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DRUSILLA WITH A MILLION

By ELIZABETH COOPER

DRUSILLA WITH A MILLION

CHAPTER I

"Drusilla Doane, O Drusilla Doane!" came waveringly around the corner; and the quavering voice was followed by a little old woman who peered at the line of old ladies sitting in the sun. "Is Drusilla Doane here?" she inquired, darting quick birdlike glances from her old eyes at the curious faces that looked up at her approach.

A little white-haired woman stopped the darning of the tablecloth in her hands and looked up expectantly.

"Yes, I'm here, Barbara. What do you want of me?"

"There's two men in the parlor to see you, an' Mis' Smith told me to tell you to hurry. I been lookin' for you everywhere."

Drusilla Doane let the cloth fall into her lap, and all the other women stopped their work to stare at the announcer of such wonderful news.

"To see _me_, are you sure?"

"Yes, they asked to see Miss Drusilla Doane. You're the only one of that name here, ain't you?"

Drusilla folded her work and placed it in the basket of linen by the side of her chair.

"Yes, I guess it must mean me," she said, and rose to go.

As she passed around the house all the old ladies moved as if by a common impulse.

"Come right here, Barbara Field, and tell us all about it. Who are the men?"

"What did they look like?" questioned another.

"Take this chair and tell us all about it," said Miss Harris, the youngest of the ladies; and a place was made in their midst and the line closed around her.

"Put your teeth in, so's we can understand you."

Barbara groped around in the pocket of her apron; then, holding the end of the apron up to her face, adroitly slipped her teeth into her mouth, and sat down to become for once the center of interest to her little world.

"Now tell us all about it--what you waiting for?" said one of the ladies impatiently.

"What'll I tell?" said Barbara. "I was passin' by the door and Mis' Smith called me in and said, 'Barbara, will you find Drusilla Doane and send her here? Tell her that there are two gentlemen who wish to see her.'"

"Two men--_two_ men to see Drusilla Doane!" cackled one old lady. "She ain't never had _one_ to call to see her before, as I knows on."

"No," chimed in another. "She's been here five years and there ain't a livin' soul before asked to see Drusilla Doane. What'd they look like, Barbara?"

"One was tall and thin and sour-lookin'--looked like a director of a institution; and the other was short and fat and pussy and was dressed real elegant. One had a silk hat and he wore one gray glove and carried another in his hand with a cane. That was the skinny one. The pussy one wore a gray vest--that's all I had time to see--and his eyes kind o' twinkled at me."

"Did you hear what they wanted Drusilla for?"

"No, I didn't hear nothin'."

"You mean you didn't hear anything, Barbara," interrupted a querulous, refined voice. "Your grammar is dreadful!"

"I don't mean no such thing. I mean I didn't hear _nothin'_ and nothin' it is." And Barbara's meek, faded old eyes glared at the little old lady in the corner, if meek, faded blue eyes could glare.

"Never mind her grammar, Lodema Ann. Why didn't you hear what they said? What was you doin' in the hall if you wasn't listenin'?"

"I told you I was just passin' through and Mis' Smith called me in."

"Don't you know nothin' about it--_nothin'!_"

"Nothin'. I've told you all I know. Can I take my teeth out now?"

"No, Barbara; keep your teeth in till we've finished with you. A person can't understand a word you say with your teeth out, you gum your words so."

"But they hurt me; they don't fit. I ain't had a new pair for twenty

years and my jaws've shrunk."

"Well, keep 'em in fer a while. They won't shrink any more fer a minit. Did they look like relations?"

"Relations!" said a big, placid-looking woman who was knitting quietly. "Drusilla ain't got no relations. She ain't never had none."

"She must have had some at one time. Everybody has relations--although _some_ people I know, had rather be without them than recognize the kind they got." The sour voiced old lady directed her tones toward the seat next to her.

"If you're a meanin' me, Caroline, I want to tell you my relations is just as good as your'n, though we don't throw 'em down everybody's throat as some folks I know."

"No," said another; "Drusilla has no family; she told me so herself. One day I was telling her about my family, about my father who was so well known in the State, and my brother who became the great--"

"Now don't begin on your family, Maria. We know all about it. We ain't heard nothin' else fer the last three years. It's a good thing that some of the women in this home has something else to talk about except the greatness of their family, or we'd all be dead."

The little old lady twisted her ball of yarn viciously, causing it to roll upon the floor, and when she had stiffly followed it and picked it from the corner her face was very red, either from the exertion of stooping or from the insult she felt she had received.

"You're jealous--that's what's the matter with you! People who've no folks are always jealous of them who's had 'em; but old age has its liberties, I suppose, and we must pardon a great deal on account of it."

"Are you speakin' of me, I'd like to know? I ain't but four years older'n you. I'm only seventy-nine and you was seventy-five last May, though you didn't want us to know it was your birthday. But I seen the date in the book some one sent you, and you can't deny it."

"Never mind," broke in the placid-looking lady again, trying to pour oil on the troubled waters; "don't fight. Barbara, did they look rich? Put your teeth in again--why can't you leave 'em alone! Teeth are fer your mouth and not fer your pocket. You do beat me and rile me dreadfully, Barbara."

"I tell you they hurt," whimpered Barbara. "I can't even enjoy the sun with my teeth in."

"Never mind. Did they?"

"Did they what?"

"Did they look rich?"

"Oh, awful. I told you they looked like directors."

"Perhaps Drusilla has friends she ain't told us about."

"No, she ain't. She told me one day she didn't have a friend or a relation in the world, and if she'd a had 'em they'd a been to see her."

"Oh, I don't know. That ain't no sign. Your friends ferget you when you're in an old ladies' home," said a voice bitterly.

"Well, I wonder who it can be! I wish she'd hurry, so's we could ask her."

"Poor Drusilla!" said a sweet-voiced little woman. "I hope some one's found her. It's awful to have no one in all the world."

"How long's Drusilla been here?"

"Let me see"--and an old lady put down her sewing. "I been here seven years, I was here not quite two years when Drusilla come. She's been the linen woman ever since."

"Yes," said a woman who showed signs of having seen better days. Her clothes still had a look of by-gone elegance and her wrinkled hands were still dainty and beautifully kept. "Drusilla's our only _charity_ inmate."

The stout old lady in the corner emitted a sound between a snort and a groan.

"Charity inmate! What are we all but charity inmates!"

The first old lady drew herself up stiffly.

"You may speak for yourself, Mis' Graham, but _I_ am no charity inmate."

"You're just as much of one as I am."

"What do you mean? I pay each year a hundred and twenty dollars, and I paid when I entered an entrance fee of a hundred dollars."

"So'd we all; but still this is an old ladies' charitable home."

"Mis' Graham, how can you say such things!" spoke up a voice that had not been heard before. "I consider that we _pay_ our way; and my grand-nephew who was here last week considers it ample!"

"Oh, so do most of our relations who'd rather pay our way in a home

than be bothered with us around."

"You may speak for yourself, Mis' Graham. I pay my way myself."

"Yes, you was a dressmaker or something and saved a little money. Well, I never worked for my livin'. It wasn't considered ladylike in my day."

"Huh! You're trying to say I'm no lady. Well, I consider that if I'm no lady and worked fer my livin', I didn't sponge off my relations and don't now."

"Cat!" hissed Mrs. Graham, and sat back trying to think of some suitable answer.

"But don't Drusilla pay nothin' at _all?"_ queried another woman.

"Not a cent. I tell you, she's charity. She's a sort of servant. Ain't you seen the way Mis' Smith treats her and orders her around? She takes care of the linen to pay her way and does odd jobs fer Mis' Smith and the family."

"How did she get in if she didn't have no money at all?"

"She's a Doane, and this home was give by a Doane most sixty years ago. And the Committee felt they couldn't let Drusilla die in the poor house because of her name. It might reflect on the home, and they'd lose some subscriptions. So they took her in."

"What'd she do before she was took in?"

"She sewed for folks and nursed and done odd jobs for the people in the village. Everything she could git to do, I guess. And then she got old and folks wanted stylisher dresses, and she wa'n't strong enough to nurse much, so she had to be took in somewhere. First they thought of sending her to the county house, and then as I told you they was afraid it would look bad to have the Doane home for old ladies right here and a Doane in the county house, so she was brought here. It most broke her heart, but they've worked her well. She's paid fer her keep and more, which is more than many I know of, what with their appetite."

"You're talkin' at me now, Frances Smith, don't you make no remarks about my appetite. I'm not strong and must eat well to keep up."

"Humph, it makes you feeble to carry round. I don't know what would happen to you if you had a chance to set down once to a square meal of vittles. I guess you'd bust."

"I want you to understand, Mis' Frances Smith, that I've et better vittles than you've ever seen. When I had my home my table was the talk of the countryside."

"Yes, and if you hadn't set up everything, perhaps you wouldn't now be where you are, havin' beans on Monday and cabbage on Tuesday and soup on Wednesday and--"

The wrangling went on amongst these old derelicts sitting on the sunny side of the Doane home for old ladies. Their lives were filled with little jealousies and quarrels over petty details. They lived in the past and exalted it until they themselves had grown to believe that they had always trodden flowery pathways, until by some unfortunate chance, for which they were not to be blamed, these paths had led them, when old age and helplessness came upon them, into this home for the poor and lonely.

* * * * *

Drusilla slowly made her way to the parlor, which she entered with the wondering, surprised look still on her face--surprised that any one should ask for her, and wondering who it could be.

Two gentlemen rose as she entered, and Mrs. Smith, the Director of the home, said:

"This is Drusilla Doane. Drusilla, this is Mr. Thornton and Mr. Gale, who wish to speak with you."

They bowed over Miss Drusilla's hand, which was falteringly extended.

"We are very glad to meet you, Miss Doane. Won't you please sit down, as our business will take quite a little time to transact." Turning to Mrs. Smith: "May we speak with her alone?"

Mrs. Smith plainly showed that she shared in the curiosity of her charges in regard to the meaning of the visit to Drusilla, but she rose from her place and said:

"Oh, of course I will leave if you must see her alone."

"Thank you," said the taller of the men dryly. "Our business is with Miss Doane."

He accompanied Mrs. Smith politely to the door and closed it, then, returning, drew a chair near to Drusilla.

"We are the bearer of news to you, Miss Doane."

Drusilla clasped her hands a little tighter.

"Has anything happened?" she said. "But nothing could happen that would matter to me, unless--" a panic stricken look came into her old eyes "unless--the Committee hain't decided that I can't live here, has it? They ain't goin' to send me to the county house, be they? I work real well, Mr. Thornton; I work as hard as I can. I'm sure I pay fer my keep."

The tall man cleared his throat and said stiffly: "No, Miss Doane, we are the bearer of _good_ news."

The short fat man bent over and impulsively patted the hands that were so tightly clenched in her lap.

"No, Miss Doane, you don't need to worry about the county house. You're not going to it yet."

Drusilla drew a deep breath of relief, and the frightened look died from her eyes. She leaned back in her chair.

"Then I don't know what you've got to tell me. It can't be that some one I know is dead, because all of my friends died long ago."

Mr. Gale said, "Tell her, so she'll understand. You're worrying the poor soul."

Mr. Thornton took a legal looking document from his pocket and a letter.

"Miss Doane," he said, "did you ever hear of Elias Doane?"

"Elias Doane? No, I don't believe I ever did."

"Well, he was a distant relation of yours; another branch of the family. He thought he was the last one of the Doane name, as he never married. A few weeks before his death, hearing about this home he sent me up here to learn the particulars regarding it, and I found you here. I reported that there was an inmate by the name of Doane still living, and we investigated and found that you belonged to the family that we thought was represented by only one man, the late Elias Doane."

"He's dead, then. Was he a relation of mine, did you say?"

"Yes, very distantly related."

"Well, I'm glad I've had _some_ relations, even if I didn't know it."

"Now, we will come to the business, Miss Doane. Our client, the late Elias Doane, was a very wealthy man, very wealthy indeed. His estate amounts to many millions, and he has left a very curious will."

The lawyer opened a paper in his hand and commenced to read, but Mr. Gale interrupted.

"Don't bother her with the will, Robert; she won't understand. Tell her about it and give her the letter."

"Perhaps that is better, as the legal terms might be confusing. The gist of the matter is this, Miss Doane. Our client, the late Elias

Doane, left the bulk of his money to the many charities in which he is interested, but he left you his home at Brookvale, near New York City, to be kept up fittingly out of the estate, and he gave you outright, to use as you may see fit, one million dollars."

Drusilla stared at him. Then her faded old face turned as white as the soft hair above it, and without a word she fell forward. For the first time in her life Drusilla Doane had fainted.

Mr. Thornton caught her in his arms and Mr. Gale sprang for the bell. Water and restoratives were brought, and within a few moments Drusilla opened her eyes--and soon she remembered. She brushed back her disarranged hair and laughed a soft, sweet little laugh.

"Well, I'm beginnin' well. All real ladies in story books faint when they hear good news."

When she was again seated in her chair and curious Mrs. Smith had been politely expelled from the room, Mr. Thornton cleared his throat and was again the precise man of business.

"As I was saying, Miss Doane, when you interrupted me, our late client, Mr. Elias Doane, left this very remarkable will and also a letter which we were to deliver to you." He handed her the letter.

Drusilla looked at it a moment as she held it in her hand. She seemed unwilling to break its seal. But the watching men opposite her caused her at last carefully, if not a little tremblingly, to tear the covering which was to reveal to her the wishes of a man, who evidently had thought of her and her happiness in his last hours. She unfolded the two pages covered with scrawling handwriting, but her faded eyes could make nothing of the strange hieroglyphics traced upon them, and she handed the letter to Mr. Thornton, saying:

"I guess it can't be nothin' private. You read it; I left my glasses in my work-basket."

Mr. Thornton adjusted his pince-nez and read:

MY DEAR DRUSILLA:

You will allow me to call you that, as it is the first and will be the last time that I will so address you; consequently you will pardon the seeming undue familiarity.

I first want to say that I regret that I did not know of your existence earlier, when perhaps I could have made life easier for you --although quite likely I would have added to its perplexities. We are the last of a good family: you, Drusilla Doane, an inmate of a charitable institution, and I, Elias Doane, millionaire, philanthropist, and rare old humbug. You have passed your life in toil, trying to earn your daily bread, and have found yourself nearing the end of this footless journey that we call life, alone and

friendless. I have passed my days in toil also, and find myself, at the end, as much alone and friendless as is the loneliest inmate of the Doane home. I have had bread, yes; and often eaten it in bitterness. I have had friends, yes; and doubted their sincerity. Love, wife, children, home, all have been sacrificed to pride of wealth, of power, and things--just mere things, that cannot touch the hand in times of sorrow, nor rejoice in times of joy. But I do not complain; I made my god a thing of gilt and tinsel, and he repaid me for my worship. And now I go to meet another God.

But before I go I want to give another a chance to do what I have never done--enjoy my money--if such a thing can give enjoyment. A great share of my hard-earned dollars will go in salaries to fat officials and well-fed directors of the institutions I have endowed, but the little I have given you I want you to spend as you see fit. Throw it to the winds, if you so desire, or feed it to the squirrels in Central Park.

I am looking forward to enjoyment in seeing the way you spend the money. They say when we have passed over the river that the things of this world will no longer interest us; but, Drusilla, that is not true. I know my days will be spent leaning over the battlements watching the fools striving here below; and the biggest telescope in Heaven--or perhaps the other place--will be trained upon Drusilla Doane.

I give you a few words of advice. Better allow Thornton to act as your business manager. He is an old fool but honest. But follow your own wishes in all things except in actual business. I have directed that all the expenses of the place at Brookvale shall be met from a trust that I have created, as you are far too old to be worried with the details of the new life which you now will enter. Thornton is a nosy man and it will delight his soul to boss your servants and see that cheating tradesmen are kept in check.

Another thing I wish to say--you can act upon it as you see fit--it is simply the advice of an old man who has known his world. _Don't_ subscribe to public charities; they're mostly grafts, and besides they have more of the Doane millions now than is good for them. And _don't_ help the needy poor upon another man's advice; _see your poor--know your poor_.

And now, Drusilla Doane, good-by. Enjoy my million! Don't make too big a fool of yourself, nor marry your tango teacher, but spend my million, Drusilla, _spend it_--and may God rest your soul!

There was quiet for a few moments after Mr. Thornton had finished reading the letter. He folded the paper and then said dryly:

"I'm glad to know that my client appreciated and recognized my abilities, at least along some lines."

He turned to Drusilla, who seemed hardly to realize or understand

the contents of the letter.

"Shall I file the letter along with the other papers, or do you wish to keep it?" he asked.

Drusilla took the letter, and folded it and refolded it, looking down at it as if it were a thing alive.

"If you don't mind, Mr. Thornton, I should like to keep it," she said. "He meant well by me, and his letter is kind though he said it in a queer way; but it is the first letter I've had from any one for a long time, and I should like to keep it. It makes it all seem more real."

The lawyer rose.

"Now we will leave you. When will you be ready to come with us to New York?"

Drusilla smiled her soft sweet smile.

"I haven't much to get ready, Mr. Thornton. It won't take me long to pack my things."

"Then shall we say that I may come for you to-morrow?"

"Yes, to-morrow will be as well as any other day. Unless--unless Mis' Smith needs me--"

Mr. Thornton said with a dry smile: "I do not think it will be necessary to consult Mrs. Smith."

The men started for the door, and then extended their hands.

"We want to congratulate you, Miss Doane. We sincerely hope that this will be the beginning of a very happy life for you. You may command me in all things. By the way, may we see the Director?"

Drusilla started to the door, but the lawyer intercepted her.

"No; do not go yourself. Ring for her."

Drusilla sat down again, rather aghast at the idea of asking any one else to do a service for her, who all her life had been at the beck and call of other people. One of the old ladies came and was asked to bring Mrs. Smith. The Director came quickly, showing that she had not been far away.

"Mrs. Smith," Mr. Thornton said, "we will come to-morrow afternoon to take Miss Doane with us. She has been left a legacy and will no longer be an inmate of the Doane home."

Mrs. Smith's expression changed instantly.

"Why, I'm real glad. Drusilla, you know I will be the first to rejoice in your good fortune."

Drusilla's face was a study for a moment as she remembered the many shrill orders and the thousand and one ways that the Director had employed to make her lonely life harder than was really necessary; but kindness triumphed and the hard look left her eyes.

"I'm sure, Mis' Smith, you will be glad with me," she said; and she thought in her kindly old heart, "Perhaps she didn't mean to be mean; she was just too busy to think."

The men left and Drusilla was alone with the Director, whose curiosity was nearly consuming her.

"What has happened, Drusilla? Has some one left you money?"

"Yes," said Drusilla.

"Who?"

"A relation I didn't know."

"Did he leave you much?"

Drusilla said quietly: "A million dollars."

Mrs. Smith nearly fell from her chair.

"What did you say?"

"A million dollars."

"Are you sure?"

"That's what the lawyer, Mr. Thornton, said."

Mrs. Smith was speechless.

"I can't believe my ears. There must be some mistake. I'll--I'll--go and talk it over with some one. Do you want to go to your room, or will you go out to the women, Drusilla?"

"I think I'll go to my room for a while, if I may--that is, if you don't need me, Mis' Smith."

Mrs. Smith shook her head. Need her, need a woman who had just been left a million dollars! No, indeed; not in the way that Drusilla meant.

Drusilla went slowly up to her room and sat down in the little rocker by the bed. She tried to think it all over; but it did not seem real.

She felt the letter in her pocket and, finding her second-best pair of glasses, moved her chair close to the window and read it through slowly. Then, holding the letter in her hands, she sat back in her chair and the tears welled slowly from her faded eyes, rolling down the wrinkled cheeks and falling, drop by drop, on to her dress unnoticed. She was not thinking of the money but of the kindly old man who had thought of her in his last hours, and planned for her happiness. She had never had any one plan for her happiness before, nor care for her for so many years that she had forgotten what care meant, and her heart seemed full to bursting. She said softly to herself, "He must 'a' cared something fer me or he wouldn't 'a' thought of it all. He _must_ 'a' cared."

