

**THE ELDEST**

There were six of them, the eldest aged eleven years. They were gentlefolks, of ancient lineage, but deadly poor; patched and outgrown clothes bearing full testimony to this sad circumstance, if other proof were needed than the fact that they lived in a tall, narrow house in a poor neighborhood, dirty of doorstep, dull of knocker and letter-box.

It is true that sometimes, after dark, the Eldest would surreptitiously "rub up" the greenish-colored metal, too often looked as if it had for days been immersed in the worst of London fogs, when once again the idea of brass was suggested to the beholder, whose eye, ungratefully but involuntarily, would be encouraged to rove over the whole house front in careless expectancy of something moderately attractive. But the brass was not too often subjected to this feverishly administered massage, for the Eldest was shrewdly aware that perfection of cleanliness in this one small matter, which was all she could contrive, would but render her smeary window-cleaning and that bugbear, the doorstep, the more noticeable by contrast.

It was only when, coming home tired in the evening from his long day in the city, or setting forth somewhat wearily in the morning to resume his endless toil, her father's chance glance rested on the neglected appointments of his front door—and the words "that looks disgraceful" fell upon the shrinking ears of his sensitive little daughter—leather and paste were brought into requisition once more.

Martha, the one maidservant, to give her due, "did" the steps every morning in broad daylight, unblushing and in curl papers; and had the family consisted only of the Eldest, her father and the fond but unpractical little mother, who seldom went out, Martha's daily attack would have kept the steps quite presentable. But between the Eldest and her baby sister were four unruly boys, which cause of "red eye" and embarrassment offers full explanation of many things.

Mrs. Desborough, who had married at seventeen, was not but at an age when more affluent young women enjoy youthful pleasures, and are still designated "girls." She was born "in the lap of luxury," and on the day that she took Philip Desborough "for richer, for poorer," no one among the wedding guests had dreamed how very much "for poorer," so far as money was concerned, it was to prove. Within two years of their marriage, Philip Desborough, through no fault of his own, had lost all the worldly goods with which he had endowed his wife. But when poverty came in at the door, love did not so much as glance at the window. Nothing could dispossess their hearts of the love they bore one to the other, nor rob them of the deep happiness they found in their children. Good health, too, had always attended them, so that the wife retained much of the cheerfulness natural to her age and disposition, while the husband, though too often careworn and depressed, being indeed burdened with anxiety, was yet in the main courageous and hopeful.

It was upon the eldest that poverty sat heaviest—it was her strenuous little nature that it most overtaxed. To her mother a small house meant so necessarily a want of cleanliness, an ill-furnished larder, a slatternly maidservant. She openly acknowledged her utter inability to cope with these somewhat squalid conditions, her forte being the ordering of order ready-made, so to say. But the eldest, albeit the child had known no life other than one of struggle and privation, felt an ever-present sense of shame and dissatisfaction that her father, with the refined features and noble bearing of his race, should fare no better than the obscure clerk and his family opposite.

It was torture to this very much disguised princess to witness occasional meetings between this same clerk and her father, and see the two continue their walk down the street together, even while her nice perception told her that the one looked like a prince, despite his shabbiness, and the other, though perhaps the better dressed of the two, still a clerk.

Then there were the two vulgar, showy daughters of a retired butcher, named Jones—girls of some twelve and fourteen years respectively, who lived in the big house at the corner, and who said "nursemaid," in a very loud whisper, when they met the Eldest pushing her baby sister in the perambulator, and giggled on Sundays when the Eldest had on her best hat.

There was one family dwelling in the long gaunt street with whom the Eldest felt deep sympathy, a family not unlike her own, she thought, in number and circumstances, with nice-looking but seldom seen parents, the little tribe of children being generally marshalled by a somewhat wearily-looking girl of about her own age.

The two children would steal a quick glance at one another in passing, the Eldest bringing all her power of observation—no small amount—to bear in the one brief look. Soon timid smiles were exchanged; they came a day when they spoke.

The first time, the Eldest, with a great effort and a fast beating heart, merely remarked that it was very cold, to which the other agreed, with a little shy shiver, and strove to pull the sleeves of her outgrown jacket over her red little wrists.

Upon the second occasion the Eldest inquired whether the baby in the perambulator was a girl or a boy, mentioning at the same time that hers was a girl.

At the third encounter she ascertained that between this chance acquaintance and herself there was involved reason for the mutual liking.

"Are you the eldest?" she had asked.

"Yes," the other had replied, "are you?" and the Eldest nodded.

