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*And so they were married*

Florence Morse Kingsley

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**And So They Were Married**

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"It isn't your husband's place to do your work and his own, too, my dear" (p. 126)

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## **And So They Were Married**

*By*

**Florence Morse Kingsley**

Author of "Titus," "The  
Singular Miss Smith," "The  
Resurrection of Miss Cynthia"

**With Illustrations**

**By W. B. King**

**New York**

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[Pg 1]

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## **CONTENTS**

[CHAPTER I](#)  
[CHAPTER II](#)  
[CHAPTER III](#)  
[CHAPTER IV](#)  
[CHAPTER V](#)  
[CHAPTER VI](#)

## CHAPTER I

Dr. North's wife, attired in her dressing-gown and slippers, noiselessly tilted the shutter of the old-fashioned inside blind and peered cautiously out. The moon was shining splendidly in the dark sky, and the empty street seemed almost as light as day. It had been snowing earlier in the evening, Mrs. North observed absent-mindedly, and the clinging drifts weighed the dark evergreens on either side of the gate almost to the ground. A dog barked noisily from his kennel in a neighbouring yard, and a chorus of answering barks acknowledged the signal; some one was coming along the moonlit street. There were two figures, as Mrs. North had expected; she craned her plump neck anxiously forward as the gate clicked and a light girlish laugh floated up on the frosty air.

"Dear, dear!" she murmured, "I do hope Bessie will come right into the house. It is too cold to stand outside talking." [Pg 2]

Apparently the young persons below did not think so. They stood in the bright moonlight in full view of the anxious watcher behind the shutter, the man's tall figure bent eagerly toward the girl, whose delicate profile Mrs. North could see distinctly under the coquettish sweep of the broad hat-brim.

"The child ought to have worn her high overshoes," she was thinking, when she was startled by the vision of the tall, broad figure stooping over the short, slight one.

Then the key clicked in the lock and the front door opened softly; the sound was echoed by the closing gate, as the tall figure tramped briskly away over the creaking snow. The neighbour's dog barked again, perfunctorily this time, as if acknowledging the entire respectability of the passer-by; all the other dogs in town responded in kind, and again there was silence broken only by the sound of a light foot on the carpeted stair. [Pg 3]

Mrs. North opened her door softly. "Is that you, Bessie?"

"Yes, mother."

"Isn't it very late, child?"

"It is only half past eleven."

"Did Louise go with you?"

"No, mother; she had a sore throat, and it was snowing; so her aunt wouldn't allow her to go."

"Oh!" Mrs. North's voice expressed a faint disapproval.

"Of course we couldn't help it; besides, all the other girls were there just with their escorts. You and grandma are so—old-fashioned. I'm sure I don't see why I always have to have some other girl along—and Louise Glenny of all persons! I couldn't help being just a little bit glad that she couldn't go."

"Did you have a nice time, dear?"

The girl turned a radiant face upon her mother. "Oh, we had a *lovely* time!" she murmured. "I'll tell you about it to-morrow. Is father home?"

"Yes; he came in early to-night and went right to bed. I hope the telephone bell won't ring again before morning." [Pg 4]

The girl laughed softly. "You might take off the receiver," she suggested. "Poor daddy!"

"Oh, no; I couldn't do that. Your father would never forgive me. But I told him not to have it on his mind; I'll watch out for it and answer it, and if it's Mrs. Salter again with one of her imaginary sinking spells I'm going to tell her the doctor won't be in before six in the morning. I do hope it isn't wrong to deceive that much; but your father isn't made of iron, whatever some people may think."

The girl laughed again, a low murmur of joy. "Good-night, dear little mother," she said caressingly. "You are always watching and waiting for some one; aren't you? But you needn't have worried about *me*." She stooped and kissed her mother, her eyes shining like stars; then hurried away to hide the blush which swept her face and neck.

"Dear, dear!" sighed Mrs. North, as she crept back to her couch drawn close to the muffled telephone, "I suppose I ought to have spoken to her father before this; but he is always so busy; I hardly have time to say two words to him. Besides, he thinks Bessie is only a child, and he would [Pg 5]

have laughed at me."

The girl was taking off her hat and cloak in her own room. How long ago it seemed since she had put them on. She smoothed out her white gloves with caressing fingers. "I shall always keep them," she thought. She was still conscious of his first kisses, and looked in her glass, as if half expecting to see some visible token of them.

"I am so happy—so happy!" she murmured to the radiant reflection which smiled back at her from out its shadowy depths. She leaned forward and touched the cold smooth surface with her lips in a sudden passion of gratitude for the fair, richly tinted skin, the large bright eyes with their long curling lashes, the masses of brown waving hair, and the pliant beauty of the strong young figure in the mirror.

"If I had been freckled and stoop-shouldered and awkward, like Louise Glenny, he *couldn't* have loved me," she was thinking. [Pg 6]

She sank to her knees after awhile and buried her face in the coverlid of her little bed. But she could think only of the look in his eyes when he had said "I love you," and of the thrilling touch of his lips on hers. She crept into bed and lay there in a wide-eyed rapture, while the village clock struck one, and after a long, blissful hour, two. Then she fell asleep, and did not hear the telephone bell which called her tired father from his bed in the dim, cold hour between three and four.

She was still rosiely asleep and dreaming when Mrs. North came softly into the room in the broad sunlight of the winter morning.

"Isn't Lizzie awake yet?" inquired a brisk voice from the hall. "My, *my!* but girls are idle creatures nowadays!"

The owner of the voice followed this dictum with a quick patter of softly shod feet.

"I didn't like to call her, mother," apologised Mrs. North. "She came in late, and——"

Grandmother Carroll pursed up her small, wise mouth. "I heard her," she said, "and that young man with her. I don't know, daughter, but what we ought to inquire into his prospects and character a little more carefully, if he's to be allowed to come here so constant. Lizzie's very young, and——" [Pg 7]

"Oh, grandma!" protested a drowsy voice from the pillows; "I'm twenty!"

"Twenty; yes, I know you're twenty, my dear; quite old enough, I should say, to be out of bed before nine in the morning."

"It wasn't her fault, mother; I didn't call her."

The girl was gazing at the two round matronly figures at the foot of the bed, her laughing eyes grown suddenly serious. "I'll get up at once," she said with decision, "and I'll eat bread and milk for breakfast; I sha'n't mind."

"She's got something on her mind," whispered Mrs. North to her mother, as the two pattered softly downstairs.

"I shouldn't wonder," responded Grandmother Carroll briskly. "Girls of her age are pretty likely to have, and I mistrust but what that young Bowser may have been putting notions into her head. I hope you'll be firm with her, daughter; she's much too young for anything of that sort." [Pg 8]

"You were married when you were eighteen, mother; and I was barely twenty, you know."

"I was a very different girl at eighteen from what Lizzie is," Mrs. Carroll said warmly. "She's been brought up differently. In my time healthy girls didn't lie in bed till ten o'clock. Many and many's the time I've danced till twelve o'clock and been up in the morning at five 'tending to my work. You indulge Lizzie too much; and if that young Bixler——"

"His name is Brewster, mother; don't you remember? and they say he comes of a fine old Boston family."

"Well, Brewster or Bixler; it will make no difference to Lizzie, you'll find. I've been watching her for more than a month back, and I'll tell you, daughter, when a girl like Lizzie offers to eat bread and milk for breakfast you can expect almost anything. Her mind is on other things. I'll never forget the way you ate a boiled egg for breakfast every morning for a week—and you couldn't bear eggs—about the time the doctor was getting serious. I mistrusted there was something to pay, and I wasn't mistaken." [Pg 9]

Mrs. North sighed vaguely. Then her tired brown eyes lighted up with a smile. "I had letters from both the boys this morning," she said; "don't you want to read them, mother? Frank has passed all his mid-year examinations, and Elliot says he has just made the 'varsity gym' team."

"Made the *what?*"

"I don't quite understand myself," acknowledged Mrs. North; "but that's what he said. He said he'd have his numerals to show us when he came home Easter."

"Hum!" murmured Mrs. Carroll dubiously; "I'm sure I hope he won't break his neck in any foolish

way. Did he say anything about his lessons?"

"Not much; he never was such a student as Frank; but he'll do well, mother."

[Pg 10]

Elizabeth North, fresh as a dewy rose and radiant with her new happiness, came into the room just as Mrs. Carroll folded the last sheet of the college letters. "I'll ask Lizzie," she said. "Lizzie, what is a g-y-m team?"

"Oh, grandma!" protested the girl, "*please* don't call me *Lizzie*. Bessie is bad enough; but *Lizzie*! I always think of that absurd old Mother Goose rhyme, 'Elizabeth, Lizzie, Betsey and Bess, all went hunting to find a bird's nest'; and, besides, you promised me you wouldn't."

"Lizzie was a good enough name for your mother," said grandma briskly. "Your father courted and married her under that name, and he didn't mind." Her keen old eyes behind their shining glasses dwelt triumphantly on the girl's changing colour. "You needn't tell *me*!" she finished irrelevantly.

But Elizabeth had possessed herself of the letters, and was already deep in a laughing perusal of Elliot's scrawl. "Oh, how splendid!" she cried; "he's made the Varsity, on his ring work, too!"

[Pg 11]

"I don't pretend to understand what particular *work* Elliot is referring to," observed grandma, with studied mildness. "Is it some sort of mathematics?"

Elizabeth sprang up and flung both arms about the smiling old lady. "You dear little hypocritical grandma!" she said; "you know perfectly well that it isn't any study at all, but just gymnastic work—all sorts of stunts, swinging on rings and doing back and front levers and shoulder stands and all that sort of thing. Elliot has such magnificent muscles he can do anything, and better than any one else, and that's why he's on the varsity, you see!"

"Thank you, Elizabeth," said grandma tranquilly. "I'd entirely forgotten that young men don't go to college now to study their lessons. My memory is certainly getting poor."

"No, grandma dear; it isn't. You remember everything a thousand times better than any one else, and what is more, you know it. But of course Elliot studies; he has to. Mr. Brewster says he thinks Elliot is one of the finest boys he knows. He thinks he would make a splendid engineer. He admires Frank, too, immensely, and——"

[Pg 12]

"What does the young man think of Elizabeth?" asked Mrs. Carroll with a wise smile.

"He—oh, grandma; I—didn't mean to tell just yet; but he—I——"

"There, there, child! Better go and find your mother. I mistrust she's getting you a hot breakfast." She drew the girl into her soft old arms and kissed her twice.

Elizabeth sprang up all in a lovely flame of blushes and ran out of the room.

[Pg 13]

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## CHAPTER II

When Samuel Herrick Brewster, B.S. and Civil Engineer, late of the Massachusetts School of Technology, came to Innisfield for the purpose of joining the corps of engineers already at work on a new and improved system of water-works, he had not the slightest intention of falling seriously in love. By "seriously" Sam Brewster himself might have told you—as he told his married sister living in Saginaw, Mich., and anxiously solicitous of the young man's general well-being—that he meant that sort and quality of affection which would naturally and inevitably lead a man into matrimony. He had always been fond of the society of pretty and amiable women, and well used to it, too. His further ideas with regard to matrimony, though delightfully vague in their general character, were sufficiently clear-cut and decided in one important particular, which he had been careful to expound at length to those impetuous undergraduates of his fraternity who had appeared to need friendly counsel from their elders. "A man," said young Brewster, conclusively, "has no business to marry till he can feel solid ground under his feet. He should be thoroughly established in his profession, and well able to pay the shot."

[Pg 14]

When this sapient young gentleman first met Elizabeth North at a picnic given by the leading citizens of Innisfield to celebrate the completion of the new aqueduct he was disposed to regard her as a very nice, intelligent sort of a girl, with remarkably handsome brown eyes. On the occasion of his third meeting with the young lady he found himself, rather to his surprise, telling her about his successful work in the "Tech," and of how he hoped to "get somewhere" in his profession some day. Elizabeth in her turn had confided to him her disappointment in not being able to go to Wellesley, and her ambitious attempts to keep up with Marian Evans, who was in the Sophomore year, in literature and music. She played Chopin's Fantasia Impromptu for him on Mrs. North's garrulous old piano; and as her slender fingers twinkled over the yellow keys he caught himself wondering how much a first-class instrument would cost. In the course of a month he had fallen into the habit of strolling home with Elizabeth after church, and twice Mrs. North, in the kindness of her motherly heart, had asked him to dinner. She was afraid, she told Grandma Carroll, that the table board at Mrs. Bentwick's was none of the best. She spoke of him further as "that nice, good-looking boy," and hoped he wouldn't be too lonely in Innisfield, away from all his friends.

[Pg 15]

As for Dr. North, that overworked physician was seldom to be seen, being apparently in a chronic state of hastily and energetically climbing into his gig, and as energetically and hastily climbing out again. He had hurriedly shaken hands with young Brewster, and made him welcome to his house in one of the brief intervals between office hours and the ever-waiting gig, with its imperturbable brown horse, who appeared to know quite as well as the doctor where the sick were to be found. After that, it is fair to state, the worthy doctor had completely forgotten that such a person as Samuel Herrick Brewster, B.S., C.E. existed. One may judge therefore of his feelings when his wife chose a moment of relaxation between a carefully cooked dinner and an expected summons by telephone to acquaint him with the fact of their daughter's engagement.

[Pg 16]

"*Engaged?*" exclaimed the doctor, starting out of his chair. "Bess—engaged! Oh, I guess not. I sha'n't allow anything of the sort; she's nothing but a child, and as for this young fellow—what 'd you say his name was? We don't know him!"

"You don't, you mean, papa," his wife corrected him gently. "The rest of us have seen a good deal of Mr. Brewster, and I'm sure Bessie—"

"Now, mother, what made you? I wanted to tell daddy myself. Oh, daddy, he's the dearest person in the world!" Then as Elizabeth caught the hurt, bewildered look in her father's eyes she perched on his knee in the old familiar fashion. "It seems sudden—to you, I know," she murmured; "but really it isn't, daddy; as he will tell you if he can ever find you at home to talk to. Why, we've known each other since last summer!"

"I'm afraid I'm very stupid, child; but I don't believe I understand. You don't mean to tell me that you have been thinking of—of getting married and to a man I don't know even." Dr. North shook his head decidedly.

"But you do know him, daddy; he's been here ever so many times. Of course"—she added with a touch of laughing malice—"he's perfectly well, and you seldom notice well people, even when they're in your own family."

"I don't have time, Bess," admitted the doctor soberly, "there are too many of the other sort. But now about this young man—Brewster—eh? You have him come 'round in office hours, say, and I'll —"

"Now, daddy, *please* don't straighten out your mouth like that; it isn't a bit becoming. Naturally you've got the sweetest, kindest look in the world, and you mustn't spoil it, especially when you are talking about Sam."

[Pg 17]

The doctor pinched his daughter's pink ear. "I'm sorry to appear such an ogre," he said with a touch of grimness, "but I know too much about the world in general, and the business of getting married in particular, to allow my one daughter to go into it blindly. I'll be obliged to make the young man's further acquaintance, Bess, before we talk about an engagement."

The girl's scarlet lips were set in firm lines, which strongly resembled the paternal expression to which she had objected; she kissed her father dutifully. "I want you to get acquainted with him, daddy," she said sweetly; "but we *are* engaged."

That same afternoon Dr. North, looking worried and anxious after a prolonged conference with the village hypochondriac, who had come to the office fully charged with symptoms of a new and distinguished disease lately imported from Europe, found himself face to face with a tall, fresh-faced young man. This new visitor came into the office bringing with him a breath of the wintry air and a general appearance of breezy health which caused the hypochondriac to look up sourly in the act of putting on her rubbers.