CHAPTER II

The next morning there was a buzz of excitement in the Doane home for old ladies. Word had got around that Drusilla had been left a fortune and was going away. Some of the ladies were plainly envious and said spiteful, catty things, while others were glad that at least one of their number would be able to leave behind the "home"--the living on charity--that nightmare of the old. Drusilla had endeared most of them to her by her many kindly acts, prompted by a loving heart that even years of poverty and unappreciated labor for others had not hardened.

She passed the morning in looking over her few possessions and making little packages of the things she treasured to be given to her friends after she left. The handkerchiefs she had embroidered before her eye-sight was bad, she left for Barbara. A little lace cap that had been given her years ago and which she had never worn, thinking it too "fancy," was for the old lady who had seen better days. The heavy shawl was for the oldest inmate, Grandma Perkins, who always suffered with the cold. The warm bed-stockings were neatly folded and left with a little word of love to Mary, who had rheumatism; and to Mrs. Childs, the beauty of the place, she left her lace fichu.

There was ample room within the tiny trunk for her clothing. The plain black cashmere that had been turned and returned until it had nearly forgotten its original texture, but which was her Sunday best, the two black dresses for every-day wear, the two night-dresses of Canton flannel, the woolen underskirt and the lighter one for summer, the heavy stockings, the Sunday shoes, a life of John Calvin that a director had given her, her Bible--and the packing was completed.

When Mrs. Smith came herself to tell her that Mr. Thornton had arrived, and in a motor car, she trembled so that she feared she would not be able to go down to meet him. But finally she put on the little bonnet that she had worn for many years, and her "mantle"--an antiquated wrap that had been given her by some kindly patron of

former years--and went down the stairs. Mr. Thornton looked at the little old lady as she came into the room--this little, kindly-faced, white-haired old woman, who showed so plainly that life had sent her sorrow but not bitterness--and offered her his hand, saying:

"I am glad you are ready, Miss Doane. We will have a nice ride to the city."

Drusilla looked up at him like a pitiful child.

"I--I--may I set down a minute--I--I'm rather trembly. I--I didn't sleep last night a-thinkin' of it all."

She sat down and tried to still the trembling of her lips and keep the tears from her eyes. Then, after a few moments, she said:

"Will you wait here or somewhere, Mr. Thornton? I want to say good-by. Mis' Smith thought I hadn't better see the ladies until I was ready to leave, as it might upset them."

"I will wait in the car for you, Miss Doane. Don't hurry; take all the time you want."

Drusilla went to the sunny veranda where she knew she would find the women in their accustomed places, and immediately she was the center of the curious old ladies, who welcomed any excitement that would relieve the monotony of their lives.

"It's true, Drusilla--then it's true, you're-a-goin' to leave us! It's true what Mis' Graham heard Mis' Smith tell Mr. Smith last night."

"What did she hear her say?"

"She heard her say, 'What do you think, James! Drusilla Doane has been left a million dollars!'"

"That's what the man told me," Drusilla said quietly; "and he's come to take me away. I come to say good-by."

The women sat forward in their chairs and stopped their knitting or darning, so that they would not miss a word.

"Well, I swan! A million dollars! A _million dollars_!"

"Is it true, Drusilla? Do you think it can be so _much_?"

"I don't know--that's what he said. He's waitin' for me and I must be goin'. Good-by, dear Harriet. Good-by, Caroline. Good-by, Mis' Graham; you always been good to me. Good-by, Mis' Fisher; I ain't never goin' to fer-get how good you was to me when I was sick. Good-by all, good-by. I'm comin' often to see you. Good-by."

She looked slowly around on her friends, then walked down the veranda to the waiting motor. Just as she reached it old Barbara came shuffling up to her. "Oh, Drusilla," she mumbled, taking her hand, "I'm so glad for you, I'm so glad. I hope it is a million dollars."

The loving touch was too much for tired Drusilla. The tears sprang to her eyes and she clasped Barbara's hands in both of her own.

"Oh, Barbara," she said, "it gives me a hurt inside my heart to leave you all behind! Listen, Barbara! Whether it's a million dollars or only a hundred, you shall have new store teeth. Good-by!"

To Drusilla's embarrassment both Mr. and Mrs. Smith were waiting for her beside the motor to say good-by, and were effusive in their farewells.

"You will come to see us, won't you, Miss Doane, and you won't forget us"--and Drusilla was tucked into the luxurious motor, a footstool found for her feet, a soft rug wrapped around her and they drove away.

She was quiet for the greater part of the journey, and Mr. Thornton left her to her own thoughts. Finally she sat more upright and began to take an interest in the fittings of the car. Mr. Thornton watched her.

"Do you like the car?" he asked

"It's beautiful. You know it's the first time I been in one."

"Why, is it possible? I thought every one had been in a motor."

"No, not every one, Mr. Thornton; I don't think that more'n two of the ladies in the home have been in one. This is fixed up real nice."

"I am glad you like it," Mr. Thornton said. "It is yours."

Drusilla sat back suddenly in her seat.

"This--this--_mine_?"

"Yes, this is yours, and you have two more at your home."

Drusilla gasped.

"Two more like this?"

"No, not exactly the same. One is an open car and one is a small town car."

"Why--why--what'll I do with three? I can't ride in 'em all at once."

"No, but you will find that you can use them all."

"Can I use them whenever I want to?"

"Certainly; they are yours. All you have to do is to send word to one of the chauffeurs and they will be ready for you."

"Send word to who?"

"The chauffeur, the man who is driving."

"Is he mine, too?"

"Yes; you have two men."

"What'll I do with two?"

"One will be on duty a certain number of hours, and then the other takes his place."

"Oh--" She was quiet for a time. "Can I take them anywhere I want to?"

"Certainly. They are yours."

"Then, I know what I'll do! I'll take the old ladies for a ride! Wouldn't Mis' Graham love it, and old Grandma Perkins--we could bundle her up; and Barbara might even ferget her teeth."

Drusilla settled back among the cushions and mused upon the joy she could give with this new wonder machine that was hers to do with as she wished, and the frightened look died from her face and a happy smile seemed trying to crowd the wrinkles from the corners of her mouth. She said nothing more for a long time; then:

"Are we goin' very fast, Mr. Thornton?"

"No; not so very fast. Are you nervous? I will have the chauffeur drive slower. I forgot you were not used to it."

Drusilla stopped him as he started to speak to the chauffeur.

"No; I wasn't thinking of that. I ain't nervous, I was just wonderin' if he couldn't go a little faster."

Mr. Thornton looked somewhat surprised, but he gave the order.

Drusilla again sat back among the cushions, a slight flush on her face. Soon she leaned forward once more.

"Mr. Thornton, couldn't he let her out jest a leetle more?"

Thornton laughed.

"We'll go as fast as you like; only I hope we won't be arrested."

Drusilla sighed.

"I'd be willin' to go to jail to pay fer feelin' like this. I always thought I'd have to wait till I got to Heaven before I'd git a chance to fly, but now they'll have to offer me something new."

She said nothing more on the journey, but showed by the bright flush on her cheeks and the sparkle in her eyes that she was enjoying every moment of the ride. At last they turned, passed a pair of big gate-posts and up a graveled driveway, and the car stopped before a door.

When a man came from the house and opened the door of the car, Drusilla came to herself with a start.

"Are we there already? I was kind of hopin' it'd never stop."

Mr. Thornton gravely helped Drusilla to the door.

"Welcome to your home, Miss Doane," he said. "I think we will find my daughter inside."

They entered a large hall and Drusilla stood hesitatingly, not knowing what to do. In a moment a voice was heard from above:

"Is that you, Father?" and a laughing face peered over the railing, and was followed by a slim young figure that seemed to fly down the stairs. "Oh, you were such a long time, Father. Welcome home, Miss Doane! we are so glad to have you. We have all been waiting such a long time. Father is always so slow;" and she flew in her pretty, impulsive way to Drusilla and took both her hands. "I am so glad to have you come, Miss Doane."

Drusilla looked at the pretty face before her that seemed to show such real welcome, and her eyes filled with tears.

"I'm real glad to come, but--but--I guess I'm a little bit scared."

"No, you aren't going to be frightened at all. You come right up with me and take off your hat in your room. Oh, here is Mrs. Perrine. She is your housekeeper, Miss Doane. And that is James, the butler; and that is Mary; and Jeanne is waiting for you upstairs. Come with me."

Drusilla followed as well as she could the flying feet up the broad stairs and was taken to a room that seemed to her a palace. It was all in soft shades of gray with a touch of blue here and there, and there were flowers everywhere. The chairs were upholstered in gray and blue chintz, and at the windows hung gray silk curtains with just a hint of the blue showing beneath them. Near the fireplace was a big couch with a soft gray silk quilt spread upon it, and pillows that invited one to rest. Drusilla stopped in delight.

"Oh--oh--what a pretty room! What a pretty room!"

Miss Thornton dimpled all over her pretty face.

"Do you like it? Oh, please say you like it! I arranged these rooms myself. This was a bachelor house, and there wasn't a pretty room in the place. I made Father let me fix them for you. You do like them, don't you?"

"I never saw nothin' like it before in my life."

"You don't think it too gay, do you? Mother said I ought not have the blue, that they should all be done in a dark color. But I said I knew you would love pretty things, and you should have them. You don't think it too gay. You like the blue, don't you?"

"I love it, I _love_ it! I never had nothin' gay colored in my life, and I love it."

"I knew you would. Come into the bedroom. Isn't this gray furniture dear? Don't those long mirrors look lovely with the gray wood? And aren't the toilet things pretty? See the monogram--_D. D_. I thought a lot about it, and aren't they pretty on that dull silver? Look at this mirror--and isn't that the _cunningest_ pin-tray? And this is for your hatpins; and look at this pin-cushion. I had the loveliest time picking them out."

Drusilla looked at the pretty things in amazement rather mixed with awe.

"Why, what'll I do with all them things?"

"Oh, you'll use them all. There isn't one too many, and perhaps I've forgotten some things. If I have, we will go and pick them out together. You will let me go with you, won't you, because I love to shop. Oh, I forgot--here is your bathroom, and beyond that is your maid's room. She is quite near, so if you feel ill in the night you can call her. But let me take off your hat. Shall I ring for Jeanne? No," as she saw the frightened look come into the eyes, "perhaps you'd rather be with me just at first. How pretty your hair is, so soft and fluffy. You must blue it, it is so white. I wish my hair would fluff, but it won't curl except in wet weather. Now come into the other room and sit down in that soft chair. Isn't that an easy chair? I picked that out too. I chose everything in the room, and I'm so proud of it. See, here is the footstool that goes with it, and you sit by the big window here when you don't want to go downstairs, and this little table will hold your books or your sewing."

Drusilla looked up at her.

"You've been real kind, Miss Thornton; you've thought of everything."

"But I loved it. I've been working ever since Father knew about you."

"It is nice of you to be here. I was afraid a little to come, not knowin' what it was goin' to be like."

"That's what I told Father. I said you didn't want to come into a big cold house with only a cold lawyer like him to say, 'Welcome home.' I made him let me come. I'm going to stay to dinner with you if you'll invite me. We'll send Father home. I don't live far from here--only about five minutes in the car--and Father can send back for me. Would you like me to stay?"

Drusilla leaned forward eagerly.

"Oh, do stay, Miss Thornton. I--I--well, I wouldn't know what to do by myself."

"Well, you sit here by this fire and I'll go down and tell Father to go away. You don't want to hear any more business to-night and Father _always_ talks business. Just you take a little nap while I'm gone. Are you comfortable? There! I'll be back in five minutes."

Drusilla sat down in the comfortable chair and watched the flames flickering in the grate; then her eyes passed lovingly around the room, resting on each beautiful picture, on the soft draperies, the easy-chairs and the flowers. She sat as one in a dream, until light steps were heard and Miss Thornton again entered the room.

"Did you sleep?"

Drusilla laughed.

"No, I didn't want to shut my eyes. I was afraid it might all go away and I'd be again in the bare little rooms I've always lived in. I don't think I'll ever sleep again--I might miss somethin'."

"Isn't that lovely! Why, you'll always have lovely things all your life. And now I've told James that we're going to have dinner up here. The dining-room looks too big for us two."

Miss Thornton busied herself around the room for a few moments; then drew a chair in front of the grate and sat down beside Drusilla while the butler and a maid brought in a small table. Drusilla watched them as they noiselessly arranged the china and the glass upon the beautiful cloth, and when all was prepared the butler said in his even, "servant" tones, "Dinner is served," and went behind the chair reserved for the mistress of the house. Drusilla hesitated a moment, in evident awe of the butler, who stood so erect and stiff in his evening clothes, but here again kindly Daphne Thornton came to her aid.

"Now, you sit here, Miss Doane," and she took her to the chair which the butler deftly slid into place. "I will be just opposite you. Isn't this nicer than sitting at that great big table downstairs

where we would need a telephone to talk to each other?"

She chatted all through the dinner, showing in a kindly, unobtrusive way the uses of the different things that might be an embarrassment to the little old lady who was used to the simple service of a charity table. After dinner the coffee was served on a small table in front of the fire.

While they were drinking it a maid entered the room.

"The motor has come for Miss Thornton," she announced.

Daphne rose.

"Now, I am going to leave you. Get a good sleep. I will call Jeanne, who will take care of you. She is your personal maid, Miss Doane, so tell her anything you want."

Answering the ring of the bell a pretty maid came into the room, and Miss Thornton said:

"Jeanne, this is Miss Doane, your mistress. She is tired and will like to go to bed early, I am sure. See that she has a good warm bath, as it will help her sleep. And, Miss Doane, I bought a few things for you, as perhaps your luggage might not come in time. Jeanne will have them ready for you. Now, good night! I am so glad you have come, and I know you will be so happy. You will let me come often to see you, won't you?"

She came over to the chair and bent her pretty young head over the old white one, and Drusilla reached up her arms and took the smiling face between her hands.

"You'll never know, dear, what you've done for a lonely old woman. I don't know how to thank you."

"Thank me--why, I should thank you. I have had such a nice time, and I'm so glad that you like the rooms--Mother said you wouldn't. Would you like me to come in the morning and see how you are getting on?"

"Oh, will you? I won't know what to do, you know."

"Yes, I'll love to come and I'll be here early. Good night and happy dreams!" And she was gone.

When she was alone Drusilla sat before the fire and tried to feel that it all was true, that it was not some beautiful dream from which she would waken. She went in retrospect over her past life from the time when, a little girl, her father dying, she and her mother were left with no support except the little earned by her mother, who was the village tailoress. Then when she became older the burden of the support for the two shifted to her shoulders, her mother seeming to

have lost heart and with it the strength and the desire to make the grim fight with the wolf that always seemed so near the door. For years she struggled on, doing the country tailoring, nursing the sick, helping in families who were too poor to hire expert labor, missing all the joys that come to the average young girl, as all her leisure moments from work were given to an ailing mother who seemed to become more dependent upon her daughter each year for companionship and strength.

Yet romance did not entirely pass her by, for when she was nineteen she loved and was loved in return by John Brierly. They were an ideal couple, the neighbors said. He, young, handsome, although a little too much of a dreamer to be a success; she, the prettiest girl in all the country side. John was restless, and with youth's ambition rebelled against the narrow restrictions of the little town. Hearing the call of the West, he decided to go to the country of his dreams and find the fortune that he knew was waiting him in that new land of mystery. He tried to persuade Drusilla to marry him and go with him; but her mother, with a sick woman's persistency, demanded that her daughter stay with her. They offered to take her with them, and painted in glowing colors the new life in that "far beyond"; but she wept in terror at the thought of leaving all she knew, and clung the more closely to Drusilla, begging her to stay with her until the end. "When I am gone, Drusilla, you may go; but let me die here among the things I know and love"; and Drusilla and John put off the journey from year to year, until at last John in desperation said, "Drusilla, I can wait no longer. I must go. I will wait for you, and some day you will come to me."

The years rolled on. Drusilla heard from John from time to time, but after many years the letters stopped. Her mother lived long enough to see Drusilla becoming old and tired and worn, and then she, too, left her for the Great Unknown. Drusilla worked on, making the clothes for each rising generation, helping tired mothers, caring for the sick. But at last she had to give up the fight; she was too old. Quicker feet were wanted, younger hands, and Drusilla learned the bitter lesson that comes often to the old. They are stumbling-blocks in the pathway of the young. This knowledge broke her courage and her health, and her hard saved dollars were spent in doctor's bills. When strength came slowly back to her she was too weak to rebel against the order that she was to pass the remainder of her days at the Doane home. Even there she tried to keep her feeling of self-respect and independence by doing the work that was not given the other women, who "paid their way." The Director and his wife, busy, annoyed by a thousand petty details, were not consciously unkind, but they found it easy to shift a few of their burdens to the shoulders that always seemed able to carry a little heavier load; consequently the willing hands were always occupied, the wearied feet often made many steps on errands that should have been relegated to one of few years.

Drusilla, sitting before the fire, saw all these bitter years pass like shadows before her half-closed eyes; she saw the years of toil without the reward that is woman's right--the love of children,

husband, a home to call her own. And yet those years had left no scar upon her soul, no rancor against the world that had taken all and given nothing except the right to live.

A log dropped into the fire and Drusilla awakened from her reverie with a start. Her eyes felt heavy and she rose to go to the bedroom; then remembered that she was told to ring when she wished to go to bed. She rang the bell and the maid came into the room.

"Madame desires to retire?"

Drusilla looked at her inquiringly.

"What did Miss Thornton say your name was?"

"Jeanne, Madame."

"Jeanne. That isn't Jane, is it?"

"It may be French for Jane; I am French."

"Well, then, I'll call you Jane. I can't remember the other. I think I would like to go to bed."

"Then I will prepare the bath."

Soon she returned to the room.

"The bath is ready for Madame," she said; and Drusilla followed her into the bedroom.

There the thoughtfulness of Miss Thornton was again shown. Over a chair hung a warm gray dressing-gown, with slippers to match, and neatly folded on the bed was a soft white nightdress, lace-trimmed, delicate, dainty, the mere touch of which gave delight to the sensitive fingers as they touched its folds.

The bathroom, with its silver fittings, was a revelation to Drusilla; and as she stepped into the warm, slightly perfumed water, it seemed to speak to her more eloquently than all the rest of the seeming miracles that were now coming into her life.

When Drusilla returned to the bedroom she found a shaded light on a table at the head of the bed, and beside the light were her Bible and the life of John Calvin.

She stood a moment looking around the room, and then she knelt beside the bed.

"O God," she whispered, "I hain't never had much to thank you for except for strength to work, but now--dear God, I thank you!"

CHAPTER III

The next morning Drusilla found herself unconsciously waiting for the rising bell that called the inmates of the Doane home from their slumbers, and when she opened her eyes she could not realize for a moment where she was. Instead of the plain white walls of her room, she saw the soft gray tints of silk and the sheen of silver, and her hands touched a silken-covered eiderdown quilt. She closed her eyes in sheer happiness, and then opened them again to be sure that it was not all a mirage. At last, not being used to lying in bed, she arose and, putting on the dressing-gown, went to one of the windows and raised the shade to look out. She stopped with her hand still on the shade, looking in wonder at the beauty just outside her window. A great copper beach was flaunting its gorgeous colors in the clear morning air; beyond it a clump of blue spruce seemed a background for the riotous autumn tints. At one side of the house was an Italian garden, with terrace after terrace falling toward the river. Across the river, the Palisades rose sheer and steep, their reddish-brown rocks covered with the glow of the morning sun.

