

Black and White.

Miss Mary Stuyvesant was dying. The great, old-fashioned shutters softened the light and muffled the clatter of vehicles, the screams of children and the thousand and one epidemics of the social abandonment of Stuyvesant Square. Through the blinds of the windows facing the ancient Dutch church, a withered-looking mulatto woman watched the doctor descending the pompous stoop, entering his brougham and moving rapidly away up-town.

Behind her could be seen in the half-light of the large room the figure of Miss Stuyvesant propped up in bed. Even in the colossal bedstead of mahogany her frame seemed large and masterful. An antiquated gray wig surmounted a face whose large features and determined expression spoke in spite of extreme age of a strong-willed woman, an aristocrat.

Everything in her surroundings—the furniture, the pictures, the ornaments the silver and glass on the table near her bed denoted, if not a scorn, at least an obliviousness to the modern spirit of New York.

"You heard what the doctor said, Lizzie," the invalid spoke in a clear voice without the least emotion.

"Yes, Miss Mary," answered the servant trying to manage her voice. "It's just what I have been expecting for some time. I knew I should never get on my feet again. You have my memorandum in a safe place?"

"Yes, Miss Mary."

"I don't suppose I have forgotten anything; the silver for the Grangers; the diamonds for the Clarks; the paintings of my father for the Historical Society; the books for Rev. Dr. Stockton; then the little things for the servants—that's all, I think."

"Yes, Miss Mary."

"You've been a faithful servant, Lizzie, and I've not forgotten you in my will. The estate funds of course cannot be touched; but I have some of my own savings. There is my miniature in the cabinet which you may take as a keepsake. I suppose you will miss me after these fifty years."

The servant merely wrung her hands together as she stood beside the bed.

"My nieces and nephew will sell the house, I fancy—it is quite out of the question for them to occupy it. You will then have to leave here; you have some money saved, haven't you?"

"Almost four thousand, Miss Mary."

"You will need that much to educate your child. She is quite like a white girl, Lizzie, and promises to be very pretty. You know you were quite pretty yourself when you first came, Lizzie, but don't be too ambitious for Alice; there's nothing like that for breaking hearts. Take my white sash, the one the Lieutenant gave me, and my coral brooch; she can wear them when she grows up. Do you know, Lizzie, I have been thinking of late that perhaps our lives all happen for the best. I don't think that marriage could leave me the sweet memories I have had of Henry Alston all my life. He was very handsome, wasn't he? You remember the day he proposed, don't you? How fascinating he looked the day he left for the war? How I cried all that afternoon? How you cried? And when the news that he was dead—I haven't dared to speak of it for years but the dying must clear accounts, even of the heart, Lizzie—I remember that it was you who nursed me back to life out of the terrible fever that set in. But I feel myself growing so very drowsy, now, that perhaps you had better hand me the Lieutenant's miniature. What a forehead he had! What eyes! Where does one see them now-a-days? And his black hair drawn over on the side—his gentle mouth—"

Miss Mary's utterance failed her for a while, and the noises of the crowded square seemed clamoring for admission into the forbidding-looking mansion and the shadowy apartment. In a little while she continued but with something of an effort:

"When I am gone, Lizzie, you must take the Lieutenant's picture; the Clarks and the Gangers never liked him and I don't wish it to fall into unfriendly hands. They will have all the family relics to squabble about. Perhaps now you ought to telegraph to have some of them come from Newport as I fear that before morning I shall be far away. At my age one cannot expect very much sympathy but it is hard to die here in mid-summer and everybody away. I

should take some consolation, as the last Stuyvesant of my branch, to know that the old families all came to the church. Arrange me very simply in the coffin, Lizzie, and—and, as I fear this may be the last good-bye, you may kiss me on the cheek now before I grow more drowsy."

Fifteen years later in a cheap apartment house in the fiftieth streets a latch key softly opened a bedroom door and from the dark the voice of Lizzie asked softly:

"Is that you, Alice?"

"Yes, Mammy," she answered; "it is almost two o'clock so I thought you would be asleep."

"Won't you light the lamp, dear. I wish to see you again in Miss Mary's sash."

"I have taken it off, Mammy; one of the buyers came up and told me that it was the finest thing he had ever seen."

"And you had a nice time?"

"Yes, splendid, Mammy; and Jim came home with me."