[Pg 18]

"If that new medicine doesn't relieve that terrible feelin' in my epigastrium, doctor—an' I don't believe it's a-goin' to—I'll let you know," she remarked acidly. "You needn't be surprised to be called most any time between now an' mornin'; for, as I told Mr. Salter, I ain't a-goin' to suffer as I did last night for nobody."

"*Good*-afternoon, Mrs. Salter," said the doctor emphatically. "Now then, young man, what can I do for you?"

The young man in question coloured boyishly. "I shouldn't have ventured to call upon you during your office hours, Dr. North; but I understood from Elizabeth that you could be seen at no other time; so I'm here."

"Elizabeth—eh? Yes, yes; I see. I—er—didn't recall your face for the moment. Just come into my private office for a minute or two, Mr. Brewster; these—er—other patients will wait a bit, I fancy."

[Pg 19]



**"Oh, daddy, he's the dearest person in the world!"**

"Elizabeth—eh? Yes, yes; I see. I—er—didn't recall your face for the moment. Just come into my private office for a minute or two, Mr. Brewster; these—er—other patients will wait a bit, I fancy."

[Pg 20]

The worthy doctor handed his visitor a chair facing the light, which he further increased by impatiently shoving the shades to the top of the windows. Then he seated himself and stared keenly at the young engineer, who on his part bore the scrutiny with a sturdy self-possession which pleased the doctor in spite of himself.

"Elizabeth told you of our engagement, I believe, sir?"



**"I said to her that I couldn't and wouldn't consider an engagement between you at present!"**

"She told me something of the sort—yes," admitted the doctor testily. "I said to her that I couldn't and wouldn't consider an engagement between you at present. Did she tell you that?"

"I was told that you wished to make my further acquaintance. I should like, if you have the time, to tell you something about myself. You have the right to know."

The doctor nodded frowningly. "If you expect me—at any time in the future, you understand—to give you my only daughter, I certainly am entitled to know—everything."

[Pg 21]

The young man looked the doctor squarely in the eyes during the longish pause that followed. "There isn't much to tell," he said. "My father and mother are dead. I have one sister, older than I, married to one of the best fellows in the world and living West. I made my home with them till I came to the Tech. You can ask any of the professors there about me. They'll tell you that I worked. I graduated a year ago last June. Since then I've been at work at my profession. I'm getting twelve hundred a year now; but——"

"Stop right there. Why did you ask my girl to marry you?"

"Because I loved her."

"Hum! And she—er—fancies that she loves you—eh?"

A dark flush swept over Samuel Brewster's ingenuous young face. "She does love me," was all he said. But he said it in a tone which suddenly brought back the older man's vanished youth.

[Pg 22]

There was a short silence; then the doctor arose so abruptly that he nearly upset his chair. "Well," he said, "I've got to go to Boston to-morrow on a case, and I'll see those professors of yours, for one thing; I know Collins well. Not that he or anybody else can tell me all about you—not by a long shot; I know boys and young men well enough for that. But you see, sir, I—love my girl too, and I—I'll say *good-afternoon*, sir."

He threw the door wide with an impatient hand. "Ah, Mrs. Tewksbury; you're next, I believe. Walk right in."

An hour later, when the door had finally closed on his last patient, Dr. North sat still in his chair, apparently lost in thought. His dinner was waiting, he knew, and a round of visits must be made immediately thereafter, yet he did not stir. He was thinking, curiously enough, of the time when his daughter Elizabeth was a baby. What a round, pink little face she had, to be sure, and what a strong, healthy, plump little body. He could almost hear the unsteady feet toddling across the breadth of dingy oilcloth which carpeted his office floor. "Daddy, daddy!" her sweet, imperious voice was crying, "I'm tomin' to see you, daddy!"

[Pg 23]

His eyes were wet when he finally stumbled to his feet. Then suddenly he felt a pair of warm arms about his neck, and a dozen butterfly kisses dropped on his cheeks, his hair, his forehead. "Daddy, dear, he came; didn't he? I saw him go away. I hope you weren't—cruel to him, oh, daddy!"

"No, daughter; I wasn't exactly cruel to him. But didn't the young man stop to talk it over with you?"

"No, daddy; I thought he would of course; but he just waved his hand for good-bye, and I—was frightened for fear——"

"Didn't stop to talk it over—eh? Say, I like that! To tell you the truth, Bess, I—rather like him. Good, clear, steady eyes; good all 'round constitution, I should say; and if—Oh, come, come, child; we'd better be getting in to dinner or your mother will be anxious. But I want you to understand, miss, that your old daddy has no notion of playing second fiddle to any youngster's first, however tall and good-looking he may be."

[Pg 24]

And singularly enough, Elizabeth appeared to be perfectly satisfied with this paternal dictum. "I knew you'd like him," she said, slipping her small hand into her father's big one, in the little girl fashion she had never lost. "Why, daddy, he's the best man I ever knew—except you, of course. He told me"—the girl's voice dropped to an awed whisper—"that he promised his mother when she was dying that he would never do a mean or dishonest thing. And—and he says, daddy, that whenever he has been tempted to do wrong he has felt his mother's eyes looking at him, so that he couldn't. Anybody would know he was good just from seeing him."

"Hum! Well, well, that may be so. I'll talk to Collins and see what he has to say. Collins is a man of very good judgment; I value his opinion highly."

"Don't you value mine, daddy?" asked Elizabeth, with an irresistible dimple appearing and disappearing at the corner of her mouth. [Pg 25]

"On some subjects, my dear," replied the doctor soberly; "but—er—on this particular one I fancy you may be slightly prejudiced." [Pg 26]

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## CHAPTER III

The question of "wherewithal shall we be clothed," which has vexed the world since its beginning in the garden "planted eastward in Eden," confronts the children of Eve so persistently at every serious crisis of life that one is forced to the conclusion that clothes sustain a very real and vital relation to destiny. Even Solomon in all his glory must earnestly have considered the colour and texture of his famous robes of state when he was making ready to dazzle the eyes of the Queen of Sheba, and the Jewish Esther's royal apparel and Joseph's coat of many colours played important parts in the history of a nation.

Elizabeth North had been engaged to be married to Samuel Brewster exactly a fortnight when the age-long question presented itself to her attention. It was perhaps inevitable that she should have thought speculatively of her wedding gown; what girl would not? But in the sweet amaze of her new and surprising happiness she might have gone on wearing her simple girlish frocks quite unaware of its relation to her wardrobe. She owed her awakening to Miss Evelyn Tripp. [Pg 27]

Elizabeth had known Evelyn Tripp in a distant fashion suited to the great gulf which appeared to exist between the fashionable lady from Boston, who was in the habit of paying semi-annual visits to Innisfield, and the young daughter of the country doctor. She had always regarded Miss Tripp as the epitome of all possible elegance, and vaguely associated her with undreamed-of festivities and privileges peculiar to the remote circles in which she moved when absent from Innisfield.

Miss Tripp explained her presence in the quiet village after one formula which had grown familiar to every one. "I was *completely* worn out, my dear; I've just run away from a perfect whirl of receptions, teas, luncheons and musicales; really, I was *on the verge* of a nervous breakdown when my physician simply *insisted* upon my leaving it all. I *do* find dear, quiet Innisfield so *relaxing* after the social strain." [Pg 28]

Miss Tripp's heavily italicised remarks were invariably accompanied by uplifted eyebrows, and a sweetly serious expression, alternating with flashing glimpses of very white teeth, and further accented by numberless little movements of her hands and shoulders which suggested deeper meanings than her words often conveyed.

Ill-natured people, such as Mrs. Buckthorn and Electa Pratt, declared that Evelyn Tripp was thirty-five if she was a day, though she dressed like sixteen; and furthermore that her social popularity in Boston was a figment of her own vivid imagination. Elizabeth North, however, had always admired her almost reverently, in the shy, distant fashion of the young, country-bred girl.

Miss Tripp was unquestionably elegant, and her smart gowns and the large picture hats she affected had created quite their usual sensation in Innisfield, where the slow-spreading ripples of fashion were viewed with a certain stern disfavour as being linked in some vague manner with irreligion of a dangerous sort. "She's too stylish to be good for much," being the excellent Mrs. Buckthorn's severe corollary. [Pg 29]

Miss Tripp had been among the first to press friendly congratulations upon young Brewster, who on his part received them with the engaging awkwardness of the unaccustomed bachelor.

"You are certainly the *most* fortunate of men to have won that sweet, simple Elizabeth North! I've known her since she was quite a child—since we were both children, in fact, and she was always the same unspoiled, unaffected girl, so different from the young women one meets in society circles."

"She's all of that," quoth the fortunate engineer, vaguely aware of a lack of flavour in Miss Tripp's encomium, "and—er—more."

Whereat Miss Tripp laughed archly and playfully shook a daintily gloved finger at him. "I can see that you think no one is capable of appreciating your prize; but I assure you *I do!* You shall see!" This last was a favourite phrase, and conveyed quite an alluring sense of mystery linked with vague promise of unstinted benevolences on the part of Miss Tripp. "Do you know," she added seriously, "I am told that you are closely related to Mrs. J. Mortimer Van Duser. She is a wonderful woman, so prominent in the best circles and interested in so many important charities." [Pg 30]

Samuel Brewster shook his head. "The relationship is hardly worth mentioning," he said. "Mrs. Van Duser was a distant relative of my mother's."

"But of course you see a great deal of her when you are in Boston; do you not?" persisted the lady.



"I dined there once," acknowledged the young man, vaguely uneasy and rather too obviously anxious to make his escape, "but I dare say she has forgotten my existence by this time. Mrs. Van Duser is, as you say, a very—er—active woman."

[Pg 31]

On the following day Elizabeth North encountered Miss Tripp on the street. She was about to pass her after a shy salutation, when Miss Tripp held out both hands in a pretty, impulsive gesture. "I was just on my way to see you, dear; but if you are going out, of course I'll wait till another day. My dear, he's *simply* perfect! and I really *couldn't* wait to tell you so. Do tell me when you are to be married? In June, I hope, for then I shall be here to help."

Elizabeth blushed prettily, her shy gaze taking in the details of Miss Tripp's modish costume. She was wondering if a jacket made like the one Miss Tripp was wearing would be becoming. "I—we haven't thought so far ahead as that," she said. Then with a sudden access of her new dignity. "Mr. Brewster expects to return to Boston in the spring. The work here will be finished by that time."

Miss Tripp's eyes brightened with a speculative gleam. "Oh, then you will live in *Boston!* How *delighted* I am to hear *that!* Did you know your *fiancé* is related to Mrs. Mortimer Van Duser? and that he has *dined* there? *You didn't?* But of course you must have heard of Mrs. Van Duser; I believe your minister's wife is a relative of hers. But Mrs. Van Duser doesn't approve of Mrs. Pettibone, I'm told; her opinions are so odd. But I *am* so glad for you, my dear; if everything is managed properly you will have an *entrée* to the most exclusive circles." Miss Tripp's eyebrows and shoulders expressed such unfeigned interest and delight in her prospects that Elizabeth beamed and smiled in her turn. She wished confusedly that Miss Tripp would not talk to her about her engagement; it was too sacred, too wonderful a thing to discuss on the street with a mere acquaintance like Miss Tripp. Yet all the while she was rosiely conscious of her new ring, which she could feel under her glove, and a childish desire to uncover its astonishing brilliancy before such warmly appreciative eyes presently overcame her desire to escape. "Won't you walk home with me?" she asked; "mother will be so glad to see you."

[Pg 32]

[Pg 33]

"Oh, *thank* you! Indeed I was coming to condole with your dear mother and to wish you all sorts of happiness. I've so often spoken of you to my friends in Boston."

Elizabeth wondered what Miss Tripp could possibly have said about her to her friends in Boston. But she was assured by Miss Tripp's brilliant smile that it had been something agreeable. When she came into the room after removing her hat and cloak she found her mother deep in conversation with the visitor, who made room for her on the sofa with a smile and a graceful tilt of her plumed head.

"We've been talking about you every minute, dear child. You'll see what a *sweet* wedding you'll have. Everything must be of the very latest; and it isn't a minute too soon to begin on your trousseau. You really ought to have everything hand-embroidered, you know; those flimsy laces and machine-made edges are so common, you won't *think* of them; and they don't wear a bit well, either."

Mrs. North glanced appealingly at her daughter. "Oh," she said, in a bewildered tone, "I guess Elizabeth isn't intending to be married for a long, long time yet; I—we can't spare her."

[Pg 34]

Miss Tripp laughed airily. "*Poor* mamma," she murmured with a look of deep sympathy, "it *is* too bad; isn't it? But, really, I'm sure you're to be congratulated on your future son-in-law. He belongs to a *very* aristocratic family—Mrs. Mortimer Van Duser is a relative, you know; and dear Betty must have everything *suitable*. I'll do some pretty things, dear; I'd love to, and I'll begin this very day, though the doctor has absolutely forbidden me to use my eyes; but I simply can't resist the temptation."

Then she had exclaimed over the sparkle of Elizabeth's modest diamond, which caught her eyes at the moment, and presently in a perfumed rush of silken skirts and laces and soft furs Miss Tripp swept away, chatting to the outermost verge of the frosty air in her sweet-toned drawling voice, so different from the harsh nasal accents familiar to Innisfield ears.

[Pg 35]

Elizabeth drew a deep breath as she watched the slim, erect figure move lightly away. She felt somehow very ignorant and countrified and totally unfit for her high destiny as a member of Boston's select circles. As a result of these unwonted stirrings in her young heart she went up to her room and began to look over her wardrobe with growing dissatisfaction.

Her mother hearing the sound of opening and shutting drawers came into the room and stood looking on with what appeared to the girl a provokingly indifferent expression on her plump middle-aged face.

"It is really too soon to begin worrying about wedding clothes, Bessie," observed Mrs. North with a show of maternal authority. "Of course"—after a doubtful silence—"we might begin to make up some new underclothes. I've a good firm piece of cotton in the house, and we can buy some edges."

The girl suddenly faced her mother, her pink lips thrust forward in an unbecoming pout. "Why, mother," she said, "don't you know people don't wear things made out of common cotton cloth now; everything has to be as fine and delicate as a cobweb almost, and—hand-embroidered. You can make them or buy them in the stores. Marian had some lovely things when she went to college. All the girls wear them—except me. Of course I've never had anything of the sort; but I

[Pg 36]

suppose I'll have to now!"

She shut her bureau drawer with an air of finality and leaned her puckered forehead upon her hand while the new diamond flashed its blue and white fires into her mother's perplexed eyes.

"We'll do the very best we can, dear," Mrs. North said after a lengthening pause; "but your father's patients don't pay their bills very promptly, and there are the boys' college expenses to be met; we'll have to think of that."

This conversation marked the beginning of many interviews, gradually increasing in poignant interest to both mother and daughter. It appeared that "Sam," as Elizabeth now called her lover with a pretty hesitancy which the young man found adorable, wished to be married in June, so as to take his bride with him on a trip West, in which business and pleasure might be profitably combined.

[Pg 37]

Mrs. North demurred weakly; but Dr. North was found to be on the side of the young man. "I don't believe in long engagements myself," he had said, with a certain suspicious gruffness in his tones. "I hoped we should have our daughter to ourselves for a while longer; but she's chosen otherwise, and there is no use and no need to wait. We'll have to let her go, wife, and the sooner the better, for both of them."