Drusilla did not know it, but she was looking at one of the most beautiful of the many beautiful places along the Hudson, a place on which hundreds of thousands of dollars had been spent with a lavish hand. Drusilla drew up a chair and sat by the window, watching the changing shades as the sun became brighter. Then she became interested in the life of the place as it gradually awoke to its morning's work. First a gardener crossed the lawn and began working around the plants; then another came with a rake and commenced raking up the dying leaves; another man wandered down toward the river. A man, evidently a house servant, came across the lawn and, seeing her at the window, went hastily into the house. Soon there was a light knock at the door, and in answer to her "come in," Jeanne, the maid, entered.

"Oh, Madame," she said, "why did, you not ring? I did not know you were up."

She bustled about the room, raising shades, and then rang for a man to come and make the fire in the grate. The house seemed warm to Drusilla.

"Do I need a fire?" she asked. "It's warm in here."

"Just a little fire, Madame," said Jeanne; "it makes the room more cheerful."

Drusilla laughed. It seemed to her that nothing could make that exquisite room more cheerful.

The maid went to the bedroom and soon returned to announce: "The

bath is ready for Madame."

Drusilla wondered why she was expected to take another bath, as she had had one the night before. But evidently it was expected of her, and she went into the bathroom and again reveled in the warm, perfumed water. When she returned to the bedroom her clothing of the night before was arranged ready for her to put on, and as she dressed she felt for the first time the coarseness of the linen and the ugliness of the plain black dress.

"Would Madame like her breakfast here," the maid asked, "or will she go to the breakfast room?"

Drusilla hesitated, as she did not know what to do.

"I think Madame would like to go to the breakfast room," the clever little French woman said hastily; "it is very pretty there, with the flowers and the birds. I will show Madame the way."

Going before her she guided Drusilla down the great staircase and across a room that was evidently the dining-room, into what Drusilla would have called a sun-parlor. It was a corner of the veranda enclosed in glass and filled with flowers and plants of every description, with birds singing among them in their gilded cages, and from it the Hudson could be seen, flowing silently to the sea. In the center of the room was a round table covered with a cloth which quickly caught her eye and charmed it with its dainty embroidery and lace, used as she had been to the coarse linen of the home. A man drew out her chair and she was seated, a footstool found for her feet, and breakfast was served. Drusilla felt that she could never forget that breakfast. The grapefruit, the coffee in its silver pot, the crisp bacon, the omelet, all served on beautiful dishes; and, to complete her joy, a great Persian cat came lazily to her and rubbed against her, begging for a share in the good things of the table. She stooped down and stroked its soft fur.

"I am afraid that Nicodemus is very spoiled," the man said. "His master always gave him a dish of cream at the table."

Drusilla laughed. It seemed the first human thing she had heard.

"Well, then, I'll spoil him too. What do you give it to him in?"

The man pointed to a silver bowl.

"That is his dish. Shall I give it to him?"

"No; let me," said Drusilla. "I want to do something for some one. Let me give him his cream."

After that she did not feel so frightened and awed by the presence of the man who waited upon her so deftly, and when he left she rose and wandered around the room, looking at the flowers, wondering what

were the names of the many plants that were strange to her. Then she went across the dining-room and up the stairs to her own rooms, where she felt more at ease. She found them already arranged, and wondered at the quickness and silence with which the work was done.

She did not know what to do, so she sat down again by the window to wait for Daphne. While she was sitting there, the housekeeper came into the room.

"Good morning, Miss Doane," she said pleasantly. "I hope you slept well."

"Yes; thank you," replied Drusilla.

"Would you like to go over the house this morning?"

Again Drusilla was embarrassed, as she did not know what would be expected of her if she went over the house. "Why--why--" she said, "I think, if you don't mind, I will wait until Miss Thornton comes."

"Very well. I will be ready at any time."

When the housekeeper left the room, Drusilla sat quietly in her place by the sunny window until at last she saw a motor turn into the grounds, and soon Daphne appeared. Drusilla's face lighted up when she saw the pretty girl standing before her. She seemed a part of the morning itself, with her sparkling eyes, her dainty coloring accentuated by her pretty suit of blue and her jaunty hat.

"Oh, you look like one of the flowers!" Drusilla exclaimed, reaching out her hands to her.

"How nice of you to say that! I've come early; did you wait long for me?"

"Yes; I have been settin' here just seeing the beauty of it all. I can't believe it's real."

"Oh, but it is. And isn't it beautiful! I always loved the place. Did you sleep well? Were you tired out? Are you rested?"

"I didn't sleep at first--I couldn't. But I'm not tired; I'm just sort of excited--and--and--oh, I don't know what to say about it all."

"Well, if you are not tired, would you like to go over the house? It's a lovely house. I know Mrs. Perrine wants to show it to you and let you see what a wonderful housekeeper she is."

"Yes; she asked me to go with her, but I wanted to wait until you come--as--as I might not know what to say."

"Well, we'll go together; and don't you worry about saying anything if you don't want to. I talk enough for both of us. That's my

trouble, Father says--I talk too much. Come--Mrs. Perrine is downstairs."

They went from room to room, from drawingroom to library, to the picture gallery in which, had Drusilla known it, were some of the famous pictures of the world, and on to the great armor room, in which the former master of the house had searched the countries of the old world for the armor and accouterments of chivalry which were arranged around the walls. Then she was shown that which interested her more than the pictures or the armor--the pantries and the room in which were kept the china and silver in daily use; and the kitchen, with its array of cooking utensils, brought a look of delight into her old eyes, because these she could understand.

Finally she was taken upstairs again and shown the guest rooms, each with its dressing-room and bath, and then opposite to her own suite of rooms she was taken into a small library paneled in soft toned woods. Daphne pulled out a leather chair for Drusilla.

"Now sit in that and tell me what you think of it all. Isn't this a pretty room? I like it best of all except your sitting-room, and isn't that a wonderful fireplace? It was brought from somewhere abroad. It is cozy here at night when the curtains are drawn. I think this room looks human; those big rooms downstairs don't. I could never curl up in a chair and read in that great library downstairs, but here you can really find a novel and read in comfort. I know you'll spend lots of time in this room."

Drusilla was quiet, sitting with folded hands. Then, after a few moments, she said:

"I was just a-thinkin' that all this great house can't be for just one old woman. And all them dishes and the kitchen with them pots and pans and the cook can't be there just to cook for me alone?"

"Oh, but he is, and he's a wonderful cook. Mr. Doane has had him for years and years. And James, the butler, came with him from England. He was in the house of a duke over there, and I assure you, Miss Doane, he doesn't forget it."

"Is that the man who stands around as if he was afraid he'd hurt something if he teched it? I ain't seen him do much; another man gave me my breakfast."

"Yes, I presume William, the second man, gave you your breakfast. James is too grand to serve breakfast."

"Do I need so many men around?"

"No, I really don't suppose you do, Miss Doane; but Mr. Doane kept a big household and he left in his will that the house should be kept up exactly the same as when he was here. But don't you worry about that. That is father's business. You don't have to bother a bit about

it. All you have to do is to enjoy yourself. Now, what would you like to do? Is there anything you want?"

Drusilla looked at her a moment and then said, half laughingly, half apologetically:

"I'd like--I'd like--"

She stopped, and Daphne came over to her.

"What would you like, Miss Doane? I'm here to do anything you wish."

"You won't think I'm a vain old woman if I tell you?"

"Why, certainly not. Tell me."

"Well--well--I was thinkin' this mornin' when I dressed that I didn't seem to fit in with the house. When I saw my pretty gray room, all so light and--and--beautiful--and when I saw myself in the lookin'-glass with my old black dress, I thought--I wished--"

"Yes, Miss Doane; what did you wish?"

Drusilla flushed as if ashamed of her wishes that seemed to her scarcely befitting a woman of her age.

"I just wished I had pretty clothes to go with the room."

Daphne clapped her hands.

"Now, isn't that lovely! Of course you should have pretty clothes, and you shall! We will go shopping! Father said to do anything you wanted to do. Now, what would you like?"

"I don't know, but I'd--I'd just like pretty clothes."

Daphne jumped up and danced around the room.

"I'll tell you what we'll do," she said gaily. "We'll go to town and shop and shop and shop. I'd love it, and we'll send all the bills to Father. He can't frown or scold as he does when _I_ send him bills; he'll have to pay yours without a word. Oh, we'll go right away!"

"I'd love to go, Miss Thornton. I never really shopped in my life. I jest bought things I had to have, things I couldn't go without no longer." Drusilla rose, as pleased with the idea as was the young girl beside her. "Can we go right away?"

"Yes; but wait, you must eat something."

"But I jest had my breakfast."

"Yes; but you must have something now, or you'll get tired. I'll

have them bring you some chicken broth or something, and I'll have some too. I can always eat."

She danced over to the bell, and when Jeanne answered it she said:

"Tell James to bring some chicken broth and some sandwiches; and have the small car at the door in half an hour. And please tell my chauffeur to return home and tell Mother that I will not be home for lunch."

When Jeanne was gone she danced back to Drusilla.

"We'll make a day of it, Miss Doane, and we'll have the _loveliest time!_"

The lunch was served and then the ugly bonnet was tied on, the mantle wrapped around the thin shoulders, and Drusilla and Daphne started for that joy land of women--Fifth Avenue.

"We'll go first and get some things that are already made," Daphne said.

She took Drusilla to one of the exclusive shops on Fifth Avenue. If Daphne had not been known, slight courtesy would have been shown the shabbily dressed old woman, but a few words from Daphne and the salesladies were all smiles and bows, eager to show their best. At first they showed her black dresses; but at Drusilla's little look of distress, quick Daphne saw there was something wrong.

"Don't you like them, Miss Doane?"

"Yes--yes--they're beautiful, Miss Thornton, but--do I _have_ to wear black? I've worn it all my life because it wears well. I'd like--I'd like--"

"Tell me what you would like."

"I'd like a soft gray dress like my room, if I ain't too old. But--but--perhaps it wouldn't be fittin'."

"That's just the thing! Why didn't I think of that! Gray will be just the color for you; and with a touch of blue, and your white hair --Oh, you'll be lovely, Miss Doane."

Again the willing salesladies were given their instructions, and gray dresses and gray suits were placed before her. Drusilla passed over the suits with hardly a look, but fingered lovingly the soft crepes and chiffons.

"I don't like the heavy things," she said. "They look as if they'd turn well, and I don't want nothin' that can be turned. I'd like something that'll wear out."

Daphne laughed.

"You're just like me. I hate things that wear forever. Father says that's the cause of the high cost of living--we women don't buy sensible clothes."

Drusilla looked pained.

"Perhaps I shouldn't look at them then--"

Daphne interrupted her.

"You just buy what you want. Don't you worry about what Father thinks. I don't."

"But I--I--don't want to be extravagant."

"You can't be extravagant. You can't spend too much. Now, don't you think about it--and don't you ask how much they cost. You don't need to know. Just you buy the prettiest things they've got."

Finally a choice was made of two pretty soft gray dresses, fragile enough to suit even Daphne's luxurious tastes; arrangements were made in regard to their hurried alterations; and, after buying a wrap to replace the now discarded mantle, they departed, Drusilla as happy as a child, with a flush on her old cheeks and a strange happy light in her blue eyes.

"Now we must have things to go with them."

They went into a lingerie shop, where Drusilla was dazed by the piles of dainty underclothing that were spread before her. She caressed the soft laces and the delicate, cobweb affairs.

"Oh, Miss Thornton, I can't decide. I didn't know there was such beautiful things in the world! Had I ought to have 'em? Ain't they too young for me?"

"There is no age for underclothing. Don't you want them? Isn't that the loveliest nightgown? Don't you want it?"

"Yes, I'd like to have it, but--" Drusilla thought of her two Canton flannel nightdresses lying in her little trunk.

"Well, you shall have them. And this fluffy gray dressing-gown--it is a dear. We will take that too; and this pretty bed-jacket. Look at the embroidery on it. You must have that, so if you have breakfast in bed--and look at this dear lace cap. When you sit up in bed, with the tray in front of you, and this little jacket on, and the cap, with a little of your hair showing beneath it, why, you'll look nice enough to eat. Now we'll go and buy stockings, pretty gray silk ones, and shoes, and slippers; and we mustn't forget about the milliner. I know the loveliest place; Madame will know just what to

give you."

Drusilla enjoyed the milliner's the most of all; for there she tried on hat after hat--not ugly bonnets but cleverly arranged creations for an old lady that seemed to remove the lines from her face and made her feel that perhaps, after all, she could take a part and share in the beautiful things of this new beautiful world, instead of a mere looker on.

At last they were taken to one of the great modistes, a creator of gowns known on two continents, and Daphne had Miss Doane wait in a reception-room while she interviewed the great lady herself. This arbitrator of fashion came smilingly to Miss Doane and with her keen, professional eye saw her "possibilities." She said to Miss Thornton:

"Will you leave it to me? I will make her the gowns and she will be pleased."

Measurements were taken and orders given; and when they were again in the motor, Drusilla asked shyly:

"What was that last place, Miss Thornton?"

"That is Marcelle, the great dressmaker's place. That was Marcelle herself who came to us."

"Was that a dressmaking shop? I didn't see no dresses or fashion books."

"No, she doesn't use fashion books. She makes her own fashions."

"But--but--we jest got two new dresses."

Miss Thornton laughed.

"Oh, those are because we were in a hurry. Your dresses must be _made_. I told her she must hurry, too; and her things are beautiful, Miss Doane. You'll love yourself in them."

Drusilla laughed softly.

"I'm afraid I love myself already. It seems awful vain for an old woman like me to be buying all them pretty clothes--but--" and she sighed like a happy child--"it's nice to be vain for once in your life. It's just _nice_."

"Of course it is. All women love pretty clothes."

"Yes; it must be something born inside of us, 'cause I don't know as I've ever had such a feelin' even when readin' the Bible as I did when I tried on them hats, and bought them dresses, and knowed they was _mine_." She was quiet for a moment. "I wonder if Eve ever had the chance to be extravagant in fig leaves?"

"Well, we've bought them, and Father's hair will certainly turn gray, but he can't say a word. Now we'll go to lunch. It's late; you must be hungry. I'm glad we found a coat that fitted you--that velvet is so soft and pretty. And your hat--why, Miss Doane, you won't know yourself!"

"Is it pretty? It ought to be. It's got ten dollars of hat and thirty dollars of style; but I don't care. I'm so happy that I'm afraid I'll cry and spoil it all."

But she did not cry and she enjoyed the luncheon at the big hotel, and as she ate she stole shy glances in the mirror opposite that reflected a transformed Drusilla from the frightened little woman who had gone tremblingly down the steps of the Doane home the day before.

CHAPTER IV

The next few days passed in a whirl of excitement for Drusilla. Dresses were bought for her to fit, and she went into town with Daphne on visits to the great dressmaker, who turned and studied Drusilla as gown after gown was fitted to her slim, yet still erect old figure. But finally they were all finished and great boxes came to the house. They were opened by Jeanne and their treasures spread upon the chairs and the bed to be admired and fingered lovingly by Drusilla, who took as much joy in her new clothes as any girl with her first trousseau. Except for the Bible and the life of John Calvin the contents of the little trunk were lost, so far as Drusilla was concerned. She became another being, as, clothed in soft-toned grays, her hair dressed by the hand of expert Jeanne, she gradually lost her feeling of loneliness, of being a person apart from her new life, and began to move with confidence amongst the treasured beauties of her new home.

The pretty gowns gave her a feeling of respect for herself that she had never experienced before, and for the first time in her life she felt within herself a power. Her opinions were deferred to, her wishes carried out immediately, and it seemed to her that all the world was trying to give her happiness. It took her many days to feel that she might ask for service instead of waiting upon herself; but she soon learned that the many servants were there for her especial use, and expected to be called upon to render any service that she required.

At first she was embarrassed when the housekeeper came to her in the mornings for orders for the day, and she confided to Daphne that she didn't know what to tell her. Daphne interviewed the housekeeper privately and then said to Drusilla, "I have seen Mrs. Perrine and told her that she doesn't need to come to you in the morning, as she

understands what is to be done. If there is anything special, you will tell her, but you are not to be bothered with the details of the house now. After a while, perhaps, you will care to attend to some of the things, and tell her what you would like; but don't let it worry you until you get used to it all. I told the chef, too, that he need not send up the menu for the day, as he did to Mr. Doane."

Miss Thornton could not know how thankful Drusilla was for this last order, as the consideration of the menu had been a great embarrassment to her. It was written in French--a language quite unknown to Drusilla--and although she could not read the names of the marvelous creations of the cook, the food delighted her and the quiet, skilful service was always a wonder. The mechanism of the great household seemed to move with almost a machine's precision, and she felt that she was in a world that revolved to the order of unseen hands.

She had been in her new home but a few days when a card was brought her, and she read on it: _Thomas Carney, The New York Times_. She went to the library, wondering what some strange man could want with her. She found a very quick, alert young man, with twinkling blue eyes, who rose to greet her. She gave him her hand and asked him to be seated. He sat down, and then question after question was asked Drusilla. What relation she was to Elias Doane? Had she ever known him? How she had passed her life; the details of the life in the Doane home; how many years she had been there? Her impressions of her new home; what she intended doing with her million dollars; if she had any relatives to whom she would leave her money? Was she interested in charities? Did she believe in promiscuous giving, or would she help personally the objects of her charity?

Poor Drusilla heard the flood of questions in amazement, and answered them quite frankly; and the keen young newspaper man read much between the answers that showed the loneliness of her life, her bewilderment in her new surroundings, and he congratulated himself that he would have an article for his Sunday paper that not only would be filled with facts but also would have "heart interest."

When he rose to go he asked her if she had a photograph of herself.

She laughed.

"No, I ain't never had my pictur' took since I was a young girl and had it on a tintype."

Nothing daunted, the young man asked for it; but she had to tell him that she had lost it years ago; and then he asked if he might take her photograph as she sat there in her high-backed chair. Drusilla was a little awed by this very confident young man, so she sat still while he took her photograph, and then when he was ready to depart, she hesitatingly said:

"Young man, you have asked me a lot of questions. May I ask you one?"

He laughed.

"Certainly! As many as you want."

"Well, why have you asked me so many things?"

"I represent the New York Times, a newspaper, and we want to tell the people all about you."

"About me? Why should they want to know about me?"

The man laughed again, pleasantly, and said:

"You know we like to know about our neighbors, and you are the newest neighbor."

"But are you going to write all I said?"

"Well, nearly all; but, Miss Doane, if there is anything you don't want written, I'll cut it."

Drusilla was embarrassed.

"Have I said anything that I shouldn't? If I had known you was from a paper, I'd 'a' waited until Mr. Thornton come."

"I'm jolly glad you didn't. Little copy could have been squeezed from that old lawyer. But don't you worry, Miss Doane. There won't be anything that will hurt you. It's kind of you to see me. I have been trying for several days to get in, but couldn't get past that butler of yours. He sure is a wonder."

"Did the butler stop you?"

"Well, yes; he stood at the door like an armored cruiser. I wouldn't have made it to-day if I hadn't waited until I saw him go out. I knew the second man was at his home and only a maid in charge of you."

Drusilla was unhappy.

"Perhaps I shouldn't have seen you. It must have been Mr. Thornton's orders, and he knows what is best for me."

She crossed over to the young man and looked rather pitifully up into his face.

"You look like a nice young man," she said; "I like your eyes. You won't say nothing that'll make Mr. Thornton unhappy?"

The reporter took the half-outstretched hand and smiled down into the kindly, wrinkled face. When he spoke there was almost a touch of tenderness in his voice.

"I don't care about making Mr. Thornton unhappy, Miss Doane, but I wouldn't do anything to make _you_ unhappy for the world; and if you ever want anything of the papers, here is my card. Just you send for me and I'll do anything for you that I can."