"What a miserable looking girl that is who passes here so often," Mrs. Desborough once observed to her daughter. It was of the child's new acquaintance that she spoke.

"I don't think she is unhappy, but she is an Eldest," the other made answer, simply.

"What do you mean, dear?" the mother asked, somewhat absent-mindedly, mildly puzzled.

"She is the eldest of the family," her daughter amended, and the opening of the door and the beckoning of a grimy finger, belonging to Martha, the maid, saved her from the possible embarrassment of further explanation.

It was a full hard life, being the Eldest; but it had its privileges and compensations. It was a great joy to be capable of helping father and mother, thus saving the serious expanse of a second servant, as undoubtedly she did. Then it repaid the Eldest for many an unsuspected little sacrifice and for much really hard work when her sweet young mother kissed her more warmly than was her wont and said she was a great help. And then her father, her dearly loved father, would sometimes call her a "little brick"—the heart of the Eldest would glow for days after that.

But when the children were intractable or disobedient, and when her mother would reproach her before them for not, as the Eldest, having more authority over them, it was very hard. And when the baker's and butcher's bills were heavy, and her mother's pretty eyes were red after laborious poring over them, the Eldest's little heart would ache with compassion, and she would have given much to be as carelessly happy as the younger ones, who never noticed mother's eyes, and who did not worry about old or untidy times of grief and humiliation when some untoward circumstances caused the Eldest to reflect upon her own little life and the rights and wrongs of it. Not that she claimed any rights, even to herself, and she certainly would never have entertained so disloyal a thought as that she was wronged in any way.

But there were periods when she could not help wistfully wishing that the others might take it in turn to be the eldest, so that she could occasionally go to school to learn something; that she might not live in perpetual fear of her ignorance being discovered, as it once was, by a terrible but well-meaning old gentleman, who called upon her mother, and who, after admiring the children, began to play a horrible sort of game—the hearing of a spelling class—in which the Eldest, as the eldest, was given the most difficult words and was put to shame before the younger ones. That night the child had cried herself to sleep; and since then many a leisure moment had been devoted to learning spelling from any odd book or newspaper she could find.

And it was a newspaper that ended it all, ended this uncongenial, unnatural life, unfitting for all concerned, from the aristocratic young father down to the beautiful baby girl.

One dark morning, in the depth of winter, at about seven o'clock, the Eldest entered the kitchen to find Martha somewhat distracted, and very eager to avail herself of the child's proffered aid.

"I've overslept myself," the handmaid hurriedly announced, "and if you'd see to the dining-room fire and lay the cloth, you'd help me fine, and breakfast won't be so late after all. Do, there's a love."

The Eldest considered a moment. "If the wood is dry I daresay I can manage it, while the water for the children is heating in here," she said.

"But I must go back to them as soon as it is hot. You see, first I have to wash the three separately, and then I have to give Cyril and Clause my opinion on the way they have washed."

"Give the baby to your ma to dress else you'll never get done," said the sympathetic Martha, bustling about with an enormous smut upon her nose.

"I would not think of it," the Eldest returned, warmly. "Mother was tired out last night. I shall take her breakfast up."

The child then proceeded to collect paper, wood and coal, and making her way briskly to the dining-room, set about her task. The wood was damp, and her stiffened fingers seemed to have lost their deftness. In despair she seized the morning's newspaper, and kneeling down held the large sheet across the fireplace in the vain endeavor to create a draught.

While thus employed, she fell to studying the advertisements while she breathed upon the numb digits of her disengaged hand. Then suddenly her attention was arrested, her little crouching form became tense, rigid; her very breathing seemed suspended! Presently she shook herself, rubbed

**DOES YOUR HEAD**

**Feel As Though It Was Being Hammered?**  
**As Though It Would Crack Open?**  
**As Though a Million Sparks Were Flying Out of Your Eyes?**  
**Horrible Sickens of Your Stomach?**  
**Then You Have Sick Headache!**

**BURDOCK BLOOD BITTERS**

Will afford relief from headaches no matter whether due, nervous, spasmodic, periodical or bilious. It cures by removing the cause.  
 Mr. Samuel J. Hibbard, Belleville, Ont., writes: "Last spring I was very poorly, my appetite failed me, I felt weak and nervous, had sick headaches, was tired all the time and not able to work. I saw Burdock Blood Bitters recommended for just such a case so I bought and I got two bottles of it, and found it to be an excellent blood medicine. You may see my name as I think that others should know of the wonderful merits of Burdock Blood Bitters."