The important question being thus finally decided, not only Miss Tripp but the Norths' whole circle of acquaintances in Innisfield, as well as the female relations, near and far, were found ready and anxious to engage heart and soul in Elizabeth's preparations for her wedding, which had now begun in what might be well termed solemn earnest.

[Pg 38]

"Are we going to—keep house?" Elizabeth asked her lover in the first inrush of this new tide of experience which was soon to bear her far from the old life.

"To keep house, dear, with you would be pretty close to my idea of heaven," the young man had declared with all the fervour of the inexperienced bachelor. "I've boarded for nearly six years now with barely a taste of home between whiles, and I'm tired of it. Don't you want to keep house, dear?"

And Elizabeth answered quite sweetly and truly that she did. "I can cook," she said, proud of her old-fashioned accomplishment in the light of her new happiness. "We will have just a little house to begin with, and then I can do everything."

But a suitable house of any size in Boston was found to be quite out of the question. "It will have to be an apartment, my dear," the experienced Miss Tripp declared; "and I believe I know the very one in a *really good* neighbourhood. I'll write at once. You mustn't *think* of South Boston, even if it is more convenient for Mr. Brewster. It is so important to begin right; and you know, my dear, you couldn't expect any one to come to see you in South Boston."

[Pg 39]

Mrs. Carroll, who chanced to be present, was observed to compress her lips firmly. "Lizzie," she said, when the fashionable Miss Tripp had finally taken her departure, after much voluble advice on the subject of the going-away gown, coupled with a spirited discussion of the rival merits of a church wedding and "just a pretty, simple home affair," "if I were you I shouldn't let that Evelina Kipp decide everything for me. You'd better make up your mind what you want to do, and what you can afford to do, and then do it without asking her leave. It seems to me her notions are extravagant and foolish."

"Why, grandma!" pouted Elizabeth. "I think it is perfectly dear of Miss Tripp to take such an interest in my wedding. I shouldn't have known what to do about lots of things, and I'm sure you and mother haven't an idea." The girl's pretty lips curled and she moved her slim shoulders gently.

[Pg 40]

"Your mother and I both managed to get married without Miss Fripp's advice," retorted grandma tranquilly. "I may not have an 'idea,' as you call it, but I can't see why you should have ruffled silk petticoats to all your dresses. One good moreen skirt did me, with a quilted alpaca for every-day wear and two white ones for best. And as for a dozen sets of underclothes, that won't wear once they see the washtub, they look foolish to me. More than all that, your father can't afford it, and you ought to consider him."

Elizabeth looked up with a worried pucker between her girlish brows. "I don't see how I am going to help it, grandma," she sighed; "I really must have suitable clothes."

"I agree with you there, Lizzie," said Mrs. Carroll, eyeing her granddaughter keenly over the top of her spectacles; "but you aren't going to have them, if you let that Sipp girl tell you what to buy."

"It isn't *Sipp*, grandma, it's Tripp. T-r-i-p-p," said Elizabeth, in a long-suffering tone; "and she knows better than any one in Innisfield possibly can what I am going to need in Boston."

[Pg 41]

"You'll find the people in Boston won't take any particular interest in your petticoats, Lizzie," her grandmother told her pointedly. But the girl had spied her lover coming up the walk toward the house and had flown to meet him.

"What's the matter, sweetheart?" asked the young man, examining his treasure with the keen eyes of love. "You look tired and—er—worried. Anything wrong, little girl?"

"N-no," denied Elizabeth evasively. "Only grandma has such queer, old-fashioned ideas about—clothes. And she thinks I ought to have just what she had when she was married to grandfather fifty years ago. Of course I want to have everything nice and—suitable for Boston, you know."

"What you are wearing now is pretty enough for anywhere," declared Sam Brewster, with masculine obtuseness. "Don't you bother one minute about clothes, darling; you'd look lovely in anything."

[Pg 42]

Then he kissed her faintly smiling lips with the fatuous idea that the final word as to wedding finery had been said.

[Pg 43]

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## CHAPTER IV

"If you can give me just a minute, Richard, before you go out." It was Mrs. North's timidly apologetic voice which broke in upon her husband's hasty preparations for a day's professional engagements.

Dr. North faced about with a laughing twinkle in his eyes. "I know your minutes, Lizzie," he said, absent-mindedly sniffing at the cork of a half-emptied bottle. "This gentian's no good; I've a mind to ship it back to Avery's and tell them what I think of the firm for selling adulterated drugs. It's an outrage on suffering humanity. I'll write to them anyway." And he began to rummage his desk in quest of stationery.

"I wanted to speak to you about Bessie's things," persisted Mrs. North. "You know you gave me some money for her wedding clothes last month; but it isn't—it won't be nearly enough."

[Pg 44]

"What on earth have you been buying for the child?" asked her husband. "I should think with what she has already the money I gave you would go quite a ways."

"That's just it," sighed Mrs. North. "Bessie thinks none of the things she has are—suitable." She hesitated a little over the hard-worked word. "Of course living in Boston, and——"

"Pooh! Boston's no different from any other town," put in the doctor. "You tell Bess I said so. She doesn't need to worry about *Boston!*" He plumped down in his office chair and began an indignant protest addressed to the firm of Avery & Co., Wholesale Druggists and Dealers in Surgical Supplies.

"I haven't bought any of her best dresses yet," sighed Mrs. North; "and she wants an all-over lace for her wedding dress. Miss Tripp says they're very much worn now."

She paused suggestively while the doctor's pen raced busily over his page.

"You didn't hear what I said, did you, Richard?" she ventured after a while.

[Pg 45]

"Yes, m' dear; heard every word; you were saying you'd bought Bess a lace wedding dress, and that Miss Tripp says they're very much worn," replied her husband, fixing on a stamp with a sounding thump of his big fist. "Glad to hear it. Well, I'll have to be moving now. Good-bye, m' dear; home to dinner if I can; if not——"

"If you could let me have two hundred and fifty dollars, Richard," said Mrs. North rather faintly, "we'll try to manage with that for the present."

"Well, now, Lizzie, when it comes to your wanting anything I always get it for you—if I can; and you know that; but I sent off cheques to Frank and Elliot this morning, and I'm what you'd call strapped."

"Couldn't you collect——"

The doctor kissed his wife cheerfully. "How can I, wifey, when folks leave their doctor's bills till the last cent's paid to everybody else? Don't know as I blame 'em; it's hard enough to be sick without having to pay out money for it; now, isn't it?"

[Pg 46]

"Oh, Dick; if that isn't just like you! But I—I've thought of a way."

"Good! What is it?"

"We might—borrow some money on the house. Other people do, and——"

"Mortgage our house for wedding finery? I guess you're joking, Lizzie. At any rate, I'll call it a joke and let it pass! Good-bye!" The quick slam of the office door put a conclusive finish to the doctor's words, and his wife went back to her work on one of Elizabeth's elaborate garments with a heavy heart.

"What did Richard say?" Grandma Carroll wanted to know, when the girl had gone into another room to be fitted.

"He said he couldn't possibly let me have anything more just now," said Richard's wife with a shade of reserve in her voice. "You know, mother, people are so slow in paying their bills. The doctor has any amount outstanding if he could only get it."

"Such folks had ought to be made to pay before they get 'ary a pill or a powder, same 's they do for what made 'em sick. They'd find money for the doctor quick enough once they had a right sharp pain from over-eating," was grandma's trenchant opinion. "But I expected he'd say that all along, and I wanted to give you this for Lizzie."

[Pg 47]

She slipped a little roll of bills into her daughter's lap. "Don't say anything to the child about it," she whispered, nodding her kind old head; "it would worry her. Besides I don't approve of the amount of money she's putting into perishable things. I meant to buy her a real good clock or a nice solid piece of furniture; but if she'd rather have lace frills that'll fall to pieces in the washtub, I'm willing she should learn by experience, same 's we've had to do before her."

Mrs. North's eyes were moist and shining. "It's what you've been putting by for years, mother," she whispered, "for——"

"Hush!" said grandma. "I guess when it comes right down to it I'm full as foolish as Lizzie. Once I set foot in the golden streets I know I sha'n't mind whether I leave a marble monument in the cemetery or not; and you don't need to either, daughter. Now remember!"

[Pg 48]

Upon this hushed conversation entered Elizabeth in a flutter of excitement and rosy pleasure over a letter which the postman had just handed her. "It is from Evelyn Tripp," she said, "and she wants me to come to Boston and stay a week with her; she says she will help me pick out all my dresses, and I'd better have my wedding dress and my going-away gown made there, anyway. Isn't that lovely?"

Then, as she met her mother's dubious gaze, "You know Malvina Bennett hasn't a particle of style; and we don't know anything about the best places to buy things in Boston; or the dressmakers, or anything."

"I've shopped in Boston for years," said Mrs. North, with a show of firmness, "and I'm sure everything at Cooper's gives perfect satisfaction."

"Oh, *Cooper's*?" laughed the girl. "Why, mother, *dear*, nobody goes to Cooper's nowadays. It's just for country people from out of town."

[Pg 49]

"What are we, I'd like to know?" Grandma Carroll wanted to know, with a humorous twinkle in her shrewd eyes. "I shouldn't wonder if you'd better do your shopping with your mother, Lizzie; her judgment would likely be quite as good as that Tipp girl's, and more in a line with what you can afford. You should remember that Samuel isn't a rich man, and you'll need good, substantial dresses that'll last. I remember I had a blue Russell-cord poplin when I was married that I wore for *fifteen years*; then I made it over for your mother, and she looked as pretty as a pink in it for two more; then she outgrew it and I gave it away; but the cloth in it was as good as new. A dress like that *pays!*"

Elizabeth laughed somewhat impatiently. "I've heard about that wonderful poplin ever since I can remember," she said. "I wonder you didn't save it for me. But I don't want to buy any dresses that will last for fifteen years. I'm sure Sam can buy me more dresses when I want them. I may go to Boston; mayn't I, mother?"

[Pg 50]

Mrs. North looked wistfully at the pretty, eager face. She had looked forward with pleasure—somewhat tempered, it is true, by the knowledge of her meagre resources, yet still with pleasure—to the choosing of her daughter's wedding gown, with all its dainty accessories of tulle and lace. "I had thought of a silk muslin," she said rather faintly, "or perhaps a cream satin—if you'd like it better, dear, and——"

"I shouldn't like either of those," said the girl decidedly, "and there's so much to do that it will really save time if you don't have to bother with any of that; Evelyn (it was Evelyn and Elizabeth now) says chiffon over liberty satin would be lovely if I can't afford the lace. Of course I wouldn't buy a *cheap lace*."

That night when Dr. North came home he tossed a handful of bills into his daughter's lap. "For the wedding gown, Bess," he said; "worse luck that you want one!"

"Oh, why do you say that, you darling daddy?" murmured the girl, "when I'm going to be so happy!" She was radiantly happy now, it appeared, and the doctor's keen eyes grew moist as he looked at her.

[Pg 51]

"Guess I was thinking about myself principally," he confessed gruffly, "and about your mother. We're going to be lonesome; and I—don't like to think of it."

The girl's bright face clouded. "The boys will be at home summers," she said, "and I'll come back to—visit often, you know. I sha'n't be far away, daddy." She clung to him for a minute without a word, a faint realisation of the irrevocable change so near at hand sweeping over her.

"Of course you *will*, Betsey Jane!" vociferated the doctor, affecting a vast jocularly for the purpose of concealing his feelings, which threatened to become unmanageable. "If you don't show up in Innisfield about once in so often I'll come to Boston with my bag and give that young robber a dose that will make his hair curl."

The next day the bride-elect journeyed to Boston carrying what appeared to her a small fortune in her little hand-bag. "You've all been so good!" she said. "I can just buy everything I need with all this."

[Pg 52]

Evelyn Tripp met Elizabeth in South Station with open arms. "How well you are looking, you *darling!*" she exclaimed effusively. "Now if we can only keep those roses through all the shopping and dressmaking. It is so exhausting; but I've everything planned for you down to the last frill, and Madame Pryse has at last consented to make your gowns! If you *knew* what I've been through with that woman! She simply will *not* take a new customer; but when I mentioned the fact that you were to marry a nephew of Mrs. Mortimer Van Duser she *finally* capitulated. I could have *embraced* her!"

"But Sam isn't Mrs. Van Duser's nephew, Evelyn. I believe his mother was Mrs. Van Duser's second cousin."

"Oh, well, that doesn't signify. I'm sure, I had to say something convincing, and Mrs. Van Duser was my *dernier resort*. Pryse will do anything for you now, you'll see, my dear! And, oh, Betty dear, when I was in at Altford's yesterday I just chanced upon the most *wonderful* bargain in a lace robe, and had it sent up on approval. The most exquisite thing, and marked down from a hundred and twenty-seven dollars to—what do you think?—only eighty-nine, fifty! I was *so* pleased; for I am sure it is *just* what you want. I got samples, too, of the most bewitching silks for your dinner gown—you must have at least *one*, you know, a simple, pretty *crêpe de chine* or something of the sort; and then with a little frock or two for luncheons and card parties, your tailor-made—that *must* be *good*—and your wedding gown for evening affairs you will do nicely."

[Pg 53]

"But, Evelyn," interrupted Elizabeth timidly, "I'm afraid I can't— You know I didn't expect to buy but two dresses in Boston. Malvina Bennett is making me a black silk, and——"

Miss Tripp paused to smile and bow at a passing acquaintance; then she turned protesting eyes upon the girl. "You *dear* child," she murmured, "you're not to worry about a *single* thing. That's *just* what I mean to spare you. I am determined you shall have just what you are going to *need*; and if you haven't enough money with you, I can arrange everything at Altford's without a bit of trouble; and of course you will pay Pryse *her* bill when it is *perfectly* convenient for *you*. She doesn't *expect* to be paid promptly. Really, I don't believe she would have a particle of respect for a patron who insisted upon paying for a gown the minute it was finished. First-class modistes and milliners, too, are *all* that way; they know better than to send their bills too soon. So *that* needn't bother you, dear; and of course Pryse *finds* everything, which will save enormously on your outlay."

[Pg 54]

Elizabeth felt very meek and hopelessly countrified as she laid off her wraps in Miss Tripp's rather stuffy but ornate little apartment. Mrs. Tripp, a faded, apologetic person smelling of rice-powder and sachet, smiled vaguely upon her and murmured something about "Evy's wonderful taste!"

One thing at least was clear to Elizabeth as she lay wide-eyed in the darkness that night, after an evening spent in the confusing examination and comparison of fashion-plates and samples, and that was the conviction that the "fortune" with which she had joyfully set forth that morning had dwindled to a pitiful insufficiency before the multiplied necessities imposed upon it by Miss Tripp's undeniable taste and knowledge.

[Pg 55]

She almost wished she had chosen to do her shopping with her mother and Grandma Carroll, as she realised that she would be obliged to write home for more money. But it was too late to change her mind now; and, after all, Evelyn knew best as to what a bride about to move in polite circles in Boston would require. She went to sleep at last and dreamed of standing up to be married in a Russell-cord poplin (whatever that wonderful fabric might be) which had already done duty for fifteen years, and was "as good as new."

[Pg 56]

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## CHAPTER V

As the twenty-first day of June drew on apace, Fate, in the slim, active personality of Miss Evelyn Tripp, appeared to have taken the entire North household firmly in hand. Events marched on in orderly, if surprising sequence, beginning with the issuing of the invitations bearing the name of Boston's most expensive firm of engravers on the flap of the inner envelope.