And so ended Drusilla's first interview.

To her amazement the next Sunday there was spread before her the paper with great headlines: MISS DRUSILLA DOANE, OUR NEWEST MILLIONAIRE. There was the picture of the Doane home for old ladies; there were pictures of the home at Brookvale taken from many angles, pictures of the garden, the conservatories; and in the middle of the page there was Drusilla herself, sitting in the high-backed chair. The article was well written, filled with "heart interest." It told of her early struggles, her years of work, and her later life in the charity home. Evidently the young man had visited the village where she had lived and talked with all who knew her; and Mrs. Smith's hand could plainly be seen in the account of the life of the inmates of the institution over which she had charge. Even poor old Barbara had been called upon to tell about Drusilla, the many little acts of kindness which she had done for the poor and lonely. As Drusilla read it she laughed and said, "Well, I guess Barbara had her teeth in that day." The article ended with the account of the million dollar bequest, and suggested that quite likely the charities of New York would benefit by the newest acquisition to the ranks of its millionaires, as Miss Doane was alone in the world, and had no one on whom to lavish her enormous income or to leave the money when she was called to the other world.

Drusilla did not know it, but this last addition of the facile reporter's pen set many heads of institutions to thinking, and caused many a person to wonder how they could gain the affections or the pity of this old lady, and separate her from at least a part of her new-found inheritance.

Drusilla passed many hours among the flowers in the conservatories, where she won the heart of the gardener by the keen interest she took in his work. He would walk around with her and tell her the names of the plants strange to her, pointing out their beauties and their peculiarities. He soon saw that the orchids and the rare blooms from foreign lands did not appeal to her as did the old-fashioned flowers she knew, and they made a little bargain that in the spring she should have some beds of mignonette, phlox, verbenas, and moss rose. One morning she watched him giving directions to one of the under-gardeners for the potting of small plants for the spring.

"Mr. Donald," she said, "I wish I could plant somethin'. It's been years since I dug around in the earth, and I want to plant somethin' and see it grow."

"That's easy, ma'am," said Scotch Mr. Donald. "I'll fix a part of the house here and you can plant what you want in it"; and after that

many mornings found Drusilla pottering happily around the conservatory with a trowel, planting seeds or "slipping" plants as she called it. It gave her something to do, and that was the one thing she needed. She missed the active life, the "doing something." Everything was done for her--she had no duties. She, who had passed her life in service for others, here had only to mention a wish and it was immediately carried out. She was not allowed even to look after her clothing. As soon as an article was removed it was whisked out of the room and when returned was brushed, mended, and ready for use again.

One afternoon Drusilla sat down by the window to mend a tear on the bottom of her skirt. Jeanne, coming into the room, quickly took the garment from her.

"Madame, she must not do that. *_Quelle horreur!* I will attend to it at once."

Drusilla laughed.

"Can't I even patch my dress?" she said. "Jane, where are my stockin's? I am sure there must be some darnin'."

Jeanne looked at her reproachfully.

"Madame does not wear darned stockings."

"Stuff and nonsense!" said Drusilla. "Why shouldn't I wear darned stockin's?"

"Yes, but it would not be *_au fait_* for Madame to wear darned stockings."

Drusilla became a little angry.

"How foolish you are, Jane! I've wore darned stockin's all my life. A few darns don't hurt one way or another. What becomes of my stockin's? I saw a hole in one the other day."

Jeanne looked a little embarrassed.

"Why--why--when they become not *_convenable_* for Madame, I--I take them."

"Oh," said shrewd Drusilla, looking at Jeanne over her glasses. "And I presume you are the judge of when they become '*_convenable_*' --whatever that means. But you'd better let me tell you when I think they're ready to be passed on."

Drusilla sat back in the chair with folded hands for a few moments; then she looked down at them as they lay idly in her lap.

"I don't see what I'm goin' to do with my hands. I've always had a

work-basket by my side whenever I set down, and now you just expect me to set. Well, I'm tired of it; I want to _do_ something."

A few of the neighbors, headed by Mrs. Thornton, the typical New York woman devoted to "society," made calls upon Drusilla; and when the first caller's card was brought to Drusilla, she went into the drawing-room and greeted the stylishly dressed lady who rose to meet her, wondering why she had come. The lady sat down and talked to Drusilla about the weather, asked how she liked Brookvale, spoke of the opera season and of a new singer, asked her if she cared for symphonies, which Drusilla thought at first was something to eat, mentioned a ball that was being given at Sherry's that night for charity; and then departed, leaving Drusilla still wondering why she came. Evidently she told her friends of her visit, as many came, some from curiosity and others from real kindness and desire to be friendly with their newest neighbor.

One day Daphne saw the cards.

"Oh," she said, "has Mrs. Druer called, and Mrs. Cairns, and Mrs. Freeman. I am so glad. You must return the call."

"Is that a call? What did they come for? I been wondering about it ever since they come."

"They are your neighbors."

"Oh, is that the way they are neighborly in the city? Set down and talk about nothing for ten minutes and then go home. Well, I don't see as it's very fillin'."

"They want to get acquainted."

"Well, why don't they stay a while and git acquainted? We jest git started to talkin' when they go away. Where I lived when a neighbor come to see you, they brought their sewin' and spent the afternoon. You can't git acquainted settin' opposite each other and wonderin' what to say. Why, they all look when they git ready to go, 'Well, I've done my duty; thank goodness it's over!'"

Daphne laughed.

"You must go and return the calls."

"You mean that I must go to their houses and do what they done--set ten minutes and ask them about the weather and the opera and symphonies? I don't know nothin' about them things at all."

"You needn't ask them about the opera, but you must return their calls."

Drusilla shook her head.

"No, I won't do it."

"Oh, but you must."

"But I won't, Miss Thornton," said Drusilla obstinately. "I don't know what to say."

"I'll go with you, Miss Doane."

"Well--" and Drusilla was a little pacified--"well, I'll go once and see what it's like. I'll do anything once, but I won't promise to do it much."

"Never mind; you must return the first calls. I'll come for you to-morrow and we'll go. You have cards--I had them made for you; and I'll bring my new cardcase. No, I'll get you the dearest bag I saw downtown. Gray suede with a cardcase and mirror in it, and a pencil and everything you need."

"What do I want a mirror in my hand satchel for?"

"Why to powder your nose if it gets shiny, Miss Doane. You're not up to date. You must have a vanity box in your bag or you won't be in it at all now."

Drusilla laughed.

"You ain't forgot how vain I was that first day when I peeked in all the mirrors at the hotel. But now I can pass one without lookin' in, if I ain't got a new dress on."

"Speaking of dresses, Miss Doane, put on that dark gray velvet that Marcelle made you and the hat with the mauve. Oh, I wish it were cold, so you could wear your new furs. But--well--they'll see them all after a while. We mustn't astonish them too much at first."

"Do I have to fix up so much?"

"But I want them to see how pretty you are."

Drusilla blushed like a girl.

"Pshaw, Miss Thornton, don't you know I'm past seventy years old? You shouldn't say such things."

"Oh, but I mean it. Margaret Fairchild, who was here with her mother, told the girls the other night at the dance that she couldn't keep her eyes off of you, as you sat with the light on your hair, and your pretty dress that was so half old-fashioned and half the latest style. She said you looked as if you had just stepped out of a picture."

"It's my clothes, I guess."

"Yes, it's partly the clothes, and that's where Marcelle is clever. She makes the clothes suit _you_, and doesn't try to make a fashionable middle-aged woman out of you. She spoke of your hands too, said they looked so--so--sort of feminine as they lay on the arms of the chair. You are clever, Miss Doane, to always sit on one of those high-backed chairs when callers come; it makes a lovely background."

"Does it? I hadn't thought of that. I generally set in the chair that's nearest the door; and I like one with arms that I can take hold of, 'cause it makes me nervous to have the women stare at me, and sometimes when there is such a long time between talks, I hold on to the arm tight so's I won't show I'm nervous and wonderin' what to say to fill in. But I didn't think any one noticed my hands." She looked down at them rather sadly. "They've always worked hard and I guess they show the marks."

"Oh, your hands are beautiful, Miss Doane. I can't ever believe you have worked with them."

"Can't you? I never had my hands idle in my lap in all my life till I come here. But--well, they ought to have something happen to 'em the way Jane works with 'em. Whenever I let her she's fussin' with my hands with little sticks and knives, until sometimes I'd like to box her ears. How any one can spend so much time just settin' still and lettin' some one fuss with their hands, I don't see. But I let her do it, as I don't have much else to do here but just set still, and she'd better fool with my hands than spend her time talkin' with William, which she does enough as it is."

"Oh, is Jeanne flirting?"

"Now, I shouldn't say anything. But I can't help seein' things, even if they do think I'm an old woman with my eyes half shut."

"I'll speak to Father about it."

"No, you won't, Miss Thornton. Leave her alone. It ain't much company for a young girl like her just to wait on an old woman like me; and William seems a nice young man. I like him, Miss Thornton, but I jest can't bear the sight of James."

Daphne turned quickly.

"Has James been impertinent to you?"

Drusilla shook her head.

"No, not at all. I wish he would be impudent or _anything_ except jest stand around and look grand. He don't approve of me, Miss Thornton--even his back when he leaves the dining-room says he don't approve of me. I never seen a back that can say so much as his'n."

"Well, if you don't like him I will speak to Father and he will get another butler."

"No, don't do that. He don't do nothin' to lose his place for; and I'd hate to have to git used to another back. He never says a word, but he jest _looks_; but perhaps he'll git over it, or I'll git used to it, or maybe when I git more used to things I'll talk to him and ask him if he can't be a little more human, instead of lookin' like the chief mourner at a funeral. It sometimes makes me feel that I'm dead and he's takin' the last look."

Daphne laughed.

"Oh, that's his way. He's English, you know, and English servants are trained to look like mummies."

"Well, he certainly had good trainin'. What time do we go callin' to-morrow? I want to git it over."

"I'll come for you at four, and I'll tell them to have the small car ready. Good-by. I'm going to a great big tea where I am to pour. I love to give tea, although I always give the wrong person lemon."

The next day Jeanne, being told that Drusilla was going to call upon the ladies of the neighborhood, took extra care in dressing her; and when Daphne came, Drusilla was a very richly, exquisitely dressed old lady waiting for her car. The bag delighted Drusilla and she examined the fittings, and looked at the little vanity case with its tiny powder puff and mirror. Daphne laughed as she saw her peep into the mirror.

"Oh, Miss Doane, you're just like us all. We can't pass a mirror without a peep."

Drusilla said: "I wonder if we ever git too old not to want to see ourselves. As long as I can have hats like this one, I won't. Ain't it funny what clothes can do for you. Now with my velvet dress I ain't a bit afraid to go in that big house, in the front door and set down in the parlor, while if I had on my old black dress, I'd feel that I belonged in the kitchen. Yet it's the same Drusilla Doane inside."

Drusilla made many calls that afternoon. At some of the places, being told that the lady was not at home, a card was left.

"Pshaw now," she said to Daphne, "will I have to come again, now she ain't at home?"

"No," said Daphne; "she'll find your cards and know you have called. That's all you have to do."

"Well, that's one good thing"--and Drusilla was relieved to find

that the disagreeable duty was so quickly done. "If I'd a knowed that, I'd a sent William to tell me when they was out and then I'd a come."

"Oh, but you'll like your neighbors when you know them. Here--Mrs. Crane is at home, I know"--and Drusilla spent a most miserable half hour sitting on the edge of a hard chair, wishing Daphne would rise as a signal to leave. Tea was served by a maid, and Drusilla held the cup awkwardly, while she ate the little wafer and infinitesimal sandwich which was passed with it.

"Why didn't they have a table?" she asked when they were outside. "I was in mortal fear that I'd spill the tea on my new dress--and I don't eat well with my gloves on."

Two more calls of the same kind were made and as they were turning into another gate, Drusilla leaned forward and said to the chauffeur: "Joseph, go straight ahead." Then, turning to Daphne, Drusilla said: "We're goin' for a ride now; we ain't goin' to spoil this lovely day with no more calls."

Drusilla would not listen to Daphne's remonstrances, and the motor flew along the beautiful drive overlooking the Hudson. Drusilla did not speak for a time, simply enjoying the ride. Then she turned to the girl.

"Daphne, what does subsidize mean."

Daphne frowned for a moment.

"I wonder if I can tell. I know what it means but it is hard to say it. It means to pay a certain sum of money to some one or some thing. For instance, the ships that carry the mails for some governments are subsidized; or if the government wants to aid some project, to enable it to start, it subsidizes it--that is, gives it a certain sum per year like a salary. Have I made myself clear? Father could tell you better than I can."

"I guess I see what it is," Drusilla said.

"Why do you want to know?" queried Daphne.

"Well, I got a little mixed up in what it meant. I got a letter this morning from some man--some poet I guess he is--who said that I should leave my money to subsidize struggling poets, who had a great message to give the world, but who had to work so hard making a livin' that they didn't git no chance to give the message. I'm afraid I got kind of mixed up--I could think of nothin' but etherize. I guess it was the strugglin' that confused my mind, and I been wondering why I could etherize a lot of struggling young poets. But now I understand."

"Well, of all the impertinence--"

"I don't know, Daphne; there's some truth in what he said. He said that nations needed great thoughts as well as they needed great inventions--them's his words not mine--and often rich men subsidized a poor inventor or a poor scientist so's they could have time to make their inventions and not have to worry over their daily bread; so why shouldn't it be done for the poets who would then have time to give great thoughts to the people, thoughts that would inspire them to noble deeds and works. There's a lot of sense in what he says."

"But you would never think of doing such a thing--"

"No, of course not; but I like to hear about it. And I been a studyin' a lot about that young man,--I am sure he was young or he wouldn't have had the courage to write me; it's only the young who have the courage to try."

"I call it nerve," said Daphne scornfully; "plain nerve."

"Yes, perhaps it is. But I was thinkin' about this young man who has got a feelin' inside of him that he could say somethin' that would make the world better, and he tries, then he's got to go to an office or somewhere and perhaps count rolls of cloth, or he may be a newspaper man who has to write stories of murders and divorces and--and--things like that, when beautiful things is just a chokin' him."

She was silent for a moment.

"It's an awful thing to be poor, Daphne--real poor. Yet--" she said musingly, "even when you're real poor you can always find somethin' to give. Like Mis' Sweet. Did I ever tell you about Mis' Sweet? She lived in our village and she was mortal poor all her life. When her husband lived he didn't do no more work than he had to and she had to git along as best she could, and then when he died she lived with her son, who was so mean and stingy that he made her go to bed at dark so's she wouldn't burn kerosene. She was so poor that she never had cookies or cakes to send her neighbors, and it kind o' cut her, because in the country we was always sendin' some little thing we'd been bakin' to each other, because that's about the only kind of presents country women can make to each other, somethin' they make themselves."

"So Mis' Sweet felt kind o' bad that she couldn't make no return. But, as I says, one ain't never too poor but that they kin give something. Now Mis' Sweet and nothin' pretty in her house, and never saw much that was beautiful, but she had beautiful thoughts inside, and she loved the flowers and things that grew around her."

"Mis' Sweet made paper flowers trying to say the beautiful things she felt inside, jest like that poet. She couldn't buy none of the pretty crinkled papers that we see nowadays; she never saw none of those; but she saved all the little pieces of tissue paper, and any scrap of silk, and the neighbors saved 'em for her too, and they

saved their broom wire; and no one ever thought of throwin' away an old green window shade--it was sent to Mis' Sweet for her leaves. She twisted the broom wires with any piece of green paper that she could git hold of, and she cut the papers into flowers, the white ones into daisies and the little pieces of silk was colored with dyes that the neighbors give her that they had left over, and she made roses and apple blossoms and begonias and geraniums, and all the flowers that she knowed. If some were peculiar and didn't look like much o' anything she called them jest wild flowers. She made them all into bouquets. And there wasn't a new baby born in the village but that the mother found by her bedside a bouquet of Mis' Sweet's, and no bride went to the altar but she had a little piece o' orange blossom on her that had been lovingly pinned on by Mis' Sweet, and before the lid was closed over our dead--they had slipped in their fingers a little flower from their old neighbor. And do you think that we laughed at her stiff little bouquets? No! We all loved 'em and we understood, 'cause with each leaf made out of our old window shades and from each wire from our wore out brooms, there was a little love mixed in with the coverin'."

She was silent for a few moments; then she added:

"And I think that this young poet will find a way to give something to the world, if he really loves it and wants to give, same as Mis' Sweet did."

They were returning home along the drive.

"We haven't made half the calls that we should," Daphne said. "We must go another day."

Drusilla shook her head decisively.

"No; I won't make no more calls."

"Oh, but, Miss Doane, you must. You must return your calls."

"Oh, but I mustn't, and I won't," said Drusilla, shaking her head obstinately. "I most froze at some of them places, and I won't risk it again. I won't make calls. They can come to me, Miss Thornton, but I won't go back."

"But they won't come to see you if you don't return the calls."

"Well, they can stay at home then--it ain't much loss on either side."

"But what will you do?"

"I'll send William to know when they are out, and he can leave my cards jest as well as I can. I won't go into them rooms and drink tea out of my lap and eat with my gloves on, and talk about things I don't know nothin' about and don't care even if I did. I'm too old to begin such foolishness."

"But what will I tell them when they ask why you don't return their calls?"

"You can tell them anything you want to. I _won't_ go."

Daphne said mischievously: "I'll say you are a _very_ old lady, and _feeble_, and cannot take the exertion of making calls."

Drusilla sat up very straight and a slight flush appeared on her cheeks.

"You'll say _no_ such thing, Daphne Thornton. You say the truth, that I don't see no sense in it. Old indeed! I'm not so old; and as to being feeble--"

Daphne snuggled her face against the arm near her.

"Oh, you are a dear, Miss Doane. I love to see you get angry. But _you_ say you are old!"

"That's different. I say it with my own meanin', and generally to pet out of doin' somethin' I don't want to do. But I'm growin' younger each minute. Perhaps"--she chuckled softly to herself--"it's my second childhood."

They came to the door, and it was opened by James--stiff, correct, funereal.

"No," almost groaned Drusilla; "there's James. Now I know I'm dead and only waitin' for the buryin'."

CHAPTER V

Drusilla grew more and more to feel that she was a part of her little world, where everything revolved around her and her wishes were law. It was only natural that she gained confidence in herself. She lost her awe of the servants, and even found courage to speak shortly to James, who, she learned from Jeanne, was relegating most of his duties to William, thinking Miss Doane would not know the difference.

But after the excitement of the first few weeks was past she found the time heavy on her hands. She had no duties, she did not read, there was no sewing nor mending for her, and she could not always work in the conservatories among the flowers; consequently she began to long for something with which to occupy her thoughts and, above all, her hands.

One morning when she was wandering aimlessly around the house she went into the pastry room. There she looked in delight at all the shining pans and the bowls arranged in graduated sizes on their shelves.

"My, ain't it nice, and everything so handy!"

She looked around for a minute; then a thought began to take shape in Drusilla's mind. She looked at the chef thoughtfully; then, evidently deciding, she gave her head a little toss and with a light laugh left the room, soon to return with a big gingham apron covering her pretty dress. The chef looked at her inquiringly.

"Cook," Drusilla said, "I'm hungry for some home cookin' and I want to do it myself. I ain't cooked none fer a good many years, and my fingers is jest itchin' to git into the flour. Where's your flour and things to make cake?"

The chef was shocked.

"_Mais_, Madame."

"Yes, Madame may, and she's goin' to; so show me where the things is." She rolled up her sleeves. "Now you git me that big yellow bowl, and give me the lard. I'm goin' to make doughnuts--fried cakes I used to call 'em, tho' it's more stylish to say doughnuts these days. I don't like them that's bought in the store with sugar sprinkled on top; sugar don't belong on fried cakes. It takes away their crispiness and you might jest as well be eatin' cake."