**People in the Country**  
 and small towns have got to consider fire—and take every precaution in building homes. Fireproof is an attractive feature of

**Metal Walls and Ceilings**

If the stove explodes, or lamp overturns, or curtains blaze up—the fire is confined to the room where it starts, because the Metal Walls and Ceilings are absolutely fireproof, and prevent fire from spreading.

**METAL SHINGLES** will protect your buildings from lightning—they are rain and snow proof—are guaranteed lightning proof—and will last for 50 years.

Find out more about Metal Building Materials. A richly illustrated catalogue mailed free if you state what you have in mind and mention this paper.

**METAL SHINGLE & SIDING CO., Limited, Preston, Ont.**

her eyes, and looked round the poor room in a dazed fashion. She was about to search, with incredulous eyes and trembling fingers, for the paragon, from which, in the first moment of amazement they had strayed, when a tongue of flame licked her hands and she was fain to crush the sheets of paper and stuff them under the grate.

Mechanically she prepared the breakfast table with the neatness natural to her, and then, returning to the kitchen, provided herself with hot water and made her way to the nursery. All through the washing and dressing of the children the Eldest was in a state of bewildered excitement. But one thought at least was definite—she must somehow obtain another newspaper. It was Saturday she remembered, and her father, beyond a casual glance at matters of public interest, often left the more thorough perusal of the day's intelligence to the long hours of Sunday. He might not even ask for the paper this morning.

It was as she hoped. The absence of the paper was noted by Mr. Desborough, whose thoughts were distracted by interests much nearer home than any its printed sheets could contain. He left the house immediately after the morning meal, and presently the Eldest, on the pretext of going marketing, set forth in feverish haste for the nearest news agent's.

She bought the paper and began her breathless search in a quiet by-street. She would have liked to avail herself of the counter in the shop, for the large sheets were difficult to manage in the wind, but there were other customers, and here, at least, she was alone.

And—yes, her eyes had not deceived her! There it was again!

"If Philip d'Arcy Desborough will communicate with Messrs. Marsham & Reeves, solicitors, 315 Chancery Lane, W.C., he will learn something to his advantage."

The Eldest folded her paper and drew a deep breath. Her mind began busily to speculate. Perhaps that hard old Aunt Lavinia had died in a softened mood and left all her money to Philip d'Arcy Desborough, his wife and such children as they possessed. The eldest considered that such must be the wording of the will, as Aunt Lavinia knew too little of the nephew toward whom she had thus suddenly become tender and solicitous to be aware of the exact number of his family, or, indeed, whether he had any family at all.

The child quickly decided upon the course to pursue. Her father must not be allowed to incur the risk of bitter disappointment; he was not very strong, he took things very much to heart, his daughter argued. She would go to Chancery Lane; she would learn the truth, and if—it was all a mistake, all unfounded, she could tell him so, quietly and soothingly. If, on the other hand—her little heart beat wildly, her breath came short. She glanced about her. Which way ought she to set forth? Chancery Lane might be very far; London was so vast, so wide. She inquired of a passing tradesman. At first he stared as if in much amazement—the Eldest thought it a bad sign—then he said if she was really wanting to get there she could not do better than take the dark green "bus at the corner of — street.

Thanking him in her courteous little way, the child walked rapidly to the street mentioned and decided that she could not go astray if she followed the direction of the dark green omnibuses—she would not be so extravagant as to ride in one! Already she had spent a penny of the marketing money on a second newspaper, and if this exciting advertisement proved to mean nothing, the disappointment would be enhanced for all of them if money had been expended upon this her vain pursuit of wealth.

Evidently Chancery Lane was a busy place and thickly populated; for it rarely chanced, when her eye could no longer follow one omnibus, that she had to wait long for another such rumbling, top-heavy looking guide. On she sped, excitement lending wings to her feet. She took no heed of the gathering clouds nor of the rain that presently fell in heavy smoke-discolored drops. But it must have been nigh upon two hours later when a bedraggled little figure, spent and weary, wet through, presented itself in the outer office of No. 315 Chancery Lane.

"I should like to see Messrs. Marsham & Reeves, Solicitors," she announced, addressing a young man who came forward to receive her.

She made a somewhat pathetic little picture as she stood there, clutching the sopping newspaper in her hand, her beautiful little face pale with emotion and fatigue—her shabby but picturesque clothes, obviously all too thin and worn for protection against the cold and wet—the long curls of dark chestnut hair heavy with rain. The clerk stared, as naturally he might.