"Every one looks for that the very first thing," Miss Tripp had announced conclusively; "and one simply *couldn't* have the name of a department store or a cheap engraver!" The correct Miss Tripp shuddered at the awful picture.

"But these are so much more expensive than I had expected," demurred Mrs. North, with a worried sigh. "I had intended ordering them at Cooper's; they do them just as well there. Don't they sometimes leave off the name?"

[Pg 57]

Miss Tripp bestowed a pitying smile upon the questioner. "Indeed they do, dear Mrs. North," she replied indulgently; "but *that* is merely a subterfuge; one always suspects the worst when there is no name. It *pays* to have the *best*."

This latter undeniable dictum was found to be entirely applicable to every detail of the forthcoming festivities, and involved such a multiplicity of expensive items that Grandma Carroll was openly indignant, and her more pliant daughter reduced to a state of bewildered apathy.

"I've been wanting to say to you for a long time, Miss Phipps, that our Lizzie isn't a fashionable girl, and that her father is a poor man and can't afford such doings," Mrs. Carroll protested in no uncertain tones. "Now I can't for the life of me see why we should have an organist from Boston to play the wedding march, when Liddy Green can do it just as well, and her feelings is going to be hurt if she doesn't; and as for a florist from Newton Centre to decorate the church, the young folks in the Sunday-school would be glad to go to the woods after greens, and they'll put 'em up for nothing. It's going to cost enough, the land knows, but there's no use of piling up unnecessary expenses."

[Pg 58]

Miss Tripp smiled winningly upon the exasperated old lady. "*Nothing* is too good for dear Elizabeth *now*," she murmured, "and you know, dear Mrs. Carroll, that a number of Boston people will be here—Mrs. Van Duser, we *hope*, and—others."

Grandma Carroll fixed piercing eyes upon the indefatigable Evelyn. "Of course you *mean* well," she said crisply; "but if I was you I'd take a rest; I'm afraid you're getting all tuckered out doing so much. And considering that you ain't any relation I guess I'd let Lizzie's own folks 'tend to the wedding from now on."

There was no mistaking the meaning of this plain speech. For an instant Evelyn Tripp's faded cheeks glowed with mortified colour; then she recovered herself with a shrug of her elegant shoulders. Who, after all, was Mrs. Carroll to interfere in this unwarranted manner?

[Pg 59]

"It is *so* sweet of you to think of poor little me, dear Mrs. Carroll," she said caressingly. "And indeed I *am* worn *almost* to a fringe; but I am promising myself a good, long rest after everything is over. Nothing would induce me to leave dear Elizabeth *now*. She couldn't possibly get along without me." She dropped a forgiving kiss on top of Grandma Carroll's cap and flitted away before that justly indignant lady could reply.

Miss Tripp was right. It would have been impossible for the unsophisticated Norths to have completed the arrangements for the entirely "correct" wedding which Miss Tripp had planned and was carrying through in the face of unnumbered obstacles. As to the motives which upheld her in her altruistic efforts in behalf of Elizabeth North Miss Tripp was not entirely clear. It is not always desirable, if possible, to classify and label one's actual motives, and Miss Tripp, for one, rarely attempted the task. A vague emptiness of purpose, a vast weariness of the unending routine of her own somewhat disappointing career, a real, if superficial kindness of heart, and back of all an entirely unacknowledged ambition to attain to that sacred inner circle of Boston society wherein revolved the august Mrs. Mortimer Van Duser, with other lesser luminaries, about the acknowledged "hub" of the universe; toward which Miss Tripp had hitherto gravitated like a humble asteroid, small, unnoticed, yet aspiring. One of the irreproachable invitations had been duly sent to Mrs. Van Duser; but as yet there had been no visible token that it had been received.

[Pg 60]

"*Won't* you ask Mr. Brewster if he will not add a personal invitation?" entreated Miss Tripp of the bride-elect, who had appeared alarmingly indifferent when the importance of this hoped-for guest was duly set forth in her hearing. "You don't seem to *realise* what it would mean to you both to have Mrs. Van Duser present. Let me persuade him to write—or perhaps better to call; one cannot be *too* attentive to a person in her position."

[Pg 61]

But Sam Brewster had merely laughed and pulled the little curl behind his sweetheart's ear when she spoke of Mrs. Van Duser. "Really, I don't care whether the old lady comes or not," he said, without meaning any disrespect. "She's a stiff, uncomfortable sort of person; you wouldn't like her, Betty. I went there to dinner once, and, my word, it was enough for me!"

"But," persisted Elizabeth, mindful of Miss Tripp's solemn exhortations, "if she's a relation of yours, oughtn't you to—"

"She was mother's second cousin, I believe; not much of a relation to me, you see. And seriously, little girl, we can't travel in her class at all; and we don't want to, even if we could."

"But why?" demanded Elizabeth, slightly piqued by his tone; "don't you think I am good enough?"

"You're a hundred times too good, in my opinion!" And the young engineer kissed the pouting lips with an earnestness which admitted of no teasing doubts. "It's only that Mrs. Van D. is rich and proud and—er—queer, and that she won't take any notice of us. I'm glad you sent her an invitation, though; that was a civil acknowledgment of a slight obligation on my side. I hope she won't send us a present, and—I don't believe she will."

[Pg 62]

The two were examining the bewildering array of glittering objects which had been arriving steadily for a week past, by mail and express; in cases left by Boston firms, and in dainty boxes tied with white ribbons from near-by friends and neighbours. The nebulous reports of Elizabeth's wedding outfit, circulated from mouth to mouth and expanding in rainbow tints as they travelled, were reflected in the shining cut glass and silver which was spread out before the wondering eyes of the young couple.

When Aunt Miranda Carroll heard that Elizabeth's trousseau included a dozen of everything (all hand-embroidered), a lace wedding-dress that cost over a hundred dollars and a pale blue velvet dinner gown lined with taffeta, she instantly abandoned the idea she had in mind of four dozen fine cotton sheets, six dozen pillow-slips and fifty good, substantial huck towels in favour of a cut-glass punch-bowl of gigantic proportions. "It would be just the thing for parties in Boston," her

[Pg 63]

daughter Marian thought.

And Uncle Caleb North, at the urgent advice of his wife (who had heard in the meantime from Aunt Miranda), exchanged his cheque for a hundred dollars for a chest of silver knives with mother-of-pearl handles. They looked so much richer than the cheque, which would have to be concealed in an inconspicuous envelope. Following the shining example of Aunt Miranda and Uncle Caleb, other relatives of lesser substance contributed cut-glass bowls and dishes of every conceivable design and for every known contingency; silver forks and spoons of singular shapes and sizes, suggesting elaborate course luncheons and fashionable dinners. While of lace-trimmed and embroidered centre-pieces and doilies there was a plenitude which would have set forth a modest linen draper. Fragile vases, hand-painted fans, perfume bottles, silver trifles of unimagined uses, sofa pillows and gilt clocks crowded the tables and overflowed onto the floor and mantelpiece.

[Pg 64]

Elizabeth surveyed the collection with sparkling eyes. "Aren't they lovely?" she demanded, slipping her hand within her lover's arm; "and aren't you surprised, Sam, to see how many friends we have?"

"Yes, I am—awfully surprised," acknowledged the young man. His brows were drawn over meditative eyes as he examined a shining carving-set with impossible ivory handles. "What are we going to do with them all?" he propounded at length.

"Do with them? Why use them, I suppose," responded Elizabeth vaguely. "Do see these darling little cups, all gold and roses, and these coffee-spoons with enamelled handles—these make eight dozen coffee-spoons, Sam!"

"Hum!" mused the unappreciative engineer. "We might set up a restaurant, as far as coffee-spoons go."

[Pg 65]

Elizabeth was bending rapturously over a lace fan, sewn thick with spangles. "I feel so rich with all these lovely things," she murmured. "I never dreamed of having so many."

She made such an exquisite picture in her glowing youth amid the sparkle and glitter of the dainty trifles that it is little wonder that Samuel Brewster lost his usually level head for the moment. "You ought always to have all the pretty things you want, darling," he whispered; "for you are the prettiest and sweetest girl alive."

Later in the day the ubiquitous Miss Tripp was discovered in the act of artfully concealing Mrs. Carroll's gift, made by her own faithful hands, under a profusion of lace-edged doilies lately arrived from a distant cousin. "There!" she exclaimed, with an air of relief, "those big gingham aprons and the dish-towels and dusters did look so absurd with all the other lovely things; they won't show now." And she planted a silver fern-dish in the midst and surveyed the effect with her head tilted thoughtfully. "Wasn't it *quaint* of Mrs. Carroll to make all those useful things? You can give them to your maid afterward; they always expect to be found in aprons nowadays—if not frocks. Really, I draw the line at frocks, with the wages one is obliged to pay; and I should advise you to."

[Pg 66]

"I'm not going to have a maid," said Elizabeth. "I can cook, and I like to."

Miss Tripp whirled about and caught the girl in her arms with an amused laugh. "You dear, romantic child!" she cried. "Did it have the *prettiest* dreams about love in a cottage, and the young wife with her sleeves rolled up cooking delicious impossibilities for a doting husband? That's all very well, my dear; but, seriously, it won't do in a Boston apartment-house. You won't have a minute to yourself after the season once begins, and of course after a while you'll be expected to entertain—quite simply, you know, a luncheon or two, with cards; possibly a dinner; you can do it beautifully with all these lovely things for your table. *I'll* help you; so don't get frightened at the idea. But *fancy* your doing all that without a maid! You mustn't *think* of it! And I am sure dear Mrs. Van Duser will give you the same advice."

[Pg 67]

The soft pink in Elizabeth's cheeks deepened to rose. "Mrs. Van Duser isn't coming to the wedding," she said, in a faintly defiant tone.

"Oh! Did she send you——"

"She sent regrets," said Elizabeth coldly.

Miss Tripp's eyebrows expressed the profoundest disappointment. "I am so *sorry*," she murmured, suddenly aware that she was exceedingly weary of the North wedding. "It will *spoil everything*."

"I can't see why," returned Elizabeth with spirit, not realising that Miss Tripp's comment applied solely to her own feelings. "It won't prevent my being married to Sam; and Sam says he is glad she is not coming. She must be a stiff, pokey sort of a person, and I am sure it will be pleasanter without her. She isn't hardly any relation to Sam, anyway, and I don't think I care to know her."

"My *dear!*" expostulated Miss Tripp, "you'll see things *very* differently some day, I *hope*. And I am glad to say that these relationships *do* count in Boston, if not in other parts of the world, and you cannot prevent people from knowing that they exist."

[Pg 68]

Like a skilful general Miss Tripp was sweeping her field clear of her disappointment, preparatory to marshalling her forces for a new campaign. "Did Mrs. Van Duser send cards, or did she——"

"She wrote a note—a stiff, disagreeable note."

"Would you mind showing it to me, dear?"

Elizabeth produced a thick white envelope from the little embroidered pocket at her belt. "You may read it," she said; "then I mean to tear it up."

Miss Tripp bent almost worshipful eyes upon the large, square sheet. "Mrs. J. Mortimer Van Duser" (she read) "begs to convey her acknowledgments to Dr. and Mrs. North for their invitation to the marriage of their daughter, and regrets that she cannot be present. Mrs. Van Duser begs to add that she will communicate further with Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Brewster upon their arrival in Boston upon a matter of moment to them both."

[Pg 69]

"Isn't that a disagreeable-sounding note?" demanded Elizabeth, her pretty chin tilted at an aggressive angle. "I just know I shouldn't like her from that letter. But I'm sure I can't think what she wants to say to us 'upon our arrival in Boston.'"

"*My dear!*" exclaimed Miss Tripp, with a horrified stare, "what *can* you be thinking of? That note is in the most perfect form. I am *so* glad you showed it to me! 'Something of moment to you both,' what can it mean but a gift—perhaps a generous cheque, and *undoubtedly* a reception to introduce you. My *dear!* Mrs. Van Duser is said to be worth *millions*, and what is more, and far, *far* better, she moves in the most *exclusive* society. You dear, lucky girl, I *congratulate* you upon the recognition you have received. *Tear it up*—indeed, you will do nothing of the sort! I'll put it here right by this cut-glass vase, where every one will see it."

[Pg 70]

Elizabeth pouted. "Mother didn't like it," she said, "and grandma laughed over it, and Sam told me to forget it; I don't see why you—"

"*Because I know,*" intoned Miss Tripp solemnly. "I only hope you won't forget poor little me when you're fairly launched in Mrs. Van Duser's set."

Elizabeth gazed reflectively at her friend. "Oh, I couldn't forget you," she said; "you've been so good to me. But," she added, with what Miss Tripp mentally termed delicious naïveté, "I don't suppose we shall give many large parties, just at first."

[Pg 71]

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## CHAPTER VI

"I am of the opinion," wrote the sapient Dr. Johnson, "that marriages would in general be as happy, and often more so, if they were all made by the Lord Chancellor, upon a due consideration of the circumstances and characters, without the parties thereto having any choice in the matter."

That this radical matrimonial reform did not find favour in the eyes of his own or any succeeding generation brands it as visionary, impracticable, not to be seriously entertained, in short, by any one not a philosopher and not himself in love. But could the benevolent shade of Dr. Johnson be let into the details of a fashionable modern wedding, it is safe to predict that he might recommend a new civic function to be administered either by the Lord Chancellor, or by some equally responsible person for the purpose of regulating by sumptuary law the bridal trousseau and the wedding presents. The renowned Georgian sage could not fail to recognise the relation which these too often unconsidered items bear to the welfare of the private citizen in particular and to the weal of mankind in general. And who can deny that all legislation is, or should be, centred chiefly on these very ends.

[Pg 72]

Such sober reflections as the above, though perhaps forming an unavoidable background in the minds of several of the older persons present, did not cloud the rapturous happiness of Elizabeth Carroll North, as she paced slowly up the aisle of the Innisfield Presbyterian church on the arm of her father, the folds of her "Pryse gown," as Miss Tripp was careful to designate it, sweeping gracefully behind her. The bridesmaids in pale rose-colour and the maid of honour in white; the tiny flower-girls bearing baskets of roses; the ushers with their boutonnières of orange buds; the waving palms and the sounding music each represented a separate Waterloo, fought and won by the Napoleonic Miss Tripp, who looked on, wan but self-satisfied, from a modest position in the audience. Never had



**"Never had there been such a wedding in Innisfield"**

[Pg 73]

there been such a wedding in Innisfield. Everybody said so in loud, buzzing whispers. Sadie Buckthorn, who was engaged to Milton Scrymger, informed her mamma that she should be married in church in October, and that her bridesmaids should wear yellow. And Bob Garrett, a clerk in a Boston department store, told his sweetheart that he guessed the wedding was about



their speed, and added that he knew a swell floor-walker who would look simply great as best man.

As for the young couple chiefly concerned they might have walked on air instead of on the roses strewn in their path by the little flower-girls; and the hundreds of curious eyes fastened upon them were as dim, painted eyes upon a tapestried wall. They only saw each other and the gate of that ancient Eden of the race opening before them.

That same evening, after all was over, and when, as the village reporter phrased it with happy originality, "the young couple had departed upon their wedding journey amid showers of rice and roses," Dr. North sought his tired wife, busy clearing away the tokens of the late festivities. [Pg 74]

"Come, Lizzie," he said kindly, "we may as well get what rest we can; to-morrow'll be another day, and we've got to go jogging on about our middle-aged business as usual."