Drusilla kept the chef busy waiting on her until she had all the articles needed. Then she turned upon him.

"Now, you go away. Go up to your room, or down to James. I don't want you standin' round lookin' as if you was goin' to bust every minute. You got to git used to this. I'm goin' to have a bakin' day once a week, same as I did for forty year."

Drusilla spent a happy morning. The "fried cakes" finished, she decided to make some cookies--the "old-fashioned kind that my mother's sister Jane give me the receipt of; I kind o' want to see if I have lost my hand."

But the hand had not lost its cunning if the great dish of brown, crisp doughnuts, and the cookies and the gingerbread were a test. After they were baked and in a row on the table, she stepped back and surveyed her handiwork, with a proud expression on her kindly old face.

"Now if I only had some one to come in and say, 'Drusilla, is them fresh fried cakes?' and I'd laugh and say, 'Yes; do try 'em,' and they'd eat three or four. Or if I only had some neighbors--"

Drusilla stopped suddenly.

"Now, why _shouldn't_ !! I've got neighbors that's all been tryin' to be neighborly to me in their way; why shouldn't I be neighborly in _my_ way? I can't be neighborly jest leavin' a card, or drinkin' tea with my gloves on--Yes, I will! Drusilla'll be neighborly in _Drusilla's_ way."

She was as delighted as a child at the thought. She hurried into the pantry and returned with some plates and napkins. She piled a few of her confections upon each plate, carefully covered it with a napkin, then called William.

"William," she said, "you take that plate o' cookies over to Mis' Gale's, and tell her that I sent 'em, bein' it was my bakin' day. See she gets 'em and they don't stop in the kitchen. And take that plate o' gingerbread to Mis' Cairns; and them fried cakes to Mis' Freeman; and tell 'em all I sent 'em with my love. Tell 'em I made 'em myself."

William looked at her but did not move.

"What you lookin' at me fer? Take 'em as I said. Put 'em in a basket if you can't carry 'em, or have one of the girls help you."

"But, ma'am, but--"

"But what? Ain't you never took cookies to one before?"

"Why--why--no, ma'am. Never in the houses where I've served--"

"Now that'll do, William. Don't begin that. That's what James always says when he specially wants to be disagreeable. If you haven't ever took a neighbor a plate o' cookies or some gingerbread, right hot out of the oven, you've missed a lot. So do as I say!"

"But--ma'am--I'm sure they have all the cakes they need. Mr. Cairns is a--very--very rich man, and they have a cook, a French cook. Why, he has an income of more than a million dollars a year, and--and--"

Drusilla looked at him over her glasses.

"Land o' Goshen, has he? That's a heap o' money; but I'm sure that if he has a French cook like mine, he'll be mighty glad to have an old-fashioned fried cake; so take that plate to him too, and I'll fix another for Mis' Freeman. He ain't never sence he was a boy set his teeth in better fried cakes. Perhaps the cookies won't be so much to his taste; but you tell 'em they're nice fer the children to slip in their apron pockets to eat at recess."

William executed his errand, although with a feeling that the dignity of the place was not being upheld. There was a luncheon party at the Cairns mansion, and when the butler brought in the plate of cookies and the doughnuts and delivered the message, trying his best

not to smile, Mrs. Cairns looked at them in dismay.

"What did you say, John?"

"Miss Doane sent them to you with her love. She said that it was her baking day, and that she had made them herself. The cookies are for the children to slip in their apron pockets and eat at recess," recited the butler with an immobile face.

Mrs. Cairns raised the napkins and surveyed the cakes; then she looked at her husband and her guests. They laughed; that is, the guests did, but not Mr. Cairns.

"Take them to the kitchen, John," Mrs. Cairns ordered. "The servants may have them."

"No; bring them here, John," Mr. Cairns said sharply. "You may go and say that Mrs. Cairns thanks Miss Doane very much for her thoughtfulness in remembering her on her baking day, and that she is sure she will enjoy the doughnuts--and the cookies will be given to the children."

The servant left the room, and Mr. Cairns sat very quietly looking at the plates before him. He took up one of the doughnuts, studied it, then finally took a bite of it.

"Hot," he said, "and crispy."

He was quiet a moment, with a far away look in his eye; then, as if noticing the silence of his guests, he said with a quiet laugh:

"It takes me back--back--. Bless her old soul! I understand. And it takes me back--and--well, I'm a boy again and I can see Mother standing over the stove, and I can smell the hot cakes when I come in from school, and hear her say, 'Jimmie, take your hands out of that crock! No, you can't have but one. Well, two, but no more. Now take that plate over to Mis' Fisher and that one to Miss Corbin--'"

He was quiet again for a few moments; then, as if coming back to the world beside him, he said in his usual even tones:

"Shall we go into the library?"

And the guests did not laugh again.

Drusilla was neighborly in other ways besides that of sending cakes and cookies on her baking day. One day she heard that Mrs. Beaumont, who lived in the first house below her, was ill. "She has a bad cold," Miss Lee told her, "and they are afraid it might develop into pneumonia. But, between you and me, she's just bored to death and doesn't have enough to interest her."

As soon as her visitor left, Drusilla went upstairs, and came down

with a little package in her hand and an old-fashioned sunbonnet on her head. She went out of the gate and down the road until she came to the great gates that guarded the home of the multi-millionaire who lived there.

She was told at the door that Mrs. Beaumont was not receiving, but she told the man to tell his mistress that she had something special for her and would not detain her but a moment. The man rather unwillingly took her message, and returning in a few moments conducted Drusilla into a luxurious bedroom, where a very beautiful woman was lying upon a chaise lounge, dressed in an elaborate peignoir, her hair covered by a marvelous creation that went by the name of boudoir cap. She languidly gave her hand to Drusilla.

"You want to see me?" she murmured in a low, languid voice. "Won't you please sit down? And excuse my appearance. I am not receiving--but--but--I thought I would see you."

Drusilla sat down.

"Now that's real nice of you to see me. I heard you was sick--had a bad cold; and I thought I'd come in and see if I couldn't help you. I brung some boneset. I nursed a lot when I was younger, and I found that boneset is the best thing in the world fer a cold. Jest make a tea of it and drink it hot. It's kind of bitter, but you can put milk and sugar in it if you want to--though, to my notion, that makes it worse. Then git right into bed and cover up and sweat. It's the best thing in the world fer a cold--jest sweat it out of you. If you should put a hot brick or a hot flatiron at your back and another at your feet, it'd help. By to-morrow you won't know you got a cold."

The woman's face was a study; but the doctor entered at that moment and saved her. She said:

"Dr. Hodman, this is Miss Doane, my nearest neighbor."

Drusilla shook his hand heartily.

"I'm real glad to see you. I've brung Mis' Beaumont some herbs. A little boneset. I told her to make a good strong cup o' tea of it, and drink it hot, then git into bed and cover up warm, and sweat, and by to-morrow she wouldn't know she had a cold."

The doctor looked from Drusilla to Mrs. Beaumont, hardly knowing what to say. This little old lady, with her sunbonnet and her boneset tea, was not the usual visitor he encountered in the homes of his fashionable patients.

"Yes," said Mrs. Beaumont, "and--and--Miss Doane was telling me that a hot brick--what was it you said, Miss Doane?"

"I was a tellin' her that a hot brick or a flatiron at her feet and another at the small of her back would help. It ain't comfortable

jest at first, but she can have the hired girl wrap it in a piece o flannel, and after a while it feels real comfortin'. But I must be goin'. I see you're a lookin' at my bunnet, Mis' Beaumont. It don't look much like what you got on your head, but I work a lot in the garden, and if I don't have somethin' on my head my hair gets all frouzy. A hat don't seem to be the right thing to work in the garden with, and if I do wear one the sun burns the back of my neck when I stoop down; so I got me a bunnet, like I used to wear, and it makes me feel real to home. Good-by, good-by, doctor."

She turned to Mrs. Beaumont:

"Now, if the boneset tea don't do you no good, let me know. Perhaps your liver is teched a little and it makes you feel bad all over. I got some camomile leaves that's real good fer that. If you want any, I'll be real glad to bring 'em over."

She was gone.

The doctor looked at his patient and the patient looked at the doctor. Then Mrs. Beaumont put back her head and burst into a gale of laughter, in which the dignified doctor soon joined. They laughed and laughed, the woman wiping her tear-filled eyes. Finally, when she could stop long enough to talk, she said:

"Did you ever hear of anything so funny in all your life--a hot brick--or a hot flatiron"--a peal of laughter--"at my feet--another one at the small of my back--Oh, I shall die, I shall surely die!" And she went off into another paroxysm of laughter.

When the laughter ceased and the doctor returned to his professional manner, asking her how she felt and starting to feel her pulse, she said:

"Doctor, she's cured me. I haven't had a laugh like that for years. It's better than all your medicine. Boneset tea--" and again she was off.

Finally, when she had quieted, the doctor said:

"I don't know but that her boneset tea is as good as anything else. All you need is a little quiet. You seem better than you were yesterday."

"I tell you that I am well! All my system needed was a little shaking up, and Miss Doane has done it for me."

The doctor rose to go.

"I think that I shall take Miss Doane as a partner. Her herbs or her prescriptions seem to have a better effect than my medicines. Shall I come to-morrow?"

"Yes; this may not last. Come to-morrow if you are near, though I am sure I won't need you."

As the doctor's hand was on the door he turned:

"If I were you, Mrs. Beaumont, I'd send for those camomile leaves."

But with all her little acts of neighborliness, and her "baking day" and her attempts to find duties to fill the hours, time began to hang heavily upon the hands of active Drusilla. If she had been of a higher station in life she would have said that she was bored or was suffering from that general complaint of the rich--"enuyee."

Here Providence stepped in. One morning when she was dressing she heard a peculiar little wailing cry. She listened. The cry was repeated. She listened again, but could not locate the sound. Then, thinking she might be mistaken, she continued with her dressing; but again that piercing wail was borne to her ears. She opened her window and then she heard it distinctly--a baby's cry. She listened in amazement. There was no baby on the place except the gardener's, and his cottage was too far from the big house to have his children's wails heard in that place given over to aristocratic quiet. Drusilla tried to see around the corner of the house, but she could not; so she rang for Jeanne.

"Jane, I heard a baby cry. Go and find out where it is," she said.

Jeanne was gone a long time, it seemed to Drusilla; and then she returned, with big frightened eyes, followed by the butler carrying a large basket. He stopped at the door.

"Come in, James. What you standing there for? What you got?"

Just then the wailing cry came from the basket, and Drusilla dropped the brush in her hand.

"For the land's sake, what's in the basket? Come here!"

James gingerly deposited the basket upon a chair.

"It's a baby, ma'am--a live baby."

"Well, upon my soul! Of course it is! You wouldn't expect it to not be alive. Let's see it."

She went over to the basket and looked down at the lively little bundle that seemed to be protesting in its feeble way against the injustice of the world in leaving it at a chance doorstep. Drusilla looked at it admiringly.

"Why, ain't it cunning, the pore little thing! It's done up warm. How'd it get here?"

"I don't know, ma'am. It must 'a' been left early this morning after the gates was opened. I'll ask the gardeners if they saw any one come in."

"Never mind now, James. Here's a letter. It'll tell us all about it. Where are my glasses, Jane?"

Drusilla put on her glasses and read the inscription on the letter.

"_Miss Drusilla Doane_. Well, they know my name."

She tore open the envelope and read aloud:

"I read in the paper that you have no one and are alone and rich. My baby has no one but me, and I can't get work. Won't you take him? His name is John--that's all."

"JOHN'S MOTHER."

Drusilla pushed the glasses up on her forehead and used a slang expression that almost drew a smile from solemn James.

"Now _what_ do you know about that!"

She looked at James as if he should have an answer, and he said:

"I'm sure, Miss Doane, I don't know anything about it at all."

Drusilla looked down at the baby in the basket, and again at the letter, not knowing what to do; but, the little wail again rising, she reached down to take the baby into her arms, and found it securely pinned into the basket.

"Poor little mother!" she said. "She didn't want you to get cold."

As she took out the safety-pins and lifted the baby into her arms, she dislodged a bottle of milk.

"Why, she thought of everything! She must 'a' loved you, little John, even though she left you on my doorstep."

The baby, a healthy little youngster about eight months old, blinked up at Drusilla in a friendly manner, then clutched her hair. Drusilla laughed, as she drew her head away.

"That's the first thing all babies make for, my hair. Bless his little heart, he's gettin' familiar already."

James interrupted.

"What'll I do with it, Miss Doane?"

Drusilla looked up from the baby.

"Do with what? The basket? Take it away."

"No, ma'am; I meant _it_"--pointing to the baby.

"James, it is not an _it_. It's a _he_. But you're right, James; what'll we do with it?" And she looked down at the little body in her arms.

"Why--why--" stammered James, who plainly showed that disposing of babies left by chance at doorsteps was entirely out of the usual line of a well trained butler's duties, "I don't know, ma'am. It never happened before where I've served." Here he had an inspiration and his face cleared. "Perhaps we'd better send for Mr. Thornton."

Drusilla looked up at him in a relieved way.

"That's the first glimmer of sense you've ever showed, James; though what he knows about babies I don't see. I'm sure he never was one himself. Now I'll set down--this baby's heavy--and you go and telephone."

"What'll I tell him, ma'am?"

"Tell him? Why, tell him we've got a baby unexpected and we don't know what to do with it."

James almost smiled again.

"I'll break the news to him careful, ma'am," he said.

When he was gone Drusilla scrutinized the baby's hood and coat.

"Jane," she said, "his clothes is pretty---his mother must 'a' made 'em; and his socks is knit, not bought ones."

She examined each article of his clothing as carefully as would a mother inspecting her firstborn's wardrobe.

"He's dressed real nice.... Did you get him?" as James entered the room. "What did he say?"

"I did not speak to him, Miss Doane, but to Miss Daphne. She acted rather--well--rather excited, and said she would be over immediately with her father."

"We'll wait in patience, I suppose. I'll lay this young man down. My arms must be a gettin' old because I feel him."

She laid the baby on the couch and he protested with legs and arms and voice against being again laid upon his back. Drusilla took him up and he was happy again.

"Well," laughed Drusilla, "I guess I've found somethin' to do with my hands."

The baby stared at Drusilla for a few moments; then his wails commenced again. Drusilla trotted him, but that did not stop his cries.

"Perhaps he is hungry, Miss Doane," Jeanne suggested.

"Give me that bottle."

Drusilla felt the bottle and found it cold.

"It's cold, James. Go warm some milk and scald the bottle."

James went away, his head held high, disapproval expressed in every line of his back. Within a few moments a motor was heard at the door and Daphne's young voice was calling:

"Can we come in, Miss Doane? Where is the baby?"

Daphne entered, interested and excited, followed by her father, stiff, erect, the correct lawyer troubled by unnecessary and petty affairs of the women world.

Daphne came to the baby, who stopped his wails long enough to stare at the new visitor with round, wondering eyes.

"Oh, _isn't_ he a dear! How did you find him?"

Drusilla handed her the letter. "Read that, and then you'll know as much as me."

Daphne read the note out loud.

"Isn't it romantic, Father!" she exclaimed. "Just like you read about in books. Oh, look at James with the bottle!"

James looked neither to the right nor to the left but handed the bottle to Drusilla. She felt it to test its warmth and gave it to the squirming baby, who settled down into the hollow of her arm with a little gurgle of content. The four stood around the baby and watched it for a few moments in silence. Soon its lids began to droop and it was off to slumberland.

"What are you going to do with it, Miss Doane?" whispered Daphne.

"I'm sure I don't know. That's why I sent for your father."

"It's clearly a case for the police," Mr. Thornton said dryly. "I will telephone them."

Drusilla looked at him inquiringly.

"What did you say? Telephone the police? Why?"

"I will ask them to call and take the child in charge."

"Why, what's the baby done?"

"Nothing, of course; but they will understand how to dispose of it."

"What'll they do with it?"

"They will get into connection with the proper authorities, and if the mother cannot be found, they will have the child committed to some institution."

"Some institution. What kind of an institution?"

"An orphan asylum--a home for waifs of this kind."

Drusilla caught the word "home" and she sat up so suddenly that the bottle fell to the floor and the blue eyes opened and looked into Drusilla's face appealingly and the little wail arose again. Drusilla bent over and picked up the bottle, and when she arose her eyes were hard and two bright spots colored her wrinkled cheeks.

"You said 'home.' What do you mean? I don't like the word."

Mr. Thornton was plainly irritated.

"A home for foundlings, where the proper care will be given it."

"Yes, but how?" queried Drusilla. "What kind of care?"

Daphne interrupted her father, who was plainly trying to find words to explain the exact meaning of an orphan asylum.

"Oh, Father, that's horrid. It'll be put in with hundreds of other babies, all dressed alike, and all brought up on rules and bells and things--"

"I know now what your father means--an orphan asylum. Just the same thing as an old ladies' home, only backwards. No, I lived in one o' them and I know what it is and," she settled back in her chair, "my baby ain't goin' there."

"But," objected Mr. Thornton, looking helplessly at the obstinate face before him, "that is the only possible way to dispose of him."

"But think of his poor mother, how she'd feel if she read in the paper that he'd been put in a home. She could 'a' done that herself."

"She should have thought of that before leaving him," Mr. Thornton said dryly. "She should not have deserted the child, and does not

deserve any consideration."

"Well, we all do things we oughtn't to do. Even you do, 'cause I can see, lookin' closely at you, that you oughtn't to drink so much coffee, but you _do_; and the mother hadn't ought to have _had_ the baby in the first place, which she did, and she oughtn't 'a' left it on my stoop, but it's done. Now can't you think of something else to do with it except send it to a home? Ugh, that word makes a pizen in my blood!"

Mr. Thornton clearly was exasperated that his very sensible advice was not acted upon immediately.

"I have told you the only thing to do, and we are wasting time. I must go into the city. James, telephone the police."

Drusilla sat up very erect.

"James, you'll do nothing of the kind! I've decided. _I'll_ take the baby."

"What!" said Mr. Thornton, his exasperated look changing to one of consternation. " _What_!" said Daphne in delight. " _Quoi!"_ said Jeanne. James did not speak, but he stopped on his way to the telephone and expressed his astonishment as well as a well trained servant may express astonishment at the actions of an employer.

Drusilla settled back in the chair and rocked back and forth with the sleeping baby in her arms, showing that she was enjoying the little explosive she had dropped in the midst of her family circle. There was silence for a few moments; then Mr. Thornton cleared his throat.

"I really don't believe I understood you, Miss Doane," he said.

Drusilla looked up at him with a twinkle in her eyes.

"I said in plain English that I'd take the baby."

Mr. Thornton looked at her, evidently at a loss for words to express his disapproval. Drusilla watched him, waiting for him to speak; and then, finding that he was silent, she said.

"Now you take that chair, and set down in front of me. Jane, go away. James, go downstairs. Now, Mr. Thornton, fix yourself real comfortable and we'll talk."

"But Miss Doane--"

"Now don't _but_ me, Mr. Thornton, 'cause I'm goin' to _talk_. I ain't used my voice much sence I been here, and it's gettin' tired o' doin' nothin', jest like I am. Now I've done everything you told me to. I've made visits I didn't like, I've talked with women who come here who

didn't like me, and I've tried hard to live up to this house and be a lady and do nothin', and have nothin' to look after and no one to do for and worry about, and nothin' to think of; and I'm tired of it. I've done somethin' all my life, and took care of some one. I nussed my mother for most forty years, then I took care of the sick in all our county, and I looked after the old ladies in the home who wasn't able to look after themselves and now I can't jest _set_. I'm too old to learn new ways, and I got to have something or some one to do for, and the good Lord knowed I was gettin' restless and sent this here baby. Now--no, wait a minute--I ain't through yet," as Mr. Thornton tried to interrupt her. "I'm goin' to have my say, then your turn'll come, though it won't do you much good, as my mind is made up, and when a woman's mind is made up it's jest as foolish to try to change it as it is to try to set a hen before she begins to cluck."