"I don't want to trouble you, Alice, but Dr. Ellis was here again; he said he knew you were at Wanameyer's dance, but that was no reason for you to look down on him because he was a West Indian."

Alice's hands dropped weakly to her sides; she came over in the dark and buried her face in her mother's bed. "O Mammy, Mammy," she moaned, "I can't keep up this cheat any longer. Jim loves me—he loves me and I can't even look him in the face."

A thin hand was laid on Alice's head and the old woman said brokenly:

"I can go away, child,—he need never know."

"Then I'll go with you."

"No, Alice, no. You must stay. Think of the years I toiled and

slaved. You don't know, dear, what these old black hands of mine have had to do ever since your father died so sudden-like in Miss Mary's pantry. When you was born so white and pretty, I prayed the good Lord to let me see your children free from the black curse and when they auctioned off the old house and furniture on Stuyvesant Square and they paid over the money Miss Mary had willed me, I had my mind that set on having you white that I put most off into the cottage at Highburgh and spent the rest on your schooling. All those years you were enjoying yourself with the boys and girls at school and church societies until the day you graduated from the High School, and I saw you sitting with your diploma in your hand, wearing old Miss Mary's sash and coral brooch and nobody knowing what a great lady, Miss Stuyvesant of Stuyvesant Square, they once belonged to. And then there was that terrible time when I began to see that things were changing for you; the boys and girls wouldn't come around to see you like before you wore your long skirts and put up your sweet brown hair. Somehow folks didn't seem to look for you at the church affairs and all day long I kept saying to myself: 'Aunt Lizzie Williams here's Alice grew up a fine white lady and only for your black face she might be among the best white folks of this town.' Then the money gave out and we had to rent the house; but that made it easy for us to come back to the city where you could pass for white and get a place in the stores. My old friends of the race don't know I'm living, I suppose, and if you had not come across this Dr. Ellis—"

"What could I do, Mammy?" asked the daughter in a smothered voice.

"When I would not speak to him on the street he followed me home. With the black man's instinct he knew our secret at once. The last time after he saw me with Jim he threatened to have us put out of the apartment. What did he say to-night?"

"He was worse than ever. He said he would be willing to marry you and give me a home. Perhaps you—"

"Hush, Mammy," whispered Alice frightenedly. "Think of what our life would be. It would be better to die first."

"Do you think Jim is willing to marry you at once?"

"No, no, Mammy, I can't. He was telling me about his own mother to-night; he is her only child and support; think of her when she found out that her child had married a negro. Such frauds as we are, Mammy, everybody casts out, the law, the church, everybody! There are others like ourselves neither black

nor white—we can go to them; they will receive us."

"Yes, Alice, but how shall we live? Nobody wants to employ an educated colored girl."

"Can't I be a waitress or a lady's maid?"

"You couldn't stand the life; you don't know what it means to be an inferior in a great house."

The old woman sat up, kissed her child tenderly and insisted that she go to bed. Alice obeyed mutely; but for Aunt Lizzie herself there was to be no sleep until morning. She lay there thinking—thinking if it could be true, that all her ambitions for Alice were to come to nothing. There was prayer in her heart, agonized prayer; but the memory of her race, its wrongs, its sufferings, its weaknesses and sins came like gail upon the sweetness of her devotions. Were the whites so just to her that she should be called upon to suffer the curse of their conventions? Was Alice to begin all over again the squalid old negro existence? Shut out from the higher hopes in the world around her? To be relegated to the back alleys of city life and the miserable cabins of the suburbs? Was she to begin it all over again as her mother and grandmother's had done? Then came such thoughts as would have frightened Miss Mary Stuyvesant could she have dreamt that they could ever enter her faithful Lizzie's head.

Meanwhile the morning came over the sea of roof-tops, a great, slow inundation of light. To the legions of the suffering and the dying it came as a blessed sign. But into Aunt Lizzie's bedroom it stole with the portentousness of fate; for as it grew in brightness her worn face grew blacker and blacker against the pillows and looking down at her nervous hands she wrung them together in dull hopeless sorrow.

As for the young girl who some hours later emerged from the door of the apartment house, few if any would distinguish a feature in common between her and the old lady's maid of Stuyvesant Square. Alice had all that nameless quality which is only partly described as patrician and stylish. Her figure in the simple cloth skirt and jacket she wore showed lightness and refinement of line. In her face there was merely a suggestion of olive or creamy tint; her eyes were dark and rather lazy in effect, and even an ethnologist would have pronounced her face to be of the true Caucasian oval. There was, however, about her delicate nostrils and sensitive mouth something that suggested the sugary types of beauty in tropical lands.