Mrs. North looked up at him with tearful eyes. "I can't seem to realise that Bessie's gone to stay," she said tremulously. "I just caught myself thinking what I'd say to her when she came home, and what we'd—"

Richard North passed his arm about the wife of his youth. "I—hope he'll be good to her," he said, his voice shaken with feeling. "I—I believe he's all right. If he isn't I'll—" He shrugged his broad shoulders impatiently.

"Oh, I'm not a bit worried about *Sam*," said Mrs. North; "I know enough about men. But, O Dick, I'm going to miss my—baby!"

He held her close for a minute while she sobbed on his shoulder; then the two went slowly up the stairs together, leaving the disordered rooms and the fading roses in the luminous dark of the June night. [Pg 75]

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The Boston apartment to which young Samuel Brewster brought his bride in the early part of September was of Miss Evelyn Tripp's choosing. The engineer had demurred at its distance from his work, but Elizabeth had said she preferred to be near Evelyn; and Evelyn said that the location, if not strictly fashionable, was at least *near* the people they ought to know.

The rent was thirty-eight dollars a month. And the rooms were small, inconvenient and old-fashioned. "But," as Miss Tripp kindly pointed out, "if one is obliged to choose between a small, old-fashioned suite in a really good locality and a light airy one in the unfashionable suburbs of South Boston one *ought* not to hesitate."

Mrs. North and Grandma Carroll had seen to putting the furnishings in place; and when the two arrived at the close of a hot afternoon they found everything in the exquisite order with which Elizabeth had been happily familiar all her life. [Pg 76]

She ran from room to room laughing and crying in the same breath. "Oh, Sam, dear, do see, there is ice in the refrigerator and a cunning little jar of cream and a print of butter; and here is a roast chicken and some of grandma's rolls and one of mother's delicious lemon pies! How hard they must have worked. I'll put on one of these big aprons, and we'll have supper in no time!"

And Sam Brewster, as he watched his wife's pretty little figure moving lightly about her new kitchen, heaved a mighty sigh of content. "It seems almost too good to be true!" he murmured. "And to think it is for always!"

It was not until they had eaten their first blissful meal together, and had washed the dishes, also together, in the dark little kitchen—an operation in which the young engineer covered himself with glory in his masterly handling of the dish-towel—that Elizabeth discovered a large square envelope, bearing the Van Duser crest, and addressed to herself. [Pg 77]

She opened it in the circle of Sam's arms, as the two reposed on their one small sofa in the room bearing the dignified title of reception hall.

"Why—what in the name of common sense is she giving us?" was Sam Brewster's startled exclamation as his quick eye took in the contents of the sheet.

"I—I don't understand," gasped Elizabeth, growing hot and cold and faint, "I can't think—how it could have happened."

Yet Mrs. Van Duser's words, though few, were sufficiently succinct. They were inspired, as she afterward confided to her rector, Dr. Gallatin, by the most altruistic sentiments of which the human heart is capable. "Truth," Mrs. Van Duser had enunciated majestically, "never finds itself at a loss. And in administering so just a rebuke to a young person manifestly appointed to fill a humble station in life I feel that I am in a measure assuming the prerogatives of Providence."

In this exalted rôle Mrs. Van Duser had written to Elizabeth North, whose miserable, shamed eyes avoided those of her husband after she had realised its contents. The letter enclosed a bill for one hundred and twenty-five dollars from Madame Léonie Pryse, for the material, making and findings for one blue velvet reception gown. There was a pencilled note attached, to the effect that as Madame Pryse had been referred to Mrs. Van Duser, she begged to present the bill, with [Pg 78]

the hope that it would be settled at an early date. Mrs. Van Duser's own majestic hand had added a brief communication, over which the young engineer scowled fiercely. He read:

"As Mrs. Brewster's personal expenses, either before or after her marriage, can have no possible interest for Mrs. Van Duser, Mrs. Van Duser begs to bring to Mrs. Brewster's attention the enclosed statement. Mrs. Van Duser wishes to inform Mrs. Brewster that she has taken the pains to send for the tradeswoman in question, and that she has elicited from her facts which seem to show an entire misapprehension of the commoner ethical requirements on the part of the person addressed.

[Pg 79]

"Mrs. Van Duser begs to add in the interests of society at large and of the person in whom, as a distant relative, she has interested herself somewhat, that she distinctly frowns upon all extravagance. Mrs. Van Duser trusts that this communication, which she begs to assure Mrs. Brewster is penned in a spirit of Christian charity, will effectually prevent further errors on the part of so young and inexperienced a person as Mrs. Brewster appears to be."

"Well?" Samuel Brewster's blue eyes, grown unexpectedly keen and penetrating, rested questioningly upon his bride.

"Don't look at me like that—please, Sam!" faltered Elizabeth. "I—I didn't mean to buy that dress; truly I didn't. I had paid for all the others, and I had twenty-seven dollars left, and Evelyn told me that Madame Pryse had a—a remnant of blue velvet which she would make up for me for a song. And—I—let her do it. I thought she would send the bill to me, and I would—"

"Did she send it to you?"

"Y-yes, twice. But Evelyn said for me not to worry. She said Madame Pryse's customers never paid her right away, and there was so much else—just at the last, I didn't like to ask daddy; Uncle Caleb always gives me fifty dollars for my birthday, and I thought—" Elizabeth's voice had grown fainter as she proceeded with her halting explanations. But she started up with a little cry, "Oh, Sam! what are you going to do?"

[Pg 80]

For her husband was examining the bill with an expression about his mouth which she had never seen there before. "I don't see that you have been credited with the twenty-seven dollars," he said quietly. Then with a sorry attempt at a smile, "These *mesdames* appear to pile up the items sky-high when it comes to building a gown; better have a cast-iron contract with 'em, I should say, and pay up when the job's finished."

Elizabeth's tear-stained face was hidden on her husband's shoulder. "I—I spent the twenty-seven dollars for—for gloves," she confessed. "Evelyn said I didn't have enough long—ones."

[Pg 81]

"*Confound Evelyn!*" said the young man strongly. "Come, Betty, dear, you're not to let this thing bother you, it isn't worth it. I'll pay this bill to-morrow. It's lucky I've the money in the bank; and I'll write to Mrs. Van D., too." He clenched his fist as though he would like to use something more powerful than his pen.

"But, Sam, you oughtn't to—I can't let you pay—for—"

"Well, I guess I can buy my wife a dress if I want to, and that blue velvet's a stunner. You haven't worn it yet, have you, dear? but when you do you'll look like a posy in it. Come, sweetheart, this was a tough proposition, I'll admit, but don't you let it bowl you over completely. And, Betty, you won't tell the Tripp lady about it, will you? I—er—couldn't stand for that, you know."

Elizabeth stole one look at the strong, kind face bent toward her. For the first time, though happily not for the last, she was realising the immense, the immeasurable comfort to be found in her husband's love. "I'll never—do such a thing again," she quavered. "I knew all the time I was being extravagant; but I didn't expect—I never supposed—"

[Pg 82]

"You couldn't very well have foreseen the Pryse woman's astonishing business methods, nor Mrs. Van D.'s Christian forbearance." His tone was bitter as he spoke the last words. "But what I can't seem to understand is how that bill ever found its way to my esteemed sixteenth cousin."

Elizabeth's eyes overflowed again. "I'm afraid it was Evelyn," she stammered. "She—told Madame Pryse that you—were Mrs. Van Duser's nephew."

Sam Brewster whistled. Then he fell into a fit of reverie so prolonged that Elizabeth nestled uneasily in the strong circle of his arm. He was reviewing the events of the immediate past in the cold light of the present, and the result was not altogether complimentary to Miss Tripp.

"I say, little girl," he said at length, looking down at the tear-stained face against his shoulder, "I don't want to be disagreeable, but—er—I can't for the life of me see why Miss Tripp should interest herself so—intimately—in our affairs. Don't you think you might—er—discourage her a bit?"

[Pg 83]

Elizabeth sighed reminiscently. "I wouldn't hurt Evelyn's feelings for the world," she said, "but I—I'll try."

[Pg 84]

## CHAPTER VII

The very next morning as Elizabeth was engaged in putting the finishing touches upon the arrangements of her new home, with all the keen delight of nest-building, so strong in some women and so utterly lacking in others, Miss Evelyn Tripp was announced, and a moment later stepped airily from the laborious little elevator. "Oh, here you are *at last*, you *darling* girl!" she exclaimed, clasping and kissing Elizabeth with *empressement*. "I knew you were expected last night—indeed, I was here all the morning helping, but as I told your mother and that dear, quaint grandmamma of yours, I wouldn't have intruded upon your very first evening *for the world!* How delightfully well and pretty you are looking, and isn't this the *sweetest* little place? and oh! I nearly forgot, *did* you find Mrs. Van Duser's note? I assure you I pounced upon *that*, and took good care to put it where you would both see it the *very* first thing. I don't mind confessing that I am simply devoured with *curiosity*. Was it a cheque, dear? And *is* she going to do something nice for you in a social way?"

[Pg 85]

Elizabeth's cheeks burned uncomfortably. "It was only a—a friendly—at least I think—I am sure she meant it to be a friendly letter. She said so, anyway. Sam put it in his pocket and took it away with him," she made haste to add, forestalling the urgent appeal in Miss Tripp's luminous gaze.

"Well, I am sure that was *most* sweet and gracious of Mrs. Van Duser. Didn't you find it so, my dear? So *dear* of her to personally welcome you to *Boston!* You'll call, of course, as soon as she returns from her country place. She will expect it, I am sure; such women are *most* punctilious in their code of social requirements, and you can't be *too* careful not to offend. You'll forgive me for saying this much, won't you, dear?"

Elizabeth was conscious of a distinct sense of displeasure as she met Miss Tripp's anxiously solicitous eyes. "You are very good, Evelyn," she said, "but Sam—Mr. Brewster—thinks it will be best for us not to—" She paused, her candid face suffused with blushes. "I'd—prefer not to talk about Mrs. Van Duser, if you please. We don't *ever* expect to go and see her."

[Pg 86]

The tactful Miss Tripp looked sadly puzzled, but she felt that it would not be the part of wisdom to press the issue for the moment. Her face wreathed itself anew in forgiving smiles as she flitted about the little rooms. "*Isn't* this the most convenient, cosy little apartment?" she twittered. "I am *so* glad I was able to secure it for you; I assure you I was obliged to use all of my diplomacy with the agent. And your pretty things *do* light up the dark corners so nicely. And speaking of corners somehow reminds me, I have found you a *perfect treasure* of a maid; but you must take her at once. She's a cousin of our Marie, and has always been employed by the best people. She was with Mrs. Paget Smythe last, I believe. She told Marie last night that she would be willing to come to you for only twenty dollars a month, and that's *very* reasonable, considering the fact that she is willing to do part of the laundry work,—the towels, sheets and plain things, you know. *Expensive?* Indeed it's not, dear—for *Boston*. Why, I could tell you of plenty of people who are *glad* to pay twenty-five and put all their laundry out. I'd advise you to engage Annita without delay. Really, you couldn't do better."

[Pg 87]

Elizabeth shook her head. "I mean to do my own work," she said decidedly. "I shall want something to do while Sam is away, and why not this when I—like it?"

"But you won't like it after a while, my poor child, when the shine is once worn off your new pans and things, and *think* of your hands! It's absolutely impossible to keep one's nails in any sort of condition, and besides the heat from the gas-range is simply *ruinous* for the complexion. Didn't you *know* that? Of course you are all milk and roses now, but how long do you suppose that will last, if you are to be cooped up in a hot, stuffy little kitchen from morning till night?" Miss Tripp paused dramatically, her eyes wide with sympathy and apprehension.

[Pg 88]

"But we—I am sure we oughtn't to afford to keep a maid," demurred Elizabeth in a small, weak voice. "So please don't—"

"Oh, of course, it is nothing to me, my dear," and Miss Tripp arose with a justly offended air. "I *thought* I was doing you a kindness when I asked Annita to call and see you this morning. It will be perfectly easy for you to tell her that you don't care to engage her. But when it comes to *affording*, I think you can scarcely afford to waste your good looks over a cooking range. It is your duty to your husband to keep yourself young and lovely as long as you possibly can. It is only *too* easy to lose it all, and then—" Miss Tripp concluded her remarks with a shrug of her shapely shoulders, which aroused the too impressionable Elizabeth to vague alarms.

"I am sure," faltered the bride of two months, "that Sam would like me just as well even if I—"

[Pg 89]

"Of course you *think* so, dear, every woman does till it is *too late*," observed Miss Tripp plaintively. "I'm sure I *hope* it will turn out differently in your case. But I could tell you things about some of my married friends that would— Well, all I have to say is that I never dared try it—matrimony, I mean—and if I were in your place— But there! I *mustn't* meddle. I solemnly promised myself years and years ago that I wouldn't. The trouble with me is that I love my friends *too* fondly, and I simply cannot endure to see them making mistakes which might *so easily* have been avoided. I'm coming to take you out to-morrow, and we'll lunch down town in the nicest, most inexpensive little place. And—*dear*, if you finally decide *not* to engage Annita, *would* you mind telling her that through a *slight misunderstanding* you had secured some one else? These high-class servants are *so easily* offended, you know, and on account of *our Marie*—a perfect *treasure* Oh, *thank* you! *Au revoir*—till to-morrow!"

Perhaps it is not altogether to be wondered at that immediately after Miss Tripp's departure Elizabeth found occasion to glance into her mirror. Yes, she was undoubtedly prettier than ever, she decided, but suppose it should be true about the withering heat of the gas-range; and then there were the rose-tinted, polished nails, to which Elizabeth had only lately begun to pay particular attention. The day's work had already left perceptible blemishes upon their dainty perfection. Elizabeth recalled her mother's hands, marred with constant household labour, with a kind of terror. Her own would look the same before many years had passed, and would Sam—*could* he love her just the same when the delicate beauty of which he was so fond and proud had faded? And what, after all, was twenty dollars a month when one looked upon it as the price of one's happiness? [Pg 90]

Elizabeth sat down soberly with pencil and paper to contemplate the matter arithmetically. Thirty-eight dollars for rent, and twenty dollars for a maid, subtracted from one hundred and twenty—the latter sum representing the young engineer's monthly salary—left an undeniable balance of sixty-two dollars to be expended in food, clothing and other expenses. After half an hour of careful calculation, based on what she could remember of Innisfield prices, Elizabeth had reached very satisfactory conclusions. Clothing would cost next to nothing—for the first year, at least, and food for two came to a ridiculously small sum. There appeared, in short, to be a very handsome remainder left over for what Sam called "contingencies." This would include, of course, the fixed amount which they had prudently resolved to lay by on the arrival of every cheque. This much had already been settled between them. Sam had a promising nest-egg in a Boston bank, and both had dreams of its ultimate hatching into a house and lot, or into some comfortable interest-bearing bonds. Elizabeth was firmly resolved to be prudent and helpful to her husband in every possible way; but was it not her duty to keep herself young and lovely as long as possible? The idea so cogently presented to her attention by Miss Tripp not an hour since appeared to have become so much her own that she did not recognise it as borrowed property. [Pg 91]

It was at this psychological instant that a second summons announced the presence of a certain Annita McMurtry in the entrance hall below. "Did Mrs. Brewster wish to see this person?" [Pg 92]

Elizabeth hesitated for the fraction of a minute. "You may tell her to come up," was the message that finally found its way to the hall-boy's attentive ear.