She stopped a moment and looked down at the sleeping baby in her arms.

"I ain't a-thinkin' of myself alone and jest how good it'll be for me, but I'm a-thinkin' of the baby and I want to give him a chance like other babies."

"But," said Mr. Thornton, "it's quite impossible! A home for such as he is the proper place for him."

"Don't say that word _home_ to me. Mr. Thornton, I hate the word. I've et charity bread and it's bitter, and charity milk'd be the same."

Mr. Thornton threw out his hands with an exasperated gesture.

"But it is impossible, I tell you, quite impossible!"

"Why impossible?" asked Drusilla. "Why, ain't the house big enough?"

"But my late client, Mr. Elias Doane--"

"Have you forgot the letter he wrote me: 'Spend the money your own way, Drusilla.'"

"But he certainly did not mean--"

"How do you know what he meant? He said spend it, and I ain't spent nothin' yet except on some foolish clothes. First thing I know I might die, then it wouldn't be spent, and I know I'd pass my days worryin' St. Peter to find out what had become of it."

Mr. Thornton threw up his hands again.

"Well, I don't know what to say more than I have said," he declared. "Have you decided on its disposition?"

Drusilla, seeing that the lawyer was surrendering, said quite meekly:

"I ain't figured out what is to be done jest now--"

Here Daphne came to her rescue.

"Why don't you give him to the gardener's wife until you find out what to do?"

Drusilla reached over and patted Daphne's hand.

"Daphne, there's some sense under them curls. Your father ought to take you in business with him. That's what we'll do. She has four already, but there's always room in a house where there's babies for one more. Send for her."

"Should it not be medically examined before being placed with other children?" Mr. Thornton suggested.

"Medically examined, stuff and nonsense! Why?"

"A child left in the manner in which this infant was left may come from extremely unsanitary surroundings, and may carry disease with it. It is more than probable."

"Disease nothin'!" said Drusilla, looking down at the baby. "I never saw a healthier child."

At the word medical Daphne rose and went to a part of the room where she could be seen by Drusilla and not by her father, and when Drusilla looked up from inspecting the baby she caught sight of Daphne, who seemed to be staring at her fixedly with a meaning in her eye.

Mr. Thornton, still intent upon the one subject where he saw a chance of having his advice acted upon, and consequently of retaining at least a semblance of authority, said: "I think a doctor should be sent for and the child medically examined."

Drusilla commenced: "It's nonsense. There ain't--" but here she again caught Daphne's eye and saw a slight movement of the head which seemed to mean, "Say yes." Drusilla looked at her a moment uncomprehendingly; then, the nod being repeated more vigorously, she said:

"Well--well--yes, if you believe it should be done, though for the life of me I don't see no sense in it. Who'll I send for?"

"I would suggest Dr. Rathman. He is--"

"Oh, Father!" interrupted Daphne. "He is so old and slow. He'd _never_ get here. Why don't you ask Dr. Eaton? He lives near here."

Mr. Thornton pursed up his lips.

"He is far too young. He has not the experience of Dr. Rathman."

"But, Father, the baby isn't dying."

Drusilla's shrewd old eyes looked keenly at Daphne's flushed face, and she laughed.

"I think Daphne is right. A young doctor's better. I don't think old doctors have a hand with babies."

"But Dr. Eaton is very young," remonstrated Mr. Thornton.

"The younger the better, then perhaps he ain't forgot how the stomach-ache feels himself. You telephone him, Daphne."

"No," said Daphne, a little embarrassed. "I think James had better do that. Oh, here's Mrs. Donald."

The baby was given into the motherly arms of Mrs. Donald; and Mr. Thornton drew on his gloves and said very coldly, feeling that he had lost ground on every point, "Come, Daphne; we will go. When you have decided upon the final disposition of the child, you may, as always, command my services, Miss Doane. Come, Daphne."

"But, Father, I'll stay a while with Miss Doane."

"No, Daphne; you will go with me. Your mother needs you."

Daphne cast an imploring glance at Drusilla.

"Can't Daphne stay a while? I'd like to talk with her," Drusilla said.

"No," said her father, with a finality in his tone that caused Daphne to go with him meekly, if unwillingly; "Daphne must return with me."

Drusilla looked at the set face a moment, and then at the rebellious face of Daphne, and her own face broke into the tiny wrinkles that accompanied her smiles.

"Oh, I see! Well, never mind, child. There are lots of other days and this baby may need the services of a doctor often." And she accompanied them to the hall with a little light of understanding in her eyes as she watched Daphne's pouting face disappear in the motor.

The young doctor came. He was a tall, broad-shouldered young athlete, not yet thirty, and his merry blue eyes and his cheery voice won Drusilla at once. They went to the gardener's cottage and inspected the baby. The doctor patted it and tickled it and tossed it in his arms until it was all gurgles of delight.

"He's as sound as a dollar, Miss Doane," he said. "Couldn't be in better condition. He could run a Marathon this minute if his legs

were long enough."

Drusilla watched the proceedings with twinkling eyes.

"Well, that's a new way to medically examine an ailin' child," she commented; "but it seems to work."

"Ailing! He isn't ailing, Miss Doane. If he keeps this fit Mrs. Donald won't have to send for me often."

"That's what I told Mr. Thornton; but he said I must have you."

Dr. Eaton stopped tossing the baby and looked at Miss Doane in astonishment.

"Are you telling me that Mr. Thornton asked you to send for me?"

"Well," and Drusilla laughed, "he didn't exactly mention your name, but he said I should have a doctor for the baby."

"I thought Mr. Thornton wasn't recommending me. Didn't he mention Dr. Rathman?"

"Perhaps he did, but Miss Daphne seemed to feel that he was too old to answer a hurry call like this, so we sort of compromised, at least Daphne and me did, on you."

There was a slight flush on the young man's face that did not miss the keen eyes of Drusilla.

"Oh," he said, "I see." And then, in an attempt to change the subject: "Is this a new baby of Donald's? I haven't seen him around here before."

"No," said Drusilla; "this is my baby."

Dr. Eaton looked at her, and then laughed with her.

"Now what should I say, Miss Doane--many happy returns of the day, or--"

"You jest say, Dr. Eaton, 'This is a fine baby.' But come up to the house and have breakfast with me. I clean forgot it. And we'll talk it all over."

They went slowly up the graveled walk to the breakfast-room, and over the coffee and the cakes Drusilla explained the unexpected arrival of the baby.

"Now you know as much about it as I do," she ended; "and I suppose you'll say with Mr. Thornton that I'm a foolish old woman to say I'll take it. But it won't do you no good. I'm goin' to have my way, and I've found out in the last few weeks that I can get it, and I'm

afraid it's spoilin' me. I'm goin' to keep the baby."

The doctor leaned back in his chair. "May I light a cigarette?
Thanks. That breakfast was corking. Now, about the baby. I think you
are right. Why shouldn't you keep the baby?"

"That's what I said--why shouldn't I?"

"No reason in the world why you shouldn't."

"I like you, Dr. Eaton. I like you more and more; and I see you
understand how I feel. Here I am, an old woman all alone in this big
house, with nothin' to do, and a lot of pesky servants that stand
around and don't earn their salt, jest a-waitin' on me. I've always
wanted babies, but never had a chance to have 'em, and I've jest
spent my heart lovin' other people's, and seein' 'em in other
people's arms and mine empty. Now I git a chance to have a baby most
my own and I ain't goin' to lose it."

The doctor looked at her face for a few moments in silence, and
beneath the lines he saw the loneliness of the heart-hungry little
old woman and he understood.

"You are perfectly right, Miss Doane. There's nothing like a baby in
all the world. It'll give you something to do and think about and
it'll bring sunshine into the house. I envy you. Every time I go down
to the 'home' where I look after the health of some kiddies, I wish I
could bundle every one of them up and take them to a real home with
me."

"That's what Mr. Thornton wanted me to do with it--put it in a home.
I've lived in a home, Dr. Eaton, and though I wasn't treated bad and
had all the comforts of four walls and enough to eat, such as it was,
it ain't a place to die in, and it sure ain't a place to grow up in."

"You're right again, Miss Doane. The kiddies up at our place get a
bed and clothes and plenty of food; but there's something they don't
get and that something is going to count in their life. They grow up
without love, and are turned out on the world just little machines
that have been taught that the world goes round at the tap of a bell.
They've missed something that they can never get, and if they win out
in life it's because they've got something pretty big inside of them
which they've had to fight for all by themselves. And any fight is
hard when it is made alone without a little tenderness to help over
the hard places. Why, when I see the girls all in checked aprons,
hair braided in two braids tied with a blue cord, all the boys in
blue with hats just exactly alike with blue bands on them--all going
to dinner at a regular time--all eating oatmeal out of a blue bowl,
all just part of a thing that turns babies into a lot of little jelly-molds
like a hundred other little jelly-molds--well, Miss Doane, it hurts
something way deep inside of me. Keep the baby, Miss Doane, for your
own sake and for the baby's."

"I'm glad you see it my way. I'd made up my mind already, but you make it easier for me. I wonder that I'll do with it at first?"

"Why don't you let the gardener's wife keep it until you can find out what you really want to do. You can pay her and she'll be glad to earn the extra money. It won't cost much."

"I ain't thinkin' about the cost. I'm jest glad to get a chance to spend some money. Mr. Thornton come to me the other day and talked most an hour about the investment of my income, and when I got it through my head what he meant, I learnt that he has to hunt up ways to put out the money that's comin' to me all the time, so's it'll make more money. Now I don't want to invest my income, or save it. I want to spend it, and I don't see no better way than taking babies."

She laughed softly.

"I wouldn't mind a few more, Dr. Eaton, jest to keep that one company. But I guess I'll git along. Most people commence with one at a time."

"Do you want more babies, Miss Doane?" asked Dr. Eaton, leaning forward interestedly. "I can get you as many as you want. I run across them every day--babies that lose their mothers in the hospitals, babies that are deserted. Why, babies that need homes are as thick as fleas, in New York."

Drusilla put up her hand.

"Now, I don't mean I want 'em all at once, Dr. Eaton. We won't be what you might call impulsive, 'cause if there's as many as you say, they can wait until I know about 'em. I'd rather like to pick and choose my family. Now I'll go upstairs and think a little about this one, and what we're goin' to do with him. It's all been rather sudden, you know, and I ain't used to so much excitement--though I think it is good fer me. I think it's going to keep me from dyin' of dry rot, which I've always been afeard of. I want to wear out, not rust out, like so many old women do."

Dr. Eaton rose to go and Miss Drusilla looked up at him as he stood straight and strong before her. She smiled, with the merry little wrinkles playing around the corners of her mouth.

"I believe I'm rather ailin' myself, and will need to have a family doctor. You might look in every once in a while and see if my health is good."

The doctor laughed as he said: "Well, I hope you won't ever need me professionally, but I'd like nothing better than to drop in and have a chat with you. Think over the baby question, Miss Doane. You'll find it the greatest question in the world to keep you up and coming. Good-by. Thank you for sending for me. Good-by."

Drusilla watched him as he swung with his long stride down the drive and out of the gate, and then she chuckled to herself.

"I can see now why Daphne is interested in the medical profession. I don't blame her; if I was fifty years younger, I'd be myself."

CHAPTER VI

One morning when Drusilla was sitting in the small library reading the morning paper her eyes caught the words: "Funeral of General Fairmont." She read of his death in the little town in the Middle West, attended by a few of the officers of his regiment and his lifelong friend, John Brierly.

Drusilla dropped the paper with an exclamation.

"John! And he's alive!"

She spent the next few hours with folded hands, her mind far in the past that was recalled by seeing the name of John Brierly. She lived over again those girlhood years when the world with John in it seemed the most beautiful place on earth. She thought of her mother's failing health, her helplessness, her dependence. She could almost hear her cry, "Don't leave me, Drusilla, don't leave me!" when John went to her and asked that they might marry and meet life's battles together. Drusilla never for a moment blamed her mother for her selfishness in demanding all and giving nothing; and she never would admit, even to herself, that her mother's obstinacy in refusing either to go with John and Drusilla or to give her consent that they live with her, had ruined her life. Those years of bitterness were past, and now she remembered only the happy days when she and John were together and life seemed just one flowery path on which they walked together.

At last she rose and rang for the butler and asked him to telephone Mr. Thornton. She could never get used to the telephone herself. She wanted Mr. Thornton to come to her on his way home.

She passed the day impatiently awaiting his arrival. She could not occupy herself with the flowers, nor could the baby at the gardener's cottage evoke any enthusiasm, although she carefully looked over the clothing of one of the younger Donalds that kindly Mrs. Donald had contributed for the baby's use.

At last the lawyer arrived. Drusilla hardly allowed him to be seated before she broached the subject.

"Mr. Thornton, I want you to do me a great favor. I just read in the paper that an--an old friend of mine that I thought dead long ago, is

living in a little town in southern Ohio. I want to know how he is getting along, what he is doing, how he is living. I want you to send some one out there and find out all about it. I want to know if he's comfortable off, and happy. He may be poor, and he may be lonely. Find out all about him, and let me know."

The lawyer started to say something.

"No, don't say a word, and don't talk about writin' out. That ain't what I want. I want to _know_, and letters won't tell me nothing. Do this for me--send some one; 'cause if you don't I'll start myself to-morrow. I'm goin' to know how life's usin' John Brierly."

She leaned over and touched the lawyer's hand.

"Don't always be agin me, Mr. Thornton. I got my heart in this. John Brierly meant all the world to me once, and although I'm old now I ain't forgot. There's _some_ things, you know, we don't forget."

Mr. Thornton looked at the flushed old face before him, and a softness came into his voice that surprised even himself.

"I'll do it at once, Miss Doane. I'm always glad to be of any service to you."

"I'm glad to hear you say it; though sometimes you have to be backed into the shafts. But you will send at once--to-morrow?"

"Yes, I'll--let me see--I'll send Mr. Burns."

"Send a bright young man, some one that'll nose around and find out everything. John's proud, and he may be poor, and I want to know jest how he's fixed; and I don't want him to feel that any one's inquiring into his affairs, 'cause then he'd shut up like a clam and I couldn't find out nothin'. Send some one with sense. Hadn't you better go yourself?"

Mr. Thornton laughed.

"That's the first compliment you ever gave me, Miss Doane; but I don't think it is necessary that I go myself. I have a very clever young man in the office who will do better than I would."

"Well, have him go at once. Can't he start to-night?"

"I don't think that is necessary either. He'd better wait until I give him all the details. But I'll start him off the first thing in the morning. Now you rest happy, and in a few days you'll know all about it."

Drusilla passed the days impatiently waiting for the return of the man from Ohio. Finally he arrived and Mr. Thornton brought him to see her.

Drusilla sat in her high-backed chair.

"Well, begin!" she said impatiently. "I'm nigh as curious as a girl."

The young clerk drew a bundle of papers from his pocket.

"I found out as much as I could regarding the present circumstances of John Brierly. He is--"

"What does he look like?" interrupted Drusilla. "I ain't seen him for mor'n forty years. Is he old lookin'? Is he sick?"

The young man smiled at her impatience.

"I should call him a singularly well preserved man for his years."

"That sounds as if he was apple-sass, or somethin' to eat. What does he look like? Is he stoop-shoulderd?"

"Not at all. He is a tall, spare man, with white hair and a gray Vandyke beard."

"What's a Vandyke beard? You mean whiskers?"

"Yes; whiskers trimmed to a point--rather aristocratic looking."

"John always was a gentleman and looked it. Is he well lookin'?"

"Yes, he was in the best of health."

"Is he--is he--married?"

"No; he never married."

Drusilla was quiet for a moment, her eyes seeing beyond the men to the lover who had remained true to her throughout the years.

"Does he live alone?"

"He has two rooms in the home of some people with whom he has lived for a great many years."

"Is he in business?"

"No; he was in business until the panic of 1893, when he lost his business."

"What does he live on? Is he poor?"

"He saved a little out of the wreck of his business and lives on that."

"How much has he?"

"I think he has about five hundred dollars a year; just enough to keep him modestly in that little town."

"Does he seem happy? Did you talk with him?"

"Yes; I visited with him all of one afternoon. He does not seem unhappy, but he is a lonely old man. All of his friends are gone and he leads a lonely life."

"What does he do?"

"He has his books."

"Yes; John always loved books. They used to say that if he'd attend to business more and books less, he'd git along better."

The clerk laughed.

"I'm afraid that's what they say out there, too. He is not a practical man, and he seems to have paid very little attention to the making of money, or--what is more--to the keeping of it after he had made it."

Drusilla smiled.

"That's just like John," she said softly. "Set him down somewhere with a book and he'd forgit that there was other things he ought to be doin' instead of readin'. He worked in Silas Graham's grocery store when he was a boy, and Silas had to keep pryin' him out from behind the barrels to wait on customers. Silas said when he let him go that John's business was clerkin' in a book store and not a grocery store. Well, well! John's just the same, I guess. He'd ought to had some one with common sense to keep him goin'."

"Is there anything else you would like to know?"

"No--" said Drusilla hesitatingly. "I guess that's all I need to know."

She was quiet for a few moments. Then:

"Does he seem strong?"

"Yes; strong and well."

"D'ye suppose he could travel by himself?"

"Certainly; he seems perfectly able to travel by himself."

"Then I guess I'll write him a letter. That's all, and I thank you very much, young man. I suppose you have a lot more on them papers,

but I know all I want to. Good day."

A few days after Drusilla's interview with the clerk, John Brierly received a letter in the handwriting that, although a little feeble, was still familiar to him. He took it home from the post-office and did not break the seal until he was in his sitting-room. Then he read it.

DEAR JOHN:

I jest heard where you are and how you are. You are alone and I'm alone. We are both two old ships that have sailed the seas alone and now we're nearing port. Why can't we make the rest of the voyage together? I have a home a great deal too big for one lone woman, and you have no home at all. Years ago your home would have been mine if you could a give it to me, and now I want to share mine with you. I'm not proposing to you, John; we're too old to think of such things, but I do want to die with my hand in some one's who cares for me and who I care for. You're the only one in all the world that's left from out my past, and I want you near me. Won't you come and see me? Then we can talk it over, and if you don't like it here you can go back. Come to me, John. Let me hear by the next mail that you're a coming.

DRUSILLA.

P. S. If you don't come to me, I'll come to you. This is a threat, John. You see if I _am_ seventy years old, I'm still your wilful Drusilla.

Drusilla doubtless would have passed the next few days anxiously awaiting an answer to her letter if an unforeseen occurrence had not driven all thoughts of it from her head. Some one had told the newspapers about the baby left on her doorstep, and that she had refused to send it to the police, and one morning great headlines stared her in the face: DRUSILLA DOANE A TRUE PHILANTHROPIST. Again she saw her picture and the picture of the house in Brookvale, and read:

I'll send no baby to a home. I've eaten charity bread and it was bitter and charity milk would be the same.

That started for Drusilla a strenuous existence for a few days. The next morning a baby--a weak, sickly little thing--was found beside the locked gates, with a note pinned to its tiny jacket. "Won't you please take my baby too?" Drusilla took it into her motherly arms, looked with pitying eyes into its little white pinched face, and sent it to the butler's wife until she could determine what to do with it. The next morning there were two babies waiting; and that night at dinner the butler was called to the door by a ring, and when he opened it, he found a little boy about two years of age standing there with a note in his hand. The grounds were searched for the person who had brought the baby and left it standing there, but no one was found--and he, too, was added to the butler's growing family.