At Lexington Avenue she found Jim waiting for her. He appeared to be what is commonly called a man's man and his lighter hair and complexion made his age something of a puzzle; he was evidently somewhat near to thirty. He had about him, moreover, that air of industry and healthy feeling which is so typical of the rising young business man of New York city.

They discussed as they walked down town the events of the evening before; how oddly one of the floor-walkers had danced; how well Miss Cassidy of the cloak department had looked in evening dress; of everything in fact but what was most before their minds. At last Alice made an opening, by saying:

"I am afraid the girls' will talk about your not dancing with anybody but me the whole evening."

"Suppose they do," he replied; "a blind man can see I am head and heels in love with you,—let alone a crowd of girls."

"But some of them may be jealous."

He laughed heartily in answer to her quizzical look.

"It's more likely some of the fellows in the store will be down on me for monopolizing you," he added. Then after a pause he continued in a more serious tone:

"I hope you are going to give me at least a fighting chance, Alice?"

"Isn't that what I'm doing?" she asked shyly.

"Don't girls ever come out and say what they think? I never had any sisters, so perhaps I am a little backward."

"Never, so long as they can help it."

"That isn't your style, Alice. I know you wouldn't keep a poor fellow on the hooks a minute longer than you had to."

"Oh, I'm a woman, Jim; we're all alike in these things."

"Then I am going to take the will for the deed and keep on hoping."

"You see, Jim, I like you well enough to marry you; but then I think I can be happy even without you. You wouldn't want to marry anybody who thought like that."

"You would learn to think more of me later on."

"Oh, I don't mean anything foolish or romantic. Besides, what do you know about me or my folks. You see me every day, in the store but what does that amount to?"

"I don't need to know anything about you. All I know is that I want you to take me for the better; I'll stand all the worse that is coming."

"Even if I—"

"There isn't any 'if' to it at all. Just think it all over again when you get a chance to-day; every minute you keep me waiting is a torture."

They were coming nearer the store and were joined by others of the employees making in the same direction; but before Jim turned to go to his office he arranged to wait for Alice when the store would close.

It was not long before the aisles of the great emporium began to fill up with customers. There were the early morning commuters from out-of-town; the sight-seers from the hotels, and bargain hunters, from the four points of—not heaven—but the compass. The roar of traffic began,—to last without intermission till the stroke of six o'clock. In the surging throngs were anxious mothers shopping for their darlings; toiling housewives from the tenements; fashionable economists hunting inexpensive luxuries; "declassé" women relieving the tedium of their way with enforced society of the salespeople; "vieux marcheurs" (and young ones) making a feat at purchasing at the counters of the pretty girls; foolish customers asking advice as to what to purchase; troublesome ones refusing to make up their minds to buy.

Therefore it did not seem long before it was Alice's turn to go to the lunch room. She sat down near Miss Cassidy and was repeating some of the complimentary remarks the latter had earned the evening before when glancing around the room she caught a number of eyes quickly turning away. There was no doubt that the girls were discussing her; in a little while she saw one of the girls beckon to Miss Cassidy and whisper something in her ear. Then shrugging her shoulders, Miss Cassidy returned to her seat and whispered: "You will pardon me, Miss Williams, but somebody should tell you that several of the girls in the store have received anonymous postal cards this morning saying that—that you are not a white woman."

Alice's answer was merely to grow deathly pale. Then she asked:

"That is why they have been staring at me so?"

"Yes, but you mustn't mind them. There isn't the slightest sign of negro blood about you; it's somebody jealous about the dance, that's all. I deny it for you."

"No, Miss Cassidy," protested Alice weakly, "I would prefer if you would say nothing at all about it."

"But, my dear girl, when you have been in this store as long as I have you will know that the only way to take a scandal here is to throttle it."

"But if it,—suppose it isn't a slander?"

"You—you—don't mean to tell me, Miss Williams, that you—that—!"

"Yes, Miss Cassidy."

"Hush, you mustn't say that; you don't know what it means to us here."

"I think I do, Miss Cassidy."

"The girls will be rude to you. Just deny it; I'll keep your secret. If it gets known I am afraid you will have to leave the department."