Annita McMurtry was a neatly attired young woman, with a penetrating black eye, a ready smile and a well-poised, not to say supercilious bearing. In response to Elizabeth's timid questions she vouchsafed the explanation that she could "do everything" and was prepared "to take full charge."

"And by that you mean?" [Pg 93]

"I mean that the lady where I work doesn't have to worry herself about anything. I take full charge of everything—ordering, cooking, laundry and waiting on table, and I don't mind wiping up the floors in a small apartment like this. Window-cleaning and rugs the janitor attends to, of course."

"When—could you come, if I—decide to engage you?" asked Elizabeth, finding herself vaguely uncomfortable under the scrutiny of the alert black eyes.

"If you please, madam, I'd rather speak first about wages and days out. I'd like my alternate Thursdays and three evenings a week; and will you be going to theatres often with supper parties after? I don't care for that, unless I get paid extra. I left my last place on account of it; I can't stand it to be up all hours of the night and do my work next day."

"I should think not!" returned Elizabeth, with ready sympathy. "We should not require anything of the sort. As to wages, Miss Tripp said you would be willing to come for twenty dollars. It seemed very high to me for only two in the family." Elizabeth spoke in a very dignified way; she felt that she appeared quite the experienced housekeeper in the eyes of the maid, who was surveying her with a faint, inscrutable smile. [Pg 94]

"I never work for a family where there is more than two," said Miss McMurtry pointedly. "I could make my thirty-five a month easy if I would. But Miss Tripp must have misunderstood me; twenty-two was what I said, but you'll find I earn it. I'll come to-morrow morning about this time, and thank you kindly, madam." The young woman arose with a proud composure of manner, which put the finishing touch upon the interview, and accomplished her exit with the practised ease of a society woman.

"I wonder if I ought to have done it? And what will Sam say?" Elizabeth asked herself, ready to run undignifiedly after the girl, whose retiring footsteps were already dying away down the corridor. But Sam was found to be of the opinion that his Elizabeth had done exactly right. He hadn't thought of hiring a servant, to be sure, but he ought, manifestly, to have been reminded of his omission. It was surely not to be expected that a man's wife should spend her time and strength toiling over his food in a dark little den of a kitchen. No decent fellow would stand for that sort of thing. He wanted his wife to have time to go out, he said; to enjoy herself; to see pictures and hear music. As for the expense, he guessed they could swing it; he was sure to get another rise in salary before long. And much more of the same sort, all of which proved pleasantly soothing to Elizabeth's somewhat disturbed conscience. [Pg 95]

"I suppose Grandma Carroll would say I was a lazy girl," she sighed.

## CHAPTER VIII

Whatever the opinion of the unthinking many on the subject of honest work as related to the happiness of the individual, there can be but one just conclusion as to the effect of continued idleness, whether it be illustrated in the person of the perennially tired gentleman who frequents our back doors at certain seasons of the year, or in the refined woman who has emptied her hands of all rightful activities.

At the end of her first week's experience with her new maid Elizabeth found herself for the first time in her wholesome, well-ordered life at a loss for something to do. When Miss McMurtry stated that she would take full charge of Mrs. Brewster's ménage she meant what she said, and Elizabeth's inexperienced efforts to play the rôle of mistress, as she had conceived it, met with a civil but firm resistance on the part of the maid.

[Pg 97]

"Yes, Mrs. Brewster, I had expected to wipe up the dining-room floor this morning, after I have finished my kitchen work," she would announce frostily, in response to Elizabeth's timid suggestion. "I have my regular days for things, an' I don't need to be told. I've already spoken to the janitor's boy about the rugs, an' you'll please to leave some money with me to pay him. Just put it on the kitchen dresser." And "No, madam, I shall not have time to make an apple-pie this morning; I generally order pastry of the baker when it's called for. Yes, Mrs. Brewster, those were baker's rolls you had on the breakfast-table. I ordered the man to stop regularly. You prefer home-made bread, you say? I'm sorry, but I never bake. It is quite unnecessary in the city."

The young woman's emphasis on the last word delicately conveyed her knowledge of Mrs. Brewster's country origin, and her pitying disapproval of it.

Miss Tripp, to whom Elizabeth confided her new perplexities, merely laughed indulgently. "You mustn't interfere, if you want Annita to stay with you," she counselled. "Just keep religiously out of your kitchen, my dear, and everything will go on peacefully. We never think of such a thing as dictating to Marie, and we're careful not to make too many suggestions. Of course you don't know what a perfectly *dreadful* time people are having with servants here in town. My *dear*, I could tell you things that would frighten you! Just fancy having your prettiest *lingerie* disappear bit by bit, and your silk stockings worn to rags, and not *daring* to say a word!"

[Pg 98]

"I have lost two handkerchiefs since Annita came," said Elizabeth doubtfully.

"Oh, *handkerchiefs*, nobody expects to keep those forever. Really, do you know when I treat myself to a half dozen new ones I conceal them from Marie as long as I possibly can, for fear she'll decide I have too many."

Elizabeth's artlessly inquiring gaze provoked another burst of well-bred merriment. "You dear little innocent, you *do* amuse me so! Don't you see our good Marie doesn't propose to encourage me in senseless extravagance in laundry; you see there is no telling to what lengths I might go if left to myself, and it all takes Marie's time. No, I don't pretend to know what she does with them all. Gives them to her relations, perhaps. She *couldn't* use them all, and I give her a half dozen at Christmas every year. Why, they're all that way, and both Marie and Annita would draw the line at one's best silk stockings, I am sure. We think Marie *perfectly honest*; that is to say, I would trust her with everything I have, feeling sure that she would use her discretion in selecting for herself only the things I ought not to want any longer. *They know*, I can tell you, and they despise parsimonious people who try to make their old things do forever. You may as well make up your mind to it, my dear, and when you are fortunate enough to secure a really good, competent servant like Annita, you *mustn't* see *too* much."

[Pg 99]

Just why Elizabeth upon the heels of this enlightening conversation should have elected to purchase for herself two new handkerchiefs of a somewhat newer pattern than the ones she had lost was not entirely clear even to herself.

[Pg 100]

There had been a new, crisp bill in her purse for a number of weeks nestling comfortably against the twin gold pieces her father had given her on the day of her wedding. Sam had put it there himself, and had joked with her on her economical habits when he had found it unbroken on what he laughingly called her next pay day. "Seriously, though, little wife of mine, I never want you to be out of money," he had said; "if I am cad enough to forget you mustn't hesitate to remind me. And you need never feel obliged to tell me what you've done with it."

This wasn't the ideal arrangement for either; but neither husband nor wife was aware of it, nor of the fact that in the small, dainty purse which lay open between them lurked a possible danger to their common happiness. Elizabeth had been brought up in the old-fashioned way, her wants supplied by her careful mother, and an occasional pocket-piece by her overworked father, who always referred to the coins transferred from his pocket to her own as "money to buy a stick of candy with." The sum represented by the twin gold pieces and the crisp bills appeared to contain unlimited opportunities for enjoyment. A bunch of carnations for the dining table and a box of bonbons excused the long stroll down Tremont Street, during which Miss Tripp carried on the

[Pg 101]

education of her protégée on subjects urban without interruption.

"If I had only thought to stop at the bank this morning," observed Miss Tripp regretfully, "I should simply have insisted upon your lunching with me at Purcell's; then we might have gone to the matinée afterward; there is the dearest, brightest little piece on now—'Mademoiselle Rosette.' You haven't heard it? What a pity! This is the very last matinée. Never mind, dear, I sha'n't be so thoughtless another day."

"But why shouldn't I—" began Elizabeth tardily; then with a deep blush. "I have plenty of money with me, and I should be so happy if you would lunch with me, and——"

[Pg 102]

"My dear, I couldn't *think* of it! I *mustn't* allow you to be extravagant," demurred Miss Tripp. But in the end she yielded prettily, and Elizabeth forthwith tasted a new pleasure, which is irresistibly alluring to most generous women.

That evening at dinner her eyes were so bright and her laughing mouth so red that her young husband surveyed her with new admiration. "What did you find to amuse you to-day in this big, dull town?" he wanted to know.

"It isn't dull at all, Sam, and I've had the loveliest time with Evelyn," she told him, and added a spirited account of the opera seen with the unjaded eyes of the country-bred girl. "I've never had an opportunity to go to theatres and operas before," she concluded, "and Evelyn thinks I ought to see all the best things as a matter of education."

"I think so too," beamed the unselfish Sam, "and I hope you'll go often now that you have the chance."

[Pg 103]

"I may as well, I suppose, now that I have Annita," Elizabeth said. "It's dreadfully dull here at home when you are gone. I've nothing to do at all."

Sam pinched her pink ear gently as the two strolled away from the table. "How does the new kitchen mechanic suit you?" he asked. The meat had been overdone, the vegetables watery and the coffee of an indifferent colour and flavour, he thought privately.

"Why, she seems to know exactly what to do, and when to do it," Elizabeth said rather discontentedly, "and she's very neat; but did you like that custard, Sam? I thought it was horrid; I'm sure she didn't strain it, and it was cooked too much."

"Since you put it to me so pointedly, I'm bound to confess that the present incumbent isn't a patch on the last lady who cooked for me," confessed her husband, laughing at the puzzled look in her eyes.

"Oh, you mean me! I'm glad you like my cooking, Sam. I should feel dreadfully if you didn't. But about Annita, I am afraid she won't allow me to teach her any of the things I know; and when I said I meant to make a sponge-cake this morning, she said she was going to use the oven. But she wasn't, for I went out and looked afterward. Then she said right out that she wasn't used to having ladies in her kitchen, and that it made her nervous."

[Pg 104]

"Hum!" commented the mere man; "you'd better ask your father to prescribe for the young person; and in the meanwhile I should frequent 'her kitchen' till she had gradually accustomed herself to the idea."

"She would leave if I did that, Sam."

"There are others."

"Not like Annita," objected Elizabeth, with the chastened air of a three-dimensioned experience. "You've no idea of the dreadful times people have with servants here in Boston. And, really, one oughtn't to expect an angel to work in one's kitchen for twenty-two dollars a month; do you think so, Sam?"

Her uplifted eyes and earnest lips and rose-tinted cheeks were so altogether charming as she propounded this somewhat absurd question that Sam said, "Speaking of angels puts me in mind of the fact that I have one right in hand," and much more of the good, old-fashioned nonsense which makes the heart beat quicker and the eyes glow and sparkle with unreasoning joy when the heart is young.

[Pg 105]

Half an hour had passed in this agreeable manner when Elizabeth bethought herself to ask, "What had I better do about the butcher's and grocer's slips, Sam dear? Annita says that in all the places where she has worked they always run bills; but if we aren't to do that——"

"And we're not, you know; we agreed about that, Elizabeth?"

"Yes, of course; but Annita brought me several when I came in to-day; I had forgotten all about them. Do you think I ought to stay at home every day till after the butcher and grocer and baker have been here? Sometimes they don't call till after twelve o'clock."

This was manifestly absurd, and he said so emphatically. The result of his subsequent cogitations was an order to Annita to leave the slips on his desk, where they would be attended to each evening. "Mind," he said, "I don't want Mrs. Brewster annoyed with anything of the sort."

[Pg 106]

"Indeed, sir, I can see that Mrs. Brewster has not been used to being worried about anything, an'

no more she ought," the young woman had replied with an air of respectful affection for her mistress which struck Sam as being no less than admirable. It materially assisted him in his efforts to swallow Annita's muddy coffee of a morning and her leaden puddings at night. All this, while Elizabeth light-heartedly entered upon what Miss Tripp was pleased to call her "first Boston season."

There was so much to be learned, so much to be seen, so much to enjoy; and the new gowns and hats and gloves were so exactly the thing for the matinées, teas, card-parties and luncheons to which she found herself asked with unlooked-for cordiality. She could hardly have been expected to know that her open sesame to even this circle without a circle consisted in a low-voiced allusion to the sidereally remote Mrs. Van Duser, "a connection by marriage, my dear."

[Pg 107]

It was on a stormy afternoon in late February when Dr. North, unannounced and disdaining the noisy little elevator, climbed the three flights of stairs to his daughter's apartment and tapped lightly on the corridor door. His summons was answered by an alert young woman in a frilled cap and apron. Mrs. Brewster was giving a luncheon, she informed him, and could see no one.

"But I am Mrs. Brewster's father, and she'll want to see me," the good doctor had insisted, sniffing delicately at the odours of salad and coffee which floated out to him from the gingerly opened door. "Go tell your mistress that Dr. North is here and would like to see her."

In another minute a fashionable little figure in palest rose-colour had thrown two pretty lace-clad arms about his neck. "Oh, you dear, old darling daddy! why *didn't* you let me know you were coming? Now I've this luncheon party, with bridge after it, and I can't— But you must come in and wait; I'll tuck you away somewhere—in my bedroom, or—"

[Pg 108]

"I can't stay, Bess—at least not long. I've a consultation at the hospital at three. But I'll tell you, I'll be back at five; how'll that do? I've a message from your mother, and—"

Elizabeth shrugged her shoulders distractedly. "They won't go a minute before six," she said; "but come then—to dinner. Be sure now!"

The doctor was hungry, he had had no lunch, and despite the warmth of his welcome there was a perceptible chill about his aging heart as he slowly made his way down the stairs.

"I'm afraid I'll not be able to make it," he told himself; "my train goes at six-fifty, and—bless me! I've just time for a bite at a restaurant before I'm due at the hospital."

[Pg 109]

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## CHAPTER IX

A loving letter from his daughter followed Dr. North to Innisfield. In it Elizabeth had described her disappointment in not being able to see more of her darling daddy. They had waited dinner for him that night, she said, and Sam was dreadfully put out about it. "He *almost* scolded me for not bringing you right in. But how could I, with all those women? You wouldn't have enjoyed it, daddy dear; I know you too well. Next time—and I hope it will be soon—you must telephone me. We have a 'phone in our apartment now, and I'm sure I don't know how we ever lived without it. You see I have so many engagements that even if I didn't happen to be entertaining, I might not be at home, which would be just as bad."

The rest of the sheet was filled with a gay description of the automobile show, which was "really quite a function this year," and of her success as a hostess. "Evelyn says I've made immense progress, and she's quite proud of me."

[Pg 110]

There was a short silence as Mrs. North folded the letter and slipped it into its envelope.

"But I don't understand why you didn't go back and take dinner with them, as Bessie asked you to do," she said at last, in a reproachful tone. "You ought to have made an effort, Richard."

The doctor's grizzled brows lifted humorously as he glanced across the breakfast table at his wife's worried face. "Ought to have made an effort—eh?" he repeated. "Well, didn't I? I wanted to see Bess the worst way, but it seems she didn't want to see me—at least not at the time I arrived. So I went my way, got my lunch, met Grayson at the hospital at two-thirty, finished the operation at four, ran over to Avery's and left an order, then—"

"But why—"

"I could have gone back to Bess then, and I wanted to; but she didn't invite me to come till six, and I knew I must make that six-twenty train, for I'd promised Mrs. Baxter I'd call in the evening. So you see, my dear, I was up against it, as the boys say."

[Pg 111]

"Did she look well, Richard?" asked his wife anxiously.

"Perfectly well, I should say."

"And did she tell you when we might expect her at home for a little visit?"

The doctor shook his head. "I didn't have a chance to ask any questions, my dear." He arose and pushed back his chair. "Well, I must be going. When you write to Bess tell her it's all right, and

she's not to worry. I'll take care to let her know next time I'm coming." He went out and closed the door heavily behind him.