In the next week eleven children were brought to the house in aristocratic Brookvale, and Drusilla was frightened at the inundation of young that she had brought upon herself. They were of all kinds and all descriptions. There were John and Hans and Gretchen, and Frieda and Mina and Guiseppi, Rachel, Polvana, Francois; even a little Greek was among the collection. Their names were pinned to their clothing, along with letters--some pitiful and some impertinent, but all asking for a home for the abandoned child. Drusilla was dismayed and sent for the young doctor, as Mr. Thornton's only word was the police and a "home," to both of which Drusilla shook her old gray head vigorously. But she saw that she could not parcel the children out indefinitely among the servants, and consequently Dr. Eaton was asked to come and help her decide what should be done.

When he came in, his eyes twinkled mischievously at Drusilla.

"I hear you have numerous additions to the family," he said.

"Young man," Drusilla said, "you set right there and tell me what to do. You got me in all this trouble. Now you get me out of it."

The doctor stopped in amazement.

"_I_ got you in this trouble? How did I get you in this trouble?"

"Now, don't you look that surprised way at me," said Drusilla severely. "Didn't you tell me all about orphan asylums and babies having to be all dressed in the same way, and have all their hair tied with blue cord, and eat porridge out of a blue bowl, and set down and stand up and go to bed at the ringin' of a bell. Didn't you tell me that?"

"Certainly; I said a few things like that, but--"

"And didn't you make my foolish old eyes jest fill up at the thought of any baby I'd ever held in my arms goin' to a place like that and bein' turned into a little jelly-mold--them's your words, a little jelly-mold--"

"Well--I did mention jelly-molds, but still--"

"And didn't you make me feel so bad that I couldn't let Mr. Thornton give that blessed little John in charge and be sent to a home?"

"Why--why--you had already decided; but still--"

"That's the third time you've said, 'but still,' and I don't see as it helps me any now."

"What'll I say, Miss Doane?"

"You jest help me out of this fix I'm in. I got eleven babies on my

hands, and what am I goin' to do with 'em?"

"Well, it is a question, isn't it?"

"No, it ain't a question; it's a whole book of questions, and the answers ain't found. I wash my hands of it all. You got me in; now you get me out."

And Drusilla sat back in her chair.

"Why--why--you put rather a responsibility on me. What does Mr. Thornton say?"

"Huh!" Drusilla nearly snorted, if the sound she emitted could have been called a snort. "He says jest what you'd suppose he'd say. Send for the police and put them where they belong."

"I presume he is right," said Dr. Eaton a little sadly. "I don't see what else you can do with them; unless--"

"Unless what? If that's all you can say, I needn't have sent for you. I've heard that with every baby that's come. Now I want somethin' different. What's your 'unless' mean?"

"Unless you keep them, Miss Doane."

"How'm I goin' to keep eleven babies and they comin' faster every day?"

"I think you had better head off the rest."

"How can I do that? They jest come and there ain't no one to give 'em to."

"We will put a policeman on guard to watch the gates, and arrest the next one who leaves a bundle or a basket."

"I hate to arrest any one, but--perhaps it's the only thing to do. But that don't help none with the ones I got now. And, Dr. Eaton, they're the cunningest lot of babies! I go round every night to see 'em undressed. I've took more exercise trotting to the different houses where I've put 'em just to look at 'em go to bed--well, I jest can't send 'em to a home."

"Why should you? Now let's talk sensibly, Miss Doane. What are your plans for your own life?"

"What do you mean?"

"What are you going to do with yourself? How occupy yourself?"

"I don't occupy myself. I'm jest settin' around waitin' to die; and, between you and me and the gate-post, Dr. Eaton, I'm not used to jest

waitin'. I'm used to doin' somethin' if I _am_ an old woman."

"That's just it--you are used to doing something. Now here's something that you can do that's worth while. There's a whole lot of babies in the world that need a home, and why can't you take your share of them and give them a chance in life?"

"How can I give them a chance?"

"Why, Miss Doane, who could give them a better chance? You have money--"

"Yes--heaps of it; and I set wonderin' what to do with it. I want to spend it and I don't know how."

"How can you spend it better than by taking care of all these babies, by seeing that they'll have love and care instead of being brought up by chance or charity, which is bound to kill every decent instinct a child may be born with."

Here Dr. Eaton got up and began walking around the room. His eyes grew bright, his voice earnest and thrilling to the old woman who watched him as he walked up and down.

"Miss Doane, you have a wonderful chance to do something great. I envy you for the chance. Just think of being able to take these little waifs and provide a place for them to grow up into the men and women that it was intended they should be! Whenever I go down to the orphan asylum and see all the little tads herded around in bunches by paid nurses, and no one really caring for them, no one tucking them up at night, no one singing them little songs, no one hearing their evening prayers, it seems to me that I _must_ take them all away with me. It seems that we are all wrong in a world where a Great Master whose teaching we are supposed to follow said, 'Suffer the little children to come unto me,' when we allow them to be turned into little machines, unloved and uncared for. Oh, Miss Doane, you've got a great chance. _Take it!_"

Drusilla frankly wiped the tears from her eyes.

"Dr. Eaton, you almost make me cry. But where'll I put 'em?"

"How big is this house? You don't use it all, do you?"

"Use it all! Well, I should say not. I feel like a pea in a tin can shakin' around loose. Young man, there's twelve empty bedrooms in this place and I don't know how many other rooms that's goin' to waste."

"There you are! Why not fill them up? Of what use are they lying empty?"

"That's what I often think, and I wonder why one old woman's got so

many rooms when there's lots of people ain't got no place to go. It don't seem jest right."

"Of course it isn't right. You've too much; a great many have nothing. Now even up."

"Who'll I git to take care of 'em?"

"We'll have to figure that out."

"We'll have to figure it out mighty sudden. I got them young ones pretty well passeed out among the hired help, and they ain't enjyin' them so much as I am. First thing I know the hull cahoots of 'em'll leave, though speakin' for a few of 'em it wouldn't cause me to go to an early grave to be shet of some of 'em."

"I must be off. I'll think it over and let you know what I've figured out for you."

"Well, hurry up about it. It's a lot to think of. I never thought I'd take to raisin' children at my time of life; but you never can tell what you'll end as. I'm pretty old to begin, I'm afraid."

"Come now, Miss Doane; don't get cold feet. One is never too old to try something. If it doesn't work, you can always send them to the police that Mr. Thornton tells you about. They're always there; so are the homes."

"Yes; that's so. And they wouldn't be no worse off'n when they come. Well--you run along and start somethin'."

"Yes, we'll start something, Miss Doane."

Dr. Eaton went away, and the next morning he got an excited telephone call from Drusilla herself, which showed that it was of the utmost importance to her and even overcame her dislike of talking into a "box," as she called it.

"Come right over, Dr. Eaton; come right over at once," she said. "I've got another baby and they've caught the mother."

Dr. Eaton lost no time in coming to Drusilla, and he found a very excited little woman, with her hat and gloves on, waiting for him.

"Don't come in; I'll tell you on the way. I've got the car and my bunnet's on, so we'll go along."

Drusilla did not stop to explain but stepped into the car, and gave directions to the chauffeur.

Dr. Eaton laughed.

"Why all this hurry, Miss Doane? Is something afire?"

"Yes; I'm afire, and I'm mad! They put a officer of some kind at the gate last night, and this morning he caught a woman leavin' a baby. An' how do you suppose he caught her? The man was hid and couldn't catch the woman when the baby was left, and he waited and pinched the baby and made it cry, and then the poor little mother who was waitin' somewhere to see her baby took in, come to see what was the matter, and they took her. I can jest see it all--the poor little mother in hidin', waitin' to see her baby took in the house, and, hearin' it cry, her mother heart drew it back to comfort it, and she was caught. Mr. Thornton tells me she was taken to court, and that's where we're a-goin' this minute. I want to see that mother, and find out why she left the baby."

When they arrived at the court, Dr. Eaton and Drusilla found a seat up near the front. They were wedged in between wives with anxious faces wondering if their husbands would be taken away from them, or watching them pay in fines the dollars that were so badly needed in the home. They were all there, those hangers-on of misery--the policemen, the plain clothes men, the probation officers, the cheap lawyers, the reporters. Here and there was an artist or a writer looking for "copy," or some woman from Fifth Avenue trying to get a new sensation from the troubles of her less fortunate sisters. Over it all there was a silence that was heavy and dead. A silence born of fear--the fear of the law.

Several cases were called before the case for which Drusilla waited, and then a young girl not more than eighteen years old rose and stood before the Judge with a baby in her arms. At first she was so frightened that she could not answer the questions; but the Judge, a kindly man, waited for her to become more calm, and then, in a quiet voice, he began to question her.

"Now do not be frightened; we will not hurt you. Just tell me why you left the baby."

The scared voice spoke so low that her words could scarcely be heard.

"I didn't know it was wrong."

"If you didn't know it was wrong, why did you hide?"

"I--I--wanted to see that nothin' happened to her. I kind of--kind of--wanted to see her as long as I could. She's my baby--and--and--I wouldn't see her again--and I just kind of waited round--" Here the girl started to cry. "I didn't know it was wrong. There was nothing else to do. I--I--"

"You were willing to give her away, yet you cared enough to go to her when she cried. I don't understand it."

"I don't know, but she cried and I thought somethin' might be hurtin' her or she wasn't covered up warm enough--and I wanted to

touch her again--and--and--"

"But if you feel that way, how could you leave her?"

"What was I to do with her? I couldn't take her back home. I come from the country and I couldn't go back with a baby. No one would speak to me, and it would hurt Mother so. I jest _couldn't_. She's only two weeks old, and you know when you leave the hospital with a baby two weeks old in your arms, and you can't go home and you've no money, what are you goin' to do?"

And she turned the tear-stained, questioning face of a child up to the Judge.

"What were you going to do if the baby was taken in?"

"I'd have tried to get work somewhere, but you can't get work with a baby."

"Have you no friends?"

"No; only some girls in the store where I worked."

"How did you come to leave the baby where you did?"

"A girl in the hospital read in a paper about an old lady who had no children and who took a baby left on her doorstep, and so I left mine, thinking that if she saw her once, she is so pretty that she'd _have_ to love her, and she'd have a chance to grow up like other girls. And I'd 'a' gone to work feeling that my baby had a home which I knowed I couldn't give her."

"But why didn't you go to some of the homes that are open to girls like you?"

"Homes? I didn't know of any."

"There are many institutions that would have helped you. Didn't any one tell you about them?"

"No; I wouldn't talk much with people. I was afraid that they'd send word to Mother, and I didn't want her to know and feel bad, so I didn't talk about myself. It's been awful hard--" and the babyish lips began to tremble.

"Do you want to keep the baby?"

The girl's face brightened.

"Do I want to--do I _want_ to--But I can't! They tell me there's no place for a girl with a baby."

"Will you work?"

"Oh, Judge," and she drew the baby closer to her, "jest give me a chance! I'll work my fingers off for her. She's all I've got now, and --I'm--I'm--_so_ lonely."

The Judge started to say something, but he was interrupted by a little old lady rising from one of the seats.

"Judge, jest you give me that girl and the baby. I'll take her."

The Judge looked over his glasses at the excited, flushed face of the old lady in front of him.

"What's that?"

"I said, jest you give me that girl and the baby, and I'll take her. I'll take her right home with me."

The Judge looked at her a moment in silence; then the young man beside the lady came forward and said:

"May I speak with you a moment, Judge Carlow?"

There was a whispered conference between the Judge, Dr. Eaton, and the kindly-faced, white-haired probation officer, and then the Judge turned to the young girl.

"Discharged in care of Miss Drusilla Doane," he said.

The girl and her baby came with the doctor through the gates which separated those who were entwined in the meshes of the law from the onlookers; then, stopping to get Drusilla, Dr. Eaton and his charge left the court-room.

The wondering girl was placed in the motor and whirled swiftly toward Brookvale.

Drusilla was quiet for a time. Then:

"Dr. Eaton," she said, "I believe we've found our nurses. Here's our first one. Why can't we find the other mothers?"

"I am afraid that would be rather difficult."

"Difficulties are made to get around. If this young girl is willin' to work to be with her baby, some of the other mothers must be the same. Perhaps some of 'em was in just the same fix as this one. Now, look at that letter of John's mother. It sounded as if she wouldn't 'a' left him if she could 'a' got work to keep him. Why can't we git as many mothers as we can and have them nurse the children? We got to have nurses of some kind, and the mothers'd be better than jest hired girls."

"It's a good idea, Miss Doane; but how can we get them? They naturally didn't leave their addresses."

"We'll advertise in the papers."

"But that would scare them; they would be afraid it would be a trap to get them arrested."

"Say in the papers that we won't arrest 'em, but that we'll give 'em a chance to support their babies and live with them while they're doin' it. Tell 'em I give my word that nothin'll happen to 'em. Git that young man that talked to me once. He said he'd do anything for me I asked him. Git him to write it all up."

Dr Eaton pondered thoughtfully for a few moments.

"It might work, and again it might not."

"Well, there ain't no harm tryin'. Fix up a good advertisement and put it in all the papers--Dutch, Italian, French and Irish. The babies are all kinds."

By the time they arrived at the big house in Brookvale Drusilla was very much interested in her new scheme.

"No," she said firmly to Dr. Eaton when he intimated that he must leave; "you ain't goin' now. Jest you come with me. Jane, you take this girl and this baby up to one of the spare rooms and see she has a bath and the baby some milk. Have you had your dinner? No; of course not. Jane, git her somethin' to eat--somethin' solid; not them finicky things the cook makes. Git her all fixed up; then come to me. Dr. Eaton, you come with me to that big room I was a lookin' at the other day."

She led the way to the third floor, where there was a big billiard room.

"Isn't this just the right kind of a room for babies?" she exclaimed. "Look at them windows to let the sun in! Now, how many beds can I put here? We'll take them big tables out and we can put a lot of beds side by side; and the nurse can sleep in this room here that opens out of it, with the littlest babies near her."

The doctor looked at the room.

"It seems made for a nursery, doesn't it?" he commented. "Let's see. You could put six little beds along each side, and a couple in the other room with the nurse's bed. That would more than dispose of your dozen already."

"And I been a-worryin' what to do with 'em all when I got this room! I ought 'a' been ashamed of myself! Now, you run right along and order the things we need--beds and whatever babies should have--and

send them right up. Tell the storekeepers that they must git here at once or I won't take 'em. I can jest see James's face when I tell him his wife won't need to keep them five babies he's got any longer. I'll go and take my bunnet off and help move."

Within the next two days twelve little beds were established in the billiard room, and the little mother was installed as first nurse, with Jane and a couple of girls hired as assistants.

That evening Drusilla was sitting down to dinner--or supper, as she called it--when Mr. Thornton was ushered in. He was more severe and uncompromising than ever, and Drusilla said to herself, "I'm in for it. He's heard somethin'."

But she did not show that she was a wee bit nervous. She said, as if it were the usual thing for him to make her an evening call,

"Why, how do you do, Mr. Thornton? Won't you have some supper with me?"

"No, thank you. I came to talk with you."

"Now, that's real nice of you. I always like to talk. Set right down and we'll have a comfortable visit. You'd better change your mind and have some supper."

"No; my dinner is waiting for me."

"I eat my dinner in the middle of the day, though James will call it lunch. I think a great big dinner at night makes you dream of your grandmother, so I have mine like I used to."

"I understand that you have been to court, and brought home with you that woman and her child."

"Well, well! How news does travel! How did you hear that?"

"It is in the evening papers."

"Is it? Well, I do declare! It seems I can't do nothin' but what I git in the papers. I don't need to talk to git writ up; my money talks for me. What did they say?"

The lawyer drew a paper from his pocket and handed it to Drusilla. She took her glasses from her forehead, where they had been resting, and read aloud: MISS DRUSILLA DOANE, THE FRIEND OF THE FRIENDLESS.

"Well, ain't that nice of 'em!" she stopped to comment; then she went on reading.

"They seem to have it all down," she said, handing the paper back to Mr. Thornton.

He looked at her with the air he used when trying to frighten witnesses who opposed him.

"Of course, you will deny all this. You will make a statement that it is all a mistake, and that you do not intend to give these--these--wanderers a home."

"Now, that's a good word, Mr. Thornton; that's jest what they are--wanderers. But they won't be wanderers no more; they've found a home."

"What do you mean?"

"Jest what I said, Mr. Thornton. I mean to give that mother and her baby a home."

"I do not understand you at all, Miss Doane; or at least I hope I am mistaken in your meaning."

"I talk plain American."

"I have been waiting for you to send those children that have been left here to the proper authorities."

"Well, I'm an authority--or at least I seem to be one since I got all this money; and no one ain't ever said I wasn't proper."

"You are evading the question. I have said with the advent of each child that it should be sent, along with the others, to the police. They would dispose of them in the homes ordained for them."

"I ain't a Presbyterian, Mr. Thornton, and I don't believe in predestination and foreordination. Them babies of mine was never ordained for a home--the kind you mean; and I won't put 'em there. I got room and I got money to feed 'em and clothe 'em; so why shouldn't I keep 'em?"

"It is quite impossible, _quite_ impossible!"

"Why impossible?"

"Why--why--my late client, Mr. Elias Doane--"

"Now, don't throw him in my teeth again. Elias Doane don't care whether I keep babies or poodle dogs, and I like babies best. Now, don't let's quarrel, Mr. Thornton," as she saw him give an exasperated shake of his head and rise as if to go. "Set still and talk it over with me calm like. Can't you see _my_ side to it? I'm old and I'm lonesome, and I've always wanted babies but the Lord didn't see fit to let me have 'em, and now He's sent me these. I feel that I'd be a goin' against His plans if I didn't keep 'em. My old heart's jest full of love that's goin' to waste, and I want to give it to some one, and," laughing, "I can't waste much of it on you, can I? I don't want to die with it all shet up inside of me. I want to

love these babies and learn 'em to love me. Why, what chance will a baby brung up in a 'home' have to know about love? How can they ever be learnt of the love of God when they grow up, if they don't learn something about love when they're little. They won't know the word. Don't be so set against it, Mr. Thornton"--she looked at him pleadingly for a moment, then her eyes twinkled--"though it won't do you much good as I'm set on this and I'm goin' to do it. Your late client, Mr. Elias Doane, said, 'Spend my money, Drusilla, in your own way'; and I'm takin' him at his word."

Mr. Thornton rose.

"Nothin more can be said then; but it is a disgrace to the neighborhood to have a home for waifs come to it."

Drusilla flushed hotly.

"Don't you call it that; and don't you call it a 'home'! It's a home, but not the kind you mean, and I won't hear it called that."

"I wash my hands of the affair. You will get into trouble, and when you do you may call on me."

Drusilla rose and laid her hand on Mr. Thornton's arm.

"I'm sure to get into trouble," she said. "I always was a hand to do that. But when I do you'll be the true, kind friend I know you are, and help me out."

Mr. Thornton smiled, against his will, as he looked down into the earnest face of the little old lady. He patted the hand on his arm.

"Miss Doane, you are causing me a lot of trouble not connected with the business of the estate; but of course I'll always help you. Every one will--they can't help it."

Drusilla drew a sigh of relief.

"I'm glad to know you ain't agin me, 'cause I like you, even when you almost always come here to scold me. You ain't near so stiff inside as you are outside. We're friends now, ain't we, babies or no babies?"

Mr. Thornton bent and kissed the withered old hand.

"Always, Miss Doane, babies or no babies; but you had better--"

"Never mind! You run along. Your dinner's cold by now. What you want to say'll keep till next time, and I know it ain't near as nice as what you said last. Good night."

CHAPTER VII

John Brierly came.