"I shall be sorry to do that. Will you say then that I will not speak of it to anybody—for to-day at least? Will you—?"

"I'll defy anybody to mention it to you. It's a ridiculous piece of malice, that's all."

"Thank you. I think I'll go back to the counter now. I can't stand the girls taking these shy looks at me."

She went back and busied herself with the customers and for a while succeeded in taking her mind away from the other girls. She attempted to speak to none of them and they seemed by common consent to avoid any conversation. But at length the suspense began to tell on her; she had not eaten anything at noon, and every time a cash girl or the floor-walker approached her, she was terrified lest it might be a summons to the office; then at the thought of Jim staring in her face, her heart sank within her.

At last she could bear it no longer. She went quietly for her hat and coat and stole out of the store. The cable-car, comparatively empty, the cheerful sunlight of the early afternoon, gave her a sense of novelty. Reaching the apartment house, she rang the bell so as not to startle her mother by returning unannounced at that hour; the front door opened and she started to climb the narrow stairs.

If Aunt Lizzie standing at the landing was surprised to see her, Alice herself was no less astonished to find her mother dressed as for a journey in the faded brown bonnet and the fringed dolman she had inherited from Miss Mary Stuyvesant. One look into the rooms explained everything; on the floor were the old satchel and hand-valise; Miss Stuy-

vesant's and the Lieutenant's portraits were gone from the wall; Alice's baby cup and saucer had disappeared from the mantel.

Tears streamed down Aunt Lizzie's face as she stood in the doorway looking weak and very aged in her ancient finery.

"Mammy," cried Alice with one great sob, throwing her arms around her, "you must let me go too."

Shortly after six o'clock Jim reared the apartment house and kept his finger on the electric button without receiving any reply. Why Alice should have left so early he could not understand and as he stood wondering whether he should ring again, the front door of the apartment house opened and a young West Indian of impressive appearance made his way to the street. Jim accosted him:

"Nobody seems to answer the Williams' bell," he said; "can you tell me if they are in?"

The West Indian smiled in an affected way and replied:

"They have been passing for white folks but the other tenants discovered that Miss Williams was a negress and she was requested to leave the apartments at once. They haven't left any clue behind them that I can discover. Perhaps you will find Miss Williams at Wanameyer's."—Roderick Gill in the Rosary Magazine.

ness, idleness to loss of courage, lost of courage to despair—or may be dissipation—and the end is the poor-house.

Then, again, if there is not exactly a lack of proper vocation, or of aptitudes in some instances, there is a great lack of room. The professions are becoming over-crowded and the result is that only a few can succeed and the majority are driven to the wall. As far as concerns the legal profession in this province, for example, the swarm of young lawyers that comes forth yearly, and the swarm of students admitted to study, have become a veritable menace. Were there not a single lawyer admitted to the practice for the next five years we would still have too many, because there would still be some obliged to abandon the profession in order to try and make a living by some other means. To-day we have a multitude of lawyers in the ranks of journalism, in the civil service, in stores, offices, and upon the highway almost begging for alms. It cannot be perpetually the case that incompetency, or lack of aptitude, causes this misery. We fancy that the over-crowding of the profession, like the overcrowding of the street cars, exposes many to be crushed.

The practical conclusion to which we come, in all this, is that there should be more care taken by parents in regard to their children's selecting positions or vocations in the world. There should be a calm consideration as to the likes, dislikes, aptitudes, and qualifications of the child or young man. Above all there should be a more widespread consideration for the less glittering, but more useful spheres of life. Our agricultural, commercial and financial fields demand a great degree of tilling, and the young men of the hour are too crazy about politics, journalism, law and medicine, to bestir themselves in the direction of more needed spheres of action.

It is certainly very pitiful to find men of university training and professional acquisitions reduced to the necessity of eking out a livelihood by furnishing materials for success to those more fortunate and living and dying, themselves, in the alms house and in the society of men with whom they can have nothing, but misery, in common. And it is also very sad to find so many medical students in the professions who are willing to advance upon the lives of their less fortunate fellow-beings; but it seems that such has always been the case in the world, for as Moore gives it:

"In the woods of the north, there are insects that prey

On the brains of the elk, till his very last sigh,

Oh! genius! thy patron's more cruel than they,

First feed on thy brains and then leave thee to die."

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