Grandma Carroll, who had listened to the conversation without comment, pursed up her small, wise mouth. "That reminds me, daughter, I think I shall go to Boston to-day," she observed briskly.

"To Boston—to-day?" echoed her daughter in surprise. "I don't believe I can possibly get away to go with you, mother. Malvina Bennett is coming to fix my black skirt; besides, there's the baking and——" [Pg 112]

"You needn't to feel that you must put yourself out on my account, Lizzie," Mrs. Carroll replied with a slightly offended air. "I am quite capable of going to China if it was necessary. I hadn't thought to mention it to you yesterday, but there's some shopping I want to do, so I'll get right off on the morning train."

"Will you have time to get around to see Bessie?"

"I'll make time," said grandma trenchantly. "I want to see what she's doing with my own eyes. I don't know what *you* think about her not asking her father in to her table, but I know what *I* think."

"Oh, mother, I hope you won't——"

"You needn't to worry a mite about what I'll say or do, I shan't be hasty; but I mistrust that Sipp woman is leading Lizzie into extravagance and foolishness, and I mean to find out. I shall probably stay all night, and maybe all day to-morrow." [Pg 113]

"But it might not be convenient for Bessie," hesitated Mrs. North, "you know what she said about telephoning; I guess I'd better let her know you're coming."

"Hump!" ejaculated grandma, "it wasn't always convenient for me to be up nights with her when she had whooping-cough and measles, but I did it just the same. I don't want you should telephone, daughter. I don't know just when I shall get around to Lizzie's house; when I do, I'll stay till I get ready to come home, you can depend upon that, if all the folks in Boston are there a-visiting. I'll go right in and visit with them. I'm going to take my best silk dress and my point lace collar, so I guess I'll be full as dressy as any of 'em."

Mrs. North sighed apprehensively, but in the end she saw Mrs. Carroll onto the train with a wondering sense of relief. "Mother always did know how to manage Bessie better than I did," she told herself vaguely. [Pg 114]

When Mrs. Carroll arrived at her destination the whistles were proclaiming the hour of noon. "I'm just in time for dinner, I guess," she observed cheerfully to the elevator boy, who grinned his appreciation. But there was no token of occupancy about the Brewster apartment when Mrs. Carroll rapped smartly upon the door.

"The missis is out," volunteered the boy, who had lingered to watch the progress of the pink-cheeked, smiling old lady; "but the girl's there. I seen her go in not fifteen minutes ago."

Thus encouraged Mrs. Carroll repeated her summons. After what seemed a second interminable silence the door opened, disclosing an alert presence in an immaculate cap and apron.

"How do you do?" said grandma pleasantly. "This boy here says Mrs. Brewster isn't at home; but I'll come in and wait till she does. I'm her grandmother, Mrs. Carroll; you've probably heard her speak of me, and I guess you're the girl she tells about in her letters sometimes. You've got a pretty name, my dear, and you look real neat and clean. Now if you'll just take my bag, it's pretty heavy, and——" [Pg 115]

Annita had not taken her beady black eyes off the little presence. "I never let strangers in when Mrs. Brewster's not at home," she said stolidly. "It ain't to be expected that I should. I guess you'll have to come again, about four this afternoon, maybe."

"I like to see a hired girl careful and watchful," said grandma approvingly, "but if you look in the photograph album I gave my granddaughter Lizzie, on her sixteenth birthday, you'll see my picture on the front page, and that'll relieve you of all responsibility." She pushed determinedly past the astonished Annita, and was laying off her bonnet in the front room before that young person could collect her forces for a second protest.

"So your mistress isn't coming home for dinner?" Mrs. Carroll's voice full of kindly inflections pursued Miss McMurry to her final stronghold. "My! I'd forgotten what a small kitchen this was. Dark, isn't it? I'm afraid that's what makes you look so pale. Now if you'll just make me a cup of tea—or let me do it if you're busy; I'm used to waiting on myself. I suppose I'll find the tea-caddy in here." [Pg 116]

"You—let—my place alone—you!" hissed Annita, livid with rage, as Grandma Carroll laid her hand on the door of the cupboard. But she was too late; the open door disclosed a large frosted cake, a heap of delicately browned rolls and a roasted chicken.

"Well, well! your cooking looks very nice indeed. I suppose you're expecting company; but if you can spare me one of those tasty rolls I shall make out nicely with the tea. Be sure and have it hot, my dear." And grandma pattered gently back into the dining-room, smiling wisely to herself.



Just how many of Miss McMurtry's plans went awry that afternoon it would be hard to say. At three o'clock, when a mysterious black-robed elderly person carrying a capacious basket came up in the elevator she was met in the corridor by a white-visaged fury in a frilled cap and apron, who implored her distractedly to go away.

[Pg 117]

"An' phwat for should I go away; ain't the things ready as usual?" demanded the lady with the basket. "I'd like me cup o' tea, too; I'm that tired an' cold."

Miss McMurtry almost wept on the maternal shoulder. "I've got a lovely chicken," she whispered, "an' a cake, besides the rolls you was hungry for, an' the groceries; but her gran'mother, bad luck to her, come this mornin' from the country, an' she's helpin' me *clean my kitchen*."

"Phwat for 'd you let her into your kitchen?" demanded the elder McMurtry indignantly. "I'm surprised at ye, Annie."

"I didn't let her in, she walked right out and poked her nose into me cupboard without so much as sayin' by your leave. I think I'll be leavin' my place; I won't wait t' be trowed out by her." Miss McMurtry's tone was bitter. "They ain't much anyway. I'd rather go where there was more to do with."

[Pg 118]

"Right you are, Annie, my girl, I've towld you that same many's the time. But if you're leavin' the night be sure—" The woman's voice dropped to a hissing whisper.

"I'll do it sure, and maybe—" The girl's black eyes gleamed wickedly as she caught the creak and rattle of the ascending elevator—"I can do better than what you said in the end. It's safe enough with the likes o' them. They're easy."

At six o'clock in fluttered Elizabeth, a vision of elegant femininity in her soft furs and plumes and trailing skirts. Darling grandmamma was kissed and embraced quite in the latest fashion, and the two sat down cosily to visit while Annita set the table for dinner with stony composure.

"I've been here since noon," said grandma, complacently, "and I've been putting in my time helping your hired girl clean her cupboards."

"What! Annita? You've been helping Annita?"

"Why, yes; I didn't have anything else to do, and the cupboards certainly did need cleaning. Seems to me, Lizzie, you keep a big stock of all sorts of groceries on hand for so small a family as yours."

[Pg 119]

"Do we?" asked Elizabeth, yawning daintily. "I'm sure I don't know what we have. Annita is perfectly competent to attend to everything in the kitchen, and I never interfere. She doesn't like it, and so why should I."

"What are you paying for butter this winter?" grandma wanted to know, after a thoughtful pause.

"I'm sure I don't know, the usual price, I suppose. Sam attends to the bills. He looks them over every night when he comes home, and gives Annita the money to pay them with."

"Hum!" commented grandma, surveying her granddaughter keenly over the top of her spectacles; "that's a new way to keep house, seems to me."

"It's a nice way, I know that," laughed Elizabeth.

She had changed subtly from the shy, undeveloped girl who had left Innisfield less than a year ago into a luxuriance of bloom and beauty which astonished the older woman. There was an air of poise, of elegance, of assured dignity about her slender figure which fitted her as did her gown.

[Pg 120]

"It must be easy, certainly," agreed Mrs. Carroll, sniffing delicately, after a well-remembered fashion.

Elizabeth laughed and shrugged her shoulders in a way she had caught from Evelyn Tripp. "Now you know you are dying to lecture me, grandma," she said caressingly; "but you see, dear, that things are decidedly different here in Boston, and— But here comes Sam; he'll be so glad to see you."

Mrs. Carroll was very cheerful and chatty with the young people that evening. She told them all the Innisfield news in her most spirited fashion, and never once by word or look expressed her growing disapproval of what her shrewd old eyes were telling her.

Miss McMurtry, who stood with her ear glued to the crack of the door for a long half hour, finally retired with a contemptuous toss of her black head. Then, the coast being clear, she found opportunity to convey to their destination the comestibles dutifully provided for maternal consumption. "She's full as easy as the young one for all her meddlin' ways," said Miss McMurtry, "an' she'll be leavin' in the mornin', so there'll be no back talk comin' from her."

[Pg 121]

But for once Annita was mistaken in her premises. Mrs. Carroll, it is true, made no immediate reference to the disclosures afforded by her daring invasion of the kitchen fastnesses, nor did she even remotely allude to the probable date of her departure for Innisfield.

"I don't want you should make company of me, Lizzie," she said pleasantly, "or put yourself out a mite. I'll just join right in and do whatever you're planning to do."

Elizabeth puckered her pretty forehead perplexedly; she was thinking that Grandma Carroll's unannounced visit would necessitate the hasty giving up of a gay luncheon and theatre party planned for that very afternoon. Tears of vexation sparkled in her brown eyes, as she took down the telephone receiver.

[Pg 122]

Mrs. Carroll listened to the one-sided conversation which followed without visible discomfiture. "Now that's too bad," she observed sympathetically. "Why didn't you tell me you wanted to go, and I'd have eaten my lunch right here at home. There's plenty of cooked victuals in your kitchen pantry; I saw 'em yesterday whilst I was out helping around. I suppose your hired girl cooked that roast chicken and the layer-cake and the rolls for Samuel's noonings. I hope you'll see to it, Lizzie, that he takes a good, tasty lunch to work every day. But of course you do."

Elizabeth stared. "Why, grandma," she said, "Sam doesn't carry his lunch like a common workman. He eats it at a restaurant in South Boston."

"Hum!" mused Mrs. Carroll, "I wonder if he gets anything fit to eat there? Samuel appears to have gone off in his weight considerable since I saw him last," she added, shaking her head wisely. "He needs a gentian tonic, I should say, or—something."

[Pg 123]

"You're mistaken, grandma," Elizabeth said, with an air of offended wifely dignity. "Sam isn't the least bit ill. Of course he works hard, but I should be the first to notice it if there was anything the matter with my husband."

"Care killed a cat," quoted grandma sententiously, "and you appear to be pretty much occupied with other things. Home ought to come first, my dear; I hope you aren't forgetting that."

Elizabeth's pretty face was a study; she bit her lip to keep back the petulant words that trembled on her tongue. "Evelyn is coming, grandma," she said hurriedly, "and please don't—discuss things before her."

Miss Tripp was unaffectedly surprised and, as she declared, "*charmed*" to see dear Mrs. Carroll in Boston. "I didn't suppose," she said, "that you ever *could* bring yourself to leave dear, quiet Innisfield."

Mrs. Carroll, on her part, exhibited a smiling blandness of demeanour which served as an incentive to the lively, if somewhat one-sided conversation which followed; a shrewd question now and then on the part of Mrs. Carroll eliciting numerous facts all bearing on the varied social activities of "*dear* Elizabeth."

[Pg 124]

"I'm positively looking forward to Lent," sighed Miss Tripp; "for really I'm *worn* to a *fringe*, but dear Elizabeth never seems tired, no matter how many engagements she has. It is a perfect *delight* to look at her, isn't it, dear Mrs. Carroll?"

"Lizzie certainly does look healthy," admitted the smiling old lady, "but it beats me how she finds time to look after her husband and her hired girl with so many parties."

The result of Mrs. Carroll's subsequent observations and conclusions were summed up in the few trenchant remarks addressed to her granddaughter the following day, as she was tying on her bonnet preparatory to taking the train for Innisfield.

"I hope you'll come again soon, grandma," Elizabeth said dutifully.

[Pg 125]

"I mistrust you don't mean that, Lizzie," replied Mrs. Carroll, facing about and gazing keenly at the young matron, "and I may as well say that I'm not likely to interfere with your plans often. I like my own bed and my own rocking-chair too well to be going about the country much. But I couldn't make out from what your father said just what the matter was."

Elizabeth shrugged her shoulders with a pretty air of forbearance. "I was awfully sorry about daddy," she murmured; "but I don't see how I could have done anything else under the circumstances."

"Well, *I* do," said Grandma Carroll severely. She buttoned her gloves energetically as she went on in no uncertain tones. "I've always been a great believer in everybody minding their own business, but there's times when a little plain speech won't hurt anybody. Things aren't going right in your house, Lizzie; I can see that without half looking. *I warn you to keep an eye on your kitchen pantry*. I mistrust there's a leak there."

[Pg 126]

"I trust Annita perfectly," said Elizabeth, her round chin tilted aggressively. "And I'm sure I ought to know by this time."

"I agree with you there, Lizzie, you ought to know, but you don't. That girl is carrying things out of your kitchen as fast as the grocer and the butcher can bring them in; I don't think you can afford to let her spend your husband's money as she pleases, and that is what it amounts to the way you're managing now."

"But grandma," protested Elizabeth, "Sam looks over every one of the bills himself before he pays them."

"It isn't your husband's place to do your work and his own too, my dear."

Elizabeth hung her head, her face flaming with angry colour.

"You've been brought up to be a sensible, industrious, economical woman," pursued Mrs. Carroll earnestly; "but from what that Tipp girl said yesterday, I should imagine you'd taken leave of your senses. What does Samuel say to your spending so much money and being out so constant?"

[Pg 127]

"He—he likes to have me have a good time."

"Well, I'll lose my guess if *he's* having one," said grandma pointedly. "Samuel looked worried to death last night when Terita brought him the bills. And I took notice he didn't eat scarcely anything at dinner. For that matter, I didn't myself; there wasn't a thing on the table cooked properly. Now, Lizzie, I've said my say, and I'm going." She kissed her granddaughter heartily. "Take time to think it over, child, and mind you don't tell the Fripp girl what I've said. She could talk a bird off a bush without a bit of trouble."

"I wonder if everybody gets as queer and unreasonable as grandma when they are old," mused Elizabeth, as she picked her way daintily through the sloppy streets. "I'm sure I hope I sha'n't. Of course Sam is all right. I guess he'd tell me the very first thing if he wasn't."

Nevertheless, Mrs. Carroll's significant words had left an unpleasant echo in her mind which haunted her at intervals all day. Under its influence she made a bold incursion into her kitchen, after a luncheon of chipped beef, dry toast and indifferent baker's cake.

[Pg 128]

"Have we any cold chicken, Annita?" she asked hesitatingly. "I—that is, I am expecting a few friends this afternoon, and I thought——"

Miss McMurtry faced about and eyed her mistress with lowering brows. "There ain't any chicken in the place, Mrs. Brewster," she said stonily; "an' as I ain't in the habit of havin' parties sprung on me unbeknownst, I'll be leaving at the end of my month, which is to-morrow—*if* you please."

Elizabeth's new-found dignity enabled her to face the woman's angry looks without visible discomfiture. "Very well, Annita," she said quietly. "Perhaps that will be best for both of us."

[Pg 129]

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## CHAPTER X

Elizabeth greeted her husband that night with a speculative anxiety in her eyes born of the uncomfortable misgivings which had haunted her during the day. And when after dinner he dropped asleep over his evening paper she perceived with a sharp pang of apprehension that his face was thinner than she had ever seen it, that his healthy colour had paled somewhat, and that hitherto unnoticed lines had begun to show themselves about his mouth and eyes.

She reached for his hand which hung idly by his side, and the light touch awakened him. "Oh, Sam," she began, "Grandma Carroll insisted upon it that you were looking ill, and I wanted to see if you had any fever; working over there in that unhealthy part of town, you might have caught something."

