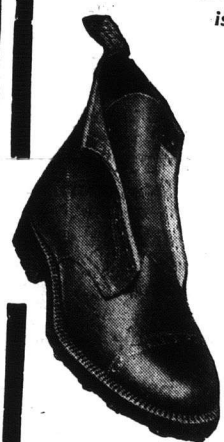
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Deputy of the Minister of the Interior

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