"What is your business?" he asked at length, politely enough.

"It is rather private," the Eldest returned, with easy confidence. "I should prefer to see the solicitors."

She added, with quiet dignity, "if they are alone."

"I don't think you can see them,"

began the puzzled young man, glancing toward the half-open door of an inner room.

The child's face grew paler. "Oh, I must see them, I must!" she cried, the clear, cultured little voice unconsciously raised on her distress. "I must see them. It is so important, a—I have come so far."

"Show her in," said a voice from the inner chamber.

The young man strode to the door. "It's only a poor child, sir," he remarked, deferentially, with, however, a lack of assurance in his undertone.

"Show her in," the voice repeated.

The young man signed to the child, who entered quickly, and the door was closed behind her. She found herself in a large, handsomely furnished apartment, with more of the private library than office about it. She bowed slightly to its only occupant, a middle-aged man with iron gray hair and shrewd, kind eyes; then advanced quickly with outstretched hand.

"It is very good of you to see me," she began; "are you Mr. Marsham or Mr. Reeves?"

"My name is James Marsham," he returned, politely, taking the proffered hand and striving to conceal any amusement or surprise that he might feel. "May I ask why you wanted to see me?"

"I have come to communicate with you about Philip d'Arcy Desborough. I want to learn about the something to his advantage," the Eldest explained, keeping strictly to the text of the advertisement, as being likely to prove most ready to the comprehension of a solicitor. "See," she added, placing before him the soaked newspaper, and pointing with shaking finger to the words.

Mr. Marsham's amazement and interest in his small client grew momentarily deeper.

"Then who are you, my—little lady?" he asked, regarding the child more observantly, noting the small, shapely hands, the refined beauty of the delicate features, and—the very, very shabby clothes.

"I am his eldest daughter," she made answer, with modest pride. "I am Pauline d'Arcy Desborough."

There was a pause.

"Your father is to be congratulated," Mr. Marsham returned, "if, indeed, he proves to be the right man of that name—it is a very handsome fortune. But may I ask why he allowed a little girl like you—what is the matter, my dear?" He broke off abruptly and sprang to his feet.

The Eldest had suddenly seated herself and turned very white. For a few moments the room grew dark, so dark that even the kind face that was bent over her faded away as she gazed at it. Then she dimly heard the clink of glass against glass, and was vaguely aware that the kindly solicitor was holding wine to her lips.

"Drink it, my dear," he was saying, "the excitement has been too much for you, and—bless me, what is this? The child is soaked through!"

As she roused herself to take the wine Mr. Marsham slipped the cloak from her shoulders and gently removed her hat. These he placed before the fire to dry and proceeding to furnish with numerous cushions the easiest chair that the room afforded, bade the child rest herself. Then sounding a little bell that stood upon his writing table, he told the clerk who answered the summons to send for some sandwiches. The food was quickly brought, and the Eldest fell to with avidity.

"I was rather tired and hungry,"

**USED MEN AT THE OFFICE UP AND TIRED OUT**  
**WOMEN IN THE HOME CHILDREN AT SCHOOL**

Every day in the week and every week in the year men, women and children feel all used up and tired out.

The strain of business, the cares of home and social life and the task of study cause terrible suffering from heart and nerve troubles. The efforts put forth to keep up to the modern "high pressure" mode of life in this age soon wears out the strongest system, shatters the nerves and weakens the heart. Thousands find life a burden and others an early grave. The strain on the system causes nervousness, palpitation of the heart, nervous prostration, sleeplessness, faints and dizzy spells, skip beats, weak and irregular pulse, smothering and sinking spells, etc. The blood becomes weak and watery and eventually causes decline.

**Milburn's Heart and Nerve Pills**

are indicated for all diseases arising from a weak and debilitated condition of the heart or of the nerve centres. Mrs. Thos. Hall, Kildon, Ont., writes: "For the past two or three years I have been troubled with nervousness and heart failure, and the doctors failed to give me any relief. I decided at last to give Milburn's Heart and Nerve Pills a trial, and I would not now be without them if they cost twice as much. I have recommended them to my neighbors and friends."

Milburn's Heart and Nerve Pills 50 cts. per box or 3 for \$1.25. All dealers, or The T. Milburn Co., Limited, Toronto, Ont.