"Who told you it was unhealthy?" he wanted to know. "It really isn't at all, little girl, and you're not to worry about me—or anything."

[Pg 130]

At just what point in his career Samuel Brewster had acquired the Quixotic idea that a woman, and particularly a young and beautiful woman, should not be allowed to taste the smallest drop of the world's bitterness he could not have explained. But the notion, albeit a mistaken one, was as much a part of himself as the blue of his steadfast eyes or the bronzy brown of his crisp locks.

"You're not," he repeated positively, "to give yourself the slightest anxiety about me. I never felt better in my life." And he smiled determinedly.

"But, Sam dear, I shall be obliged to worry if you are going to be ill, or if—" a misty light breaking in upon her confused thoughts, "you are keeping anything from me that I ought to know. I've been thinking about it all day, and I've been wondering if—" she lowered her voice cautiously—"Annita is perfectly reliable. I've always thought so till to-day. Anyway, she's going to leave to-morrow, and you'll be obliged to go back to my cooking for a while, till I can get some one else."

[Pg 131]

The somewhat vague explanations which followed called for an examination of grocer's and butcher's accounts; and the two heads were bent so closely over the parti-coloured slips that neither heard the hasty preparations for departure going on in the rear.

"It looks to me as if our domestic had been spoiling the Egyptians," hazarded Sam, after half an hour of unsatisfactory work. "But I really don't know how much meat, groceries and stuff we ought to be using."

"I might have found out," murmured Elizabeth contritely. "I've just gone on enjoying myself like a child, and—and I'm afraid I've spent too much money. I haven't kept any count."

Her husband glanced at her pretty worried face with a frown of perplexity and annoyance between his honest eyes. "The fact is, Betty," he burst out, "a poor man has no business to marry and make a woman uncomfortable and unhappy. You haven't spent but a trifle, dear, and all on the simplest, most innocent pleasures; yet it does count up so confoundedly. I wanted you to have a good time, dear, and I couldn't—bear—" He dropped into a chair and thrust his hands deep into

[Pg 132]

his pockets.

"Then we *have* been spending too much on—contingencies; why didn't you tell me before?"

He bit his lip. "We've spent nearly every dollar of our reserve, Betty," he said slowly, "and this month I'm afraid—I don't see how I am going to meet all of the bills."

"Oh, Sam!" gasped Elizabeth, turning pale.

A voice from the softly opened kitchen door broke in upon, this crucial conversation. "You'll please to excuse me, Mrs. Brewster, but I've had word that my mother is sick, an' I'll have to be leaving at once. My month's up in the morning anyway, an' I hope you'll not mind paying me my wages to-night."

Her lip curled scornfully as she glanced at the tradesmen's slips scattered on the table. Miss McMurtry openly despised people who, as she expressed it, were always "trying to save a copper cent on their meat and groceries." She herself felt quite above such economies. One could always change one's place, and being somewhat versed in common law, she felt reasonably secure in such small pecadilloes as she had seen fit to commit while in the employ of the Brewsters. [Pg 133]

"I should like to ask you a few questions first about these accounts," said the inexperienced head of the house sternly. "How does it happen that you ordered fifteen pounds of sugar, seven pounds of butter and two of coffee last week? Surely Mrs. Brewster and I never consumed such an amount of provisions as I see we have paid for."

Miss McMurtry's elbows vibrated slightly. "I only ordered what was needed, sir," she replied in a high, shrill voice. "Sure, you told me yourself not to bother the madame."

"I did tell you that, I know. I thought you were to be trusted, but this doesn't look like it." [Pg 134]

A fearsome change came over the countenance of the respectable young person in the frilled apron. "Are you meaning to insinooate that *I* took them groceries?" she demanded fiercely. "I'll ask you to prove that same. Prove it, I say! It's a lie, an' I'd be willin' to swear to it in a court of justice. That's what comes of me workin' for poor folks that can't pay their bills!" Miss McMurtry swung about on her heels and included Elizabeth in the lightning of her gaze. "I come here to accomydate her, thinkin' she was a perfec' lady, an' I've slaved night an' day in her kitchen a-tryin' my best to please her, an' this is what I gets for it! But you can't take my character away that easy; I've the best of references; an' I'll trouble you for my wages—if you can pay 'em. If not, there's ways I can collect 'em."

"Pay her, Sam, and let her go, do!" begged Elizabeth in a frightened whisper.

"I ought not to pay the girl, I'm sure of that; but to save you further annoyance, my dear—" He counted out twenty-two dollars, and pushed the little pile of bills across the table. "Take it," he said peremptorily, "and go." [Pg 135]

The two gazed at each other in silence while the loud trampling footsteps of the erstwhile gentle and noiseless Annita sounded in the rear. Then, when a violent and expressive bang of the kitchen door announced the fact that their domestic had finally shaken off the dust of her departure against them, Elizabeth burst into a relieved laugh. She came presently and perched on her husband's knee.

"Sam, dear," she murmured, "it is all my fault, every bit of it. No; don't contradict me—nor interrupt—please! We can't afford to go on this way, and we're not going to. We'll begin over again, just as we meant to before I—" she paused while a flood of shamed colour swept over her drooped face—"tried to be fashionable. It isn't really so very much fun to go to card-parties and teas and luncheons, and I don't care a bit about it all, especially if—if it is going to cost us too much; and I—can see that it has already."

All her little newly acquired graces and affectations dropped away as she spoke, and her husband saw the sweet, womanly soul he had loved and longed for in the beginning looking out of her brown eyes. He kissed her thankfully, almost solemnly. "Dear Betty," he whispered. [Pg 136]

"Couldn't we—go away from this place?" she went on after a while. "It isn't very pleasant, is it? and—I'm almost ashamed to say it—but Evelyn Tripp has such a way of making things look different to one. What she says sounds so—so *sensible* that I can't—at least I haven't done as I intended in hardly anything."

"There's a little red cottage to let, with a pocket-handkerchief lawn in front and room for a garden behind, not half a mile from where we are working," Sam told her, "but I haven't mentioned it because it's a long way to Tremont Street and—Evelyn." His blue eyes were full of the laughing light she had missed vaguely for more weeks than she cared to remember.

"Let's engage it to-morrow!" exclaimed Elizabeth. "Why, Sam dear, we could have roses and strawberries and all sorts of fun out there!" [Pg 137]

When, after missing her friend for several days, Miss Tripp called at the Brewster apartment she was astonished beyond measure to find her dearest Elizabeth busy packing some last trifles, while several brawny men were engaged in taking away the furniture.

"*My dear!*" she exclaimed. "What *are* you doing?"

"We're moving," said Elizabeth tranquilly. "You know I never cared particularly for this apartment, the rooms are so dark and unpleasant; besides the rent is too high for us."

"But *where*—"

"I was just going to tell you; we've taken a little house away over near the new water-works." Then as Miss Tripp's eyebrows and shoulders expressed a surprise bordering on distraction, "I felt that it would be better for us both to be nearer Sam's work. He can come home to luncheon now, and I—we shall like that immensely."

[Pg 138]

"But you're going *out of the world*; do you *realise* that, my dear? And *just* as you were beginning to be known, too; and when I've tried so hard to—" Miss Tripp's voice broke, and she touched her eyelids delicately with her handkerchief. "Oh, *why* didn't you consult *me* before taking such an irrevocable step? I'm sure I could have persuaded you to change your mind."

Elizabeth opened her lips to reply; then she hesitated at sight of Evelyn's wan face, whereon the lavishly applied rice powder failed to conceal the traces of the multiplied fatigues and disappointments of a purely artificial life.

"You'll be glad you didn't try to make me change my mind when you see our house," she said gaily. "It has all been painted and papered, and everything about the place is as fresh and sunny and delightful as this place is dark and dingy and disagreeable. Only think, Evelyn, there is a real fireplace in the living room, where we are going to burn real wood of an evening, and the bay-window in the dining-room looks out on a grass-plot bordered with rose-bushes!"

[Pg 139]

"But the neighbourhood, dear!" wailed Evelyn. "Only think what a social Sahara you are going into!"

"I don't know about that," Elizabeth told her calmly. "Several of the engineers who are working with Sam live near with their families, and Sam thinks we are going to enjoy it immensely. He is so glad we are going."

Evelyn had folded her hands in her lap and sat looking hopelessly about the dismantled rooms. "You don't seem to think about me, Betty," she said, after a while. "I—I am going to miss you terribly." Tears shone in her faded eyes and her voice trembled.

Elizabeth's warm heart was touched. "You've been very good to me, Evelyn," she said. "I shall never forget all that I've—learned from you. But we're really not going out of the world, and you shall come and see us whenever you will, and bye and bye we shall have strawberries and roses to offer you."

[Pg 140]

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## CHAPTER XI

The roses on the tiny lawn of which Sam had spoken were in full bud, and Elizabeth was searching eagerly for the first streak of pink in the infant blossoms when she was surprised by the sight of an imposing equipage drawing up at the curb. The fat black horses pawed the gravel disdainfully, shaking their jingling harness, as the liveried footman dismounted from his perch and approached the mistress of the house.

"I beg pawdon, miss," he said loftily; "but can you tell me where—aw—Mrs. Samuel Brewster lives?"

"I am Mrs. Brewster." Elizabeth told him.

Whereupon the man presented a card with an air of haughty humility.

Elizabeth's wondering eyes uprose from its perusal to the vision of a tall, stout lady attired in purple broadcloth who was being assisted from the carriage. The hot colour flamed over her fair face, and for an instant she was tempted to run into the house and hide herself and the neat checked gingham gown she was wearing. Then she gripped her courage with both hands and came forward smiling determinedly.

[Pg 141]

The august personage in purple paused at sight of the slender, blue-frocked figure, and raising a gold-mounted lorgnette to her eyes deliberately inspected it. "You are—Samuel Brewster's wife?" she asked.

"Yes, Mrs. Van Duser." Elizabeth's voice trembled in spite of herself, but her eyes were calmly bright. "Won't you come in?" she added politely.

The lady breathed somewhat heavily as she mounted the vine-wreathed porch. "I will sit down here," she announced magisterially; "the air is pleasant in the country."

Elizabeth's brief experience in Boston society came to her assistance, enabling her to reply suitably to this undeniable statement of fact. Then an awesome silence ensued, broken only by the bold chirp of an unabashed robin successfully hunting worms in the grass-plot.

[Pg 142]

"Where is your husband?" suddenly propounded the visitor.

"Mr. Brewster is engaged in making a topographical map for the city; I do not know exactly

where he is this afternoon," replied Elizabeth, her colour paling, then rising as she recalled the too well-remembered words of Mrs. Van Duser's late communication. "Did you wish to see him?"

Mrs. Van Duser was apparently engaged in a severe inspection of the adventurous robin. She did not at once reply.

Elizabeth looked down at the toe of her shabby little shoe. "Sam—comes home to lunch now," she faltered. "I—he hasn't been gone long."

"Ah!" intoned Mrs. Van Duser, majestically transferring her attention from the daring robin to Elizabeth's crimson face.

"Samuel has neglected to call upon me since his return to Boston," was Mrs. Van Duser's next remark, delivered in an awe-inspiring contralto; "though it is evident that he owes me an acknowledgment of his present good fortune."

[Pg 143]

Elizabeth fixed round eyes of astonishment upon her visitor. "I can't think what you mean," she exclaimed unguardedly.

"And yet I find you here, in this sylvan spot, far removed from the follies and temptations of your former position, and—I trust—prospering in a modest way."

"Thank you," murmured Elizabeth, pink with indignation, "we are getting on very well."

"What rent do you pay?"

Elizabeth looked about rather wildly, as if searching for a way of escape. The robin had swallowed his latest find with an air of huge satisfaction, and now flew away with a ringing summons to his mate. "We pay thirty dollars, Mrs. Van Duser," she said slowly, "by the month."

"Um! Why don't you buy the place?"

"I don't think—I'm sure we—couldn't—" hesitated Elizabeth.

[Pg 144]

"You are wrong," said Mrs. Van Duser, again raising her lorgnette to her eyes; "if you can afford to pay three hundred and sixty dollars in rent you can afford to own a home, and you should do so. Tell Samuel I said so."

"Yes, Mrs. Van Duser," murmured Elizabeth in a depressed monotone.

"Do you keep a maid?"

"No, Mrs. Van Duser, I do my own housework." Elizabeth's brown eyes sparkled defiantly as she added, "I was brought up to work, and I like to do it."

Mrs. Van Duser's large solemn countenance relaxed into a smile as she gazed into the ingenuous young face at her side.

"Ah, my dear," she sighed, "I envy you your happiness, though I had it myself once upon a time. I don't often speak of those days, but John Van Duser was a poor man when I married him, and we lived in a little house not unlike this, and I did the cooking. Do you think you could give me a cup of tea, my dear?"

When Samuel Brewster came home from his work at an unexpectedly early hour that afternoon he was astonished to find an imposing coupé, drawn by two fat, shining horses, being driven slowly up and down before his door; and further, as he entered the house, by the cheerful sound of clinking silver and china and low-voiced conversation. Elizabeth, pink-cheeked and smiling, met him with an exclamation of happy surprise.

[Pg 145]

"I am so glad you came home, Sam dear," she said. "Mrs. Van Duser was hoping to see you before she went."

And Mrs. Van Duser, looking very much at home and very comfortable indeed in Sam's own big wicker chair, proffered him a large white jewelled hand, while she bade him give an account of himself quite in the tone of an affectionate relative.

"You have a charming and sensible wife, Samuel, and a well-conducted home," said the great lady. "I have seen the whole house, cellar, kitchen and all," she added with a reminiscent sigh, "and it has carried me back to the happiest days I ever spent."

[Pg 146]

The young engineer passed his arm about his Elizabeth's shoulders as the two stood at the gate watching the stately departure of the Van Duser equipage. "Well, Betty," he said, "so the mountain came to Mahomet? But the mountain doesn't seem such a bad sort, after all. I liked the way she kissed you good-bye, though I should never have guessed she was capable of it."

Elizabeth drew a deep breath. "I never was so frightened in my life as when she first came," she confessed. "But she is kind, Sam, in her way, though at first I thought it wasn't a pleasant way. And O, Sam dear, she thinks we gave up our flat and came out here just because she wrote us that letter; she was as complacent as could be when she spoke of it."

"Did you undeceive her?"

"N-no, dear, I didn't even try. Perhaps it was the letter—partly, and anyway I felt sure I couldn't make her think any differently whatever I might say. But I did tell her about Annita and about

"Did you tell her about the Tripp lady?" he suggested teasingly.

"No," she said gravely. "Evelyn meant to be kind, too; I am sure of that."

"O benevolent Betty!" he exclaimed with mock gravity. "O most sapient Elizabeth! I perceive that in gaining a new friend thou hast not lost an old one! I suppose from now on you will begin to model your small self on the Van Duser pattern. My lady will see to it that you do, if you see much of her."

Elizabeth looked up at her tall husband, her brown eyes brimming with thoughtful light. "It is good to have friends," she said slowly; "but, Sam dear, we must never allow any—*friend* to come between us again. We must live our own lives, and solve our own problems, even if we make an occasional blunder doing it."

"We've solved our problems already," he said confidently, "and I'm not afraid of the blunders, thanks to the dearest and best little wife a man ever had."

And Elizabeth smiled back at him, knowing in her wiser woman's heart that there were yet many problems to be solved, but not fearful of what the future would bring in the light of his loving eyes.

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