**GOLD MEDAL FOR ALE AND PORTER**

**AWARDED JOHN LABATT AT ST. LOUIS EXHIBITION, 1904**

**'THE GENUINE ARTICLE'**

If there was a hall mark 18 or 22 karat fine to distinguish between the different grades of bread, don't you think

**Tomlin's Bread**

Would be hall marked. Well, it would, if a critical but generous public could place the stamp thereon—they have classed it now as the best and proved it by giving the preference daily.

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**THE DOMINION BREWERY CO., Limited**  
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**White Label Ale**  
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**HOUSEKEEPERS**

See that you are well supplied with

**EDDY'S WARES**

And you will escape a great deal of annoyance, you would otherwise experience with a "2 in 1" or a "3 in 1"

**WASHBOARD**  
 AND AN

**EDDY**

**FIBRE TUB and PAIL**

Your washday labor can be reduced to a minimum and your comfort correspondingly enhanced.

**JOSEPH E. SEAGRAM**  
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DISTILLER OF

**FINE WHISKEYS**

BRANDS

**83**

**WHITE WHEAT**

TORONTO OFFICE 30 WELLINGTON EAST  
 C. T. MEAD, AGENT

she explained presently. "The walk was a long one, five or six miles, I should think, and I don't believe I had any breakfast."

"Why not?" Mr. Marsham asked, somewhat bluntly.

"I don't think I wanted any," she rejoined, simply. "I was thinking too much of the something to his advantage, you know. Besides, Claude's egg was musty, and I have him mine," she added, with sudden recollection. "He and Cyril go to school; they must have a good meal."

Mr. Marsham regarded the daughter of Philip d'Arcy Desborough as she sat very much at ease among the cushions in his armchair, steadfastly returning his gaze with large, grave eyes. The color was stealing back to her face—she was wistfully pretty, he thought. His own little daughter, had she lived, would have been about her age.

"Tell me," he said, gently, after a pause, "why did not your father write, or call himself, concerning this business?"

"He does not know about it," the Eldest explained, eagerly. "I—I thought I would find out the truth so as to save him from being terribly disappointed if—it somehow came to nothing."

And she related at length how it chanced that she saw the advertisement of the newspaper; and how she had followed the dark green omnibuses till she had at last arrived at the office of Messrs. Marsham & Reeves, Solicitors.

"And do you know," she ended with a little sigh of comfort and satisfaction, "you are not a bit what I thought a solicitor would be. I don't know Mr. Reeves, of course, but you are not a bit like one. I have always had a dread of solicitors—as a class," she amended, quickly, fearing to have hurt Mr. Marsham's feelings. The solicitor in question looked much amused despite his concern for the brave little girl.

"But your brothers," he pursued, "could not one of them have saved you this—"

"Oh, I am the Eldest," she interposed, hastening to vindicate the absent. "Besides, I don't go to school!"

she added, with another and sadder little sigh. "But about the fortune," she continued, "it must have been either Aunt Lavinia or Uncle Hubert. I could judge better which of them it was who left it to father if you could tell me the amount of it—by the year, you know."

Mr. Marsham succeeded fairly well in keeping his countenance.

"Let me ask one question before answering you," he said. "Where do, or did, these relations live?"

"Shropshire," the Eldest made answer without an instant's hesitation. "There are two great country seats belonging to the d'Arcy Desboroughs in Shropshire—seats are extra big houses, as I daresay you know—and Aunt Lavinia lives in one and Uncle Hubert in the other, and they hate each other. Do you know which has died?" she asked, anxiously.

"Aunt Lavinia," said Mr. Marsham.

The Eldest was about to speak, when the clock upon the mantelpiece struck twelve. She sprang up in dismay.

"I must go," she said, beginning to wrap the still damp cloak about her. "It takes two hours—the walk—and I have not done the marketing yet! Oh, dear, what will mother think!"

Mr. Marsham rose also. "You must not put on that damp cloak," he said, decidedly. "One of my clerks shall take you home in a cab—and this will serve to keep you warm."

"It is a spare one," he added, in answer to her remonstrance.

"Do you mean you have another?" she asked, suspiciously. "Or do the two hanging there belong to Mr. Reeves?"

"One is his, but I keep two here," explained Mr. Marsham, turning away and pulling at his moustache. Then he rang the bell. "Call a cab," he said to the young man who attended.

"I am sorry not to have seen Mr. Reeves," the Eldest remarked, politely, fastening on her hat. "I suppose he is interviewing some one else. Did you say a clerk was to go with me?" she asked, wistfully. "I should so much, much rather you came yourself."

(Concluded on page 7.)