He first wrote Drusilla a long letter and Drusilla answered it by telegraph--an answer that brought a reminiscent smile to John Brierly's lips. It read:

"I can't talk by letter. Just come."

And John came.

He was met at the station by the young man from the lawyer's office who had been to see him in Cliveden, and when he arrived at the house he found Drusilla awaiting him. After the young man left, Drusilla said:

"John, come upstairs; I want to look at you, and I want to talk to you."

She took him up to the small library, which looked very cozy with its fire in the big grate and the heavy English curtains drawn at the windows.

"Now set down there in that chair, John. It was made for a man--no woman could ever get out of it without help once she got in--and tell me all about yourself, John."

John looked around the luxurious room in a hesitating manner.

"I hardly know what to say, Drusilla--I can't understand all this--I can't understand."

"Never mind, John; it's all real. I know how you feel. I felt that way myself for the first few weeks; but now I'm gettin' used to it."

"Is--is--this place yours, Drusilla?"

"Yes, it's mine. I'll tell you all about it tomorrow, but now I just want to talk to you and about you. You want to smoke, don't you? Light your pipe and be comfortable. It'll make you think better."

John laughed.

"I do want to smoke."

He drew his pipe from some pocket and filled it from a worn tobacco pouch.

Drusilla watched him interestedly.

"Now I know what this room needed. It needs tobacco. It'll make the curtains smell as if people lived here. You know the greatest trouble I find with this place, John, is to have it feel human. Everything is so sort of--sort of--dead--with just me a-creepin' round, and James and William tip-toein', and the hired girls never speakin' except to say, 'No, ma'am' or 'Yes, ma'am.' Why, sometimes I'd like to hear somebody drop somethin', or get mad, or stomp, or do _somethin'_ as if they was alive. Here, help me pull up the chair closer by the fire, where I can see you without putting on my specs. There, that is comfortable. Now tell me all about yourself."

John looked into the fire dreamily.

"Drusilla, I am afraid I have been a failure. Your mother was right; I've been always a dreamer and a failure."

Drusilla leaned toward him.

"Never you mind, John. So long as you haven't been a dreamer and a democrat, I can stand it. I never could abide democrats. Why didn't you ever marry?"

John looked at her.

"I couldn't, Drusilla."

Drusilla flushed at the look in his face and sat back in her chair.

"Oh--Oh--"

John said again, earnestly: "I just couldn't, Drusilla. When I got you out of my heart enough to look at another woman, I was too old to care."

"What are you going to do now?" Drusilla asked, to turn the conversation into another channel.

"What I have done for the last few years--sit quietly by and wait for the messenger to come."

"Stuff and nonsense, John! I don't believe in waitin' for messengers. That's meetin' them half way. I believe in bein' so busy that he'll have a hard time to catch up to me."

"But I'm old, Drusilla, and--"

"Old, nothin' of the sort! You ain't but two years older'n me and I'm jest beginnin' to live. Why I've jest took to raisin' children, John, and I'm goin' to watch 'em grow up; so I can't afford to think about being old or dyin'. I got to see these babies get started someway."

John looked at her curiously.

"Yes, you're surprised--so's everybody--and it kind of tickles me to surprise people. I've had to do the things expected of me all my life; I couldn't afford to surprise no one; so I feel like I'm breaking out now, and--and--" laughing, "I like it, John--I like it. Why, when Mr. Thornton stands up so stiff and straight and makes his mouth square and hard to say, _'Impossible!_' why--why--my toes kind of wiggle around in delight like the babies do when you hold 'em to the fire. But I don't want to talk about myself; we got lots of time to do that. I want to know what you intend doin'."

"Nothing, Drusilla. I have enough to live on in my little town; and with my books, and--"

"But, John, you can't live with jest _books." _

"That's all I have left, Drusilla. All my friends are gone."

"That's what I wanted to hear. You ain't got no one that draws your heart back to that place in Ohio, have you?"

"No one in the world, Drusilla."

Drusilla settled back into her chair and gave a sigh of contentment.

"Then what I've been dreamin' of ever sence I saw your name in the paper can come true."

"What have you been a-dreaming of, Drusilla?"

Drusilla was silent for a few moments, looking thoughtfully into the fire. Then she said softly:

"Ever sence I knew you was alive, and after I sent that young man out to you and he told me about you, I jest been dreamin' of seein' you settin' there, smokin' your pipe, and me a-settin' here, talkin' to you, and I have come into this room more the last two weeks, lookin' at it, thinkin' how it would look with your things layin' around. You are alone, John, and I'm alone. As I wrote you, we are both two old ships that have sailed the seas alone for all these years, and now we're nearin' port. Why can't we make the rest of the voyage together? I have a home too big for one lone woman; you have no home at all. Years ago your home would 'a' been mine, if you could 'a' give it to me; and now I want to share mine with you. No--don't start," as she saw John make a movement, "I ain't proposin' to you, John. We're too old to think of such things, but I want to die with my hand in some one's who cares for me and who I care for. You're the only one in all the world that's left from out my past, and I want you near me."

"But, Drusilla--"

"Don't interrupt me, John. I want you to live here near me. These

rooms are a man's rooms. I want to see a man in 'em; and, John, you're the man I want."

"But, Drusilla--"

"Now, John," raising her faded hand, "don't argue with me. I can see it's took you by surprise. But why shouldn't you live here, and me across the hall; and evenings, when the time is long, we can set before the fire like this and talk of the past. It's lonely, John, with no one."

"But, Drusilla, I couldn't--I couldn't--"

"Couldn't what, John? Couldn't you be happy here?"

"It isn't that."

"Well, what is it?"

"Drusilla, I couldn't accept even your charity."

"Now, John, I was afraid you'd say somethin' like that. When I was young, when we were young together, I'd 'a' give you all my life. What is a roof and the food you eat, compared to what I'd 'a' give you if things had been different?"

"But, Drusilla--"

"Yes, I know all you'd say. But see, John. I have more'n I can ever spend, though, goodness knows, I'm goin' to do my best; and there's some things I can't buy, John. I can't buy companionship and friends, John; and that's what we are, jest two old friends. We've drifted far apart, and now the winds has brought us together again, let's anchor side by side."

They were both silent, staring into the fire. Then Drusilla rose.

"Now we won't talk of it no more. These are your rooms. I want you to do what you want to do. If you'd feel that you could be happy here, send for your books and call this home, 'cause remember, John," and she went up to him and standing back of his chair put her hand around his head until it rested on his face, "remember, John, I always want you."

John reached up and covered the soft little hand with one of his for a moment, then he brought it down and kissed it.

Drusilla turned and left the room.

The next few days were happy days for Drusilla. She took great pride in showing John the place, and they spent long hours in the gallery studying and discussing the pictures. The armor room was John's especial delight, after the library. He found a book on armor and

learned the rules of chivalry. Drusilla said she could always tell where to find him--"a-studyin' them tin clothes."

One sunshiny day they decided to visit the Doane home. John did not want to go where there were so many women, but Drusilla insisted.

"I want 'em to see a man, John. They're shet up all day with nothin' but women, and they're tired of seein' 'em."

"But I'm an old man, Drusilla."

"Never mind how old you are, you're a _man,_ and any man'll look good to them. Even if most of the ladies is past seventy, they ain't dead yet, and they're still women. You'll see how they'll set up and take notice; Miss Lodema'll smooth back her hair as soon as you step on the porch. I want to give 'em some real pleasure. Barbara'd like to talk to you better'n gettin' new teeth even. We'll take the big car and take as many as we can git in it out for a ride."

Drusilla had the cook make some cakes, for, as she confided to John, "I ain't a-goin' to take 'em a thing sensible. They git that every day. I'm goin' to have the cook make 'em as big cakes as he can, and put lots of frostin' and chocolate on 'em; and I've sent to town for twenty pounds of candy--the real fancy kind, that'll quite likely make 'em all sick, but they'll love it; and I've bought 'em a lot of things they don't need and that no one would think of givin' 'em. They're going to have a _real_ party when I come to see 'em, John."

Drusilla was as excited as a child about her visit; but her excitement did not equal that of the old ladies when Drusilla was seen driving into the grounds in a big limousine with a man beside her.

The women clustered around her and chattered and talked and asked questions, and fingered their gifts like a group of children at a visit of Santa Claus. After lunch Drusilla announced that five of the old ladies should go with her to the near-by city, where she was going to take Barbara to a dentist.

"I don't want the dentist that would come here to see the 'inmates.' He'd give charity teeth. I want Barbara to have real teeth, so's she can chew a bone if she wants to, and I want to take Grandma Perkins. She's never been in a motor and she's near ninety, so she'd better hurry up or she'll be ridin' in a chariot and after that a motorcar wouldn't be excitin'."

The old ladies were bundled up, Grandma Perkins was carried out to the car, and they were off to the city about twenty miles away. The women were awed at first, and rather uneasy, some of them a little frightened. Drusilla watched Grandma Perkins, to see that she was not nervous; but after a few miles had been passed, the old lady sat up straighter in her shawls, and her eyes became bright.

"Drusilla," she asked, "how fast are we goin'?"

"I don't know," Drusilla said. "We'll ask the man."

Twenty-five miles an hour, the chauffeur told them.

"We'll go slower if it scares you, Grandma," Drusilla said gently.

The old lady looked at her with scorn.

"Scares me, nothin'! I was only wonderin' if we couldn't go faster!"

Drusilla laughed.

"That's jest what I said when I first rode in the car with Mr. Thornton."

She gave the order and the car sped swiftly over the macadam road. The old lady settled back among her shawls, a look of absolute happiness on her wrinkled old face.

They arrived at the city all too soon. Barbara was taken to the dentist, and Drusilla had the other ladies taken to a tea shop and given tea while she waited for Barbara.

After tea they started home.

"I don't want to go back, Drusilla," Grandma Perkins began to whimper. "Must we go back right away?"

Drusilla looked puzzled.

"I don't know what to do. Where'll we go if we don't go back?" She thought a moment. "I'll ask Joseph; he always knows everything." She turned to the waiting chauffeur. "Joseph, we don't want to go home. Ain't there anything we can see?"

Joseph looked at the five old ladies, evidently at a loss as to what would please them; then a suggestion occurred to him.

"You might go to a moving-picture show."

"What's that?"

"It's--it's a kind of theater."

"Well, I ain't never seen one," said Drusilla; and turned to the old ladies, who were waiting patiently to learn of their final disposal.

"Do you want to go to a movin'-picture show?"

"What's that?" came in chorus.

"I don't know myself, but it's a sort of--sort of--"

"Never mind what it is, we want to go."

"Yes, let's go, Drusilla; let's not go home."

And the patrons of the moving-picture house had a view of six old ladies, piloted by a smartly dressed chauffeur, who saw them seated in a box and then left them. It was really a very good moving-picture, and if the actors could have seen the delight of the box party they would have felt they had not toiled in vain. They sat for two hours entranced by the scenes that passed before them on the screen. One of the plays was a war-time drama, and the old ladies were quite likely the only ones in the house to whom the blue and the gray brought memories.

At the end of the reel, Drusilla decided that they should be leaving, as supper would be ready at the home. One of the old ladies objected.

"Let's not go home, Drusilla; let's miss supper."

"It's bean night, anyway," said another. "Let's stay."

Five pairs of dim old eyes looked at Drusilla beseechingly.

"Well, we'll stay just a little while longer," she concluded.

The little while quite likely would have been the rest of the evening if the performance had not finished for the afternoon. They rose with a sigh and left the theater. When they started to help Grandma Perkins into the car, she stopped with one foot on the step.

"Drusilla, I want to ride with the man," she said.

"Oh, but, Grandma, you'd catch cold," Drusilla objected.

"I wouldn't," she wailed, "and I want to. I might jest as well die fer a sheep as a lamb, and I won't never git no chance again to feel myself goin' through the air with nothin' in front of me."

"But, Grandma--"

The old lip quivered, and the eyes filled childishly.

"But I want to, Drusilla. I don't want to be all squashed up with a lot of old women where I can't see nothin'. I want to see, and I want to _feel._"

Drusilla turned helplessly to the other women, and then Joseph came to her aid.

"She can sit here, Ma'am. I'll fix the wind shield so's she won't catch cold, and you can put this rug around her. She'll be warm."

Grandma Perkins was lifted into the seat by the driver, bundled up in a big fur rug so that only her bright eyes could be seen, and they were off. Twice on the way home Grandma Perkins was seen to lean towards the chauffeur and the car jumped forward until it seemed that they were flying. When at last they drove into the "home" grounds, they found a very anxious superintendent and John waiting for them, fearing something had happened.

As Drusilla took her leave, Grandma Perkins chuckled childishly.

"I always said, Drusilla, that I didn't want to die and go to Heaven; but I've changed my mind. I'll go any time now, 'cause I like flyin' and am willin' to be an angel."

The superintendent was inclined to be angry with Drusilla--as angry as she could be with a woman who possessed a million dollars. She said stiffly:

"I'm afraid the ladies will be ill to-morrow."

One of them, hearing it, spoke up.

"Of course we'll all be sick; but, then, it was worth it!"

And Drusilla left with those words ringing in her ears.

"John," she said, "perhaps all is vanity and a strivin' after wind; but the preacher didn't know much about women, or his wives didn't have motorcars."

CHAPTER VIII

One morning James came to Drusilla.

"There is a man downstairs who wishes to see you," he announced.

"What does he want?" asked Drusilla.

"He does not say; just says he wants to see you personally. He says he is from your home town or village."

Drusilla looked up, pleased.

"Is that so. Take him in one of the setting-rooms and I'll be right down."

James hesitated.

"What is it, James?"

"He, well, he is not exactly a gentleman; he looks like a man from the country."

"That ain't nothin' to disgrace him for life. I'm from the country too, and I'm real glad to see any one from the place where I was raised. I ain't seen no one from there for a long time."

When she went downstairs she found a rather florid man, about fifty years of age, dressed as a farmer would dress when out on a holiday. She extended her hand cordially.

"James tells me you are from Adams," she said. "I'm real glad to see somebody from there. Set down. Won't you take off your coat?"

The man removed his overcoat and sat down.

"I am John Gleason," he said; "the brother of James Gleason, who owns the Spring Valley Stock Farm, just out of Adams."

Drusilla thought for a moment.

"I don't seem to recall the name, but perhaps you moved there sence I went away."

"I been there about thirty years. Of course you know William Fisher, the editor of the county paper? He is a friend of mine."

Drusilla's face brightened.

"Yes, indeed; I know him well. I nursed his wife through all her children and her last spell of sickness."

"Is that so! His wife was a cousin of my wife's. Her name was Jenny Jameson before she married me."

"The daughter of old Dr. Jameson! Well, I do declare, it's like meetin' old friends. How is she?"

"I'm sorry to say she is not very well. We lost our little girl about two years ago, and she has been sick ever since."

Kindly Drusilla was all sympathy at once.

"Do tell me. What did she die of."

"Diphtheria. She got it in school; it run through all the children in the county."

"How old was she?"

"She was eleven, and it near broke my wife's heart. She was our only

child. I catch her settin' by the door waitin' for Julia to come home. It worries me very much."

"Well, I'm so sorry. Have you had a doctor?"

"Yes; we have had Dr. Friedman and another doctor from the city. But they don't seem to be doing her no good."

"It's too bad! Now perhaps I got something that'll help her. I got some harbs that make the best tonic. I always give it to mothers who didn't get along well, and it made them have an appetite; and if one can eat well, they can generally git enough strength to throw off sorrow. You just set still a minute, and I'll make a package for you. I ain't got much left, 'cause I been kind of savin' of it; but I know it'll do your wife good, so I'm goin' to give you some."

Drusilla left to go up to her room to find the "harbs" that she had been carefully cherishing for time of need. When she returned she handed the package to the man.

"You have her bile them fifteen minutes and drink it like a tea," she said.

They chatted for fifteen minutes about the families in Adams. Mr. Gleason seemed to be very familiar with them all, and Drusilla's eyes brightened as she heard the old names. She thoroughly enjoyed the visit.

"John Brierty is upstairs," she said finally. "I'll call him. He'd like to hear all the news of the old neighbors, and perhaps he'll know about your father."

The man looked embarrassed.

"Well, Miss Doane," he stammered, "I'd like to see him, but I'm in a hurry. I want to get the eleven o'clock train home. I'm worried about leaving my wife. She's not sick, you know, but just peculiar and I don't like to leave her longer than I can help. I had to come down on business--I've been seeing about some cattle over in New Jersey, and--and--Miss Doane, I'm in trouble, and I don't know a soul in New York, and I didn't know who I could go to but you, and I remembered you was from Adams and might help me."

Drusilla looked at him with inquiring, sympathetic eyes.

"What can I do?" she asked.

"Well,"--and the man was most embarrassed--"I've been farmer enough to have my pocket picked on the train. I was sleepy and went to sleep and when I woke up my pocketbook that I always carried right here"--showing an inside pocket in his coat--"was gone. It had all my money and my mileage ticket."

"Well, I swan!" said Drusilla.

"Yes; I didn't know _what_ to do. I tried to tell the man in the ticket office that I would send back my ticket money, but he wouldn't give it to me, and I--well--I don't know _what_ to do. I feel I ought to go home to my wife at once, and--and--"

"How much is the ticket?"

"The ticket is only about three dollars and sixty cents--"

"Pshaw, that is very little. I'll get some money from James. I never have any."

She rang the bell; and when James returned with fifteen dollars she handed it to the man.

"You'd better have a little extra, as somethin' might happen," she said.

He was more than thankful.

"I'll never forget your kindness, and I'll send it to you as soon as I get home. You'll get it day after to-morrow. And I'll see my wife takes this tea. We'll never forget you, Miss Doane."

He wrung her hand.

"Can't I get you anything from the country," he asked. "But I suppose you have everything. I'd like to send you something to show you how I feel."

Drusilla was touched.

"Now that's real kind of you to think of it," she said; "but I don't need nothin'."

She followed him to the door and helped him on with his overcoat.

"Be sure and let me know how your wife gets on. Perhaps if the tea don't do no good, my doctor will know of something that'll help her. She might come down here for a few days; a change might take her mind off her sorrow."

Again Mr. Gleason shook the kindly outstretched hand, and for a moment he seemed rather overcome by his feelings of gratitude.

"I'll let you know at once, and I'll remember your offer. I must catch my train. Thank you again, Miss Doane."

Drusilla watched him walk down the drive, and then she went up to tell John of his visit. As they were talking, Dr. Eaton's card was brought to her and Drusilla asked him to be shown to John's sitting-room.

Drusilla met him with a happy smile on her face.

"Come right in, Dr. Eaton. I'm always glad to see you. You're just youth and strength and it does my old eyes good to see you. John, this is Dr. Eaton, my family doctor. You didn't know I was an ailin' woman and have to have a doctor by the year."

John looked at her anxiously.

"You ain't sick, are you, Drusilla?"

"Oh, money gives you lots of diseases that you didn't know you had till you could afford 'em."

The doctor laughed.

"Miss Doane'll never be sick in her life, Mr. Brierly. She's good for twenty-five years of hard work yet."

"Don't speak that word to me, Dr. Eaton. I don't like the word _work_. It's stuck closer to me than a brother for too many years."

"Oh, but there's work and work. But am I interrupting your visit with Mr. Brierly?"

"No; I just been tellin' him about a visitor I had who comes from Adams, where we used to live when we was young. I wanted John to come and see him, but the man couldn't wait. He had to catch a train."

"Was it an old friend? It's nice to see old friends."

"No, he wasn't exactly an old friend, but he knowed a lot of people I knowed once. Poor man, he was in a lot of trouble. He had his pocket picked and couldn't get home and his wife was sick--"

The doctor looked up quickly.

"Did you lend him money, Miss Doane?"

"Yes; I felt so sorry for him. He was so worried I let him have fifteen dollars. He'll send it back to me to-morrow. He was so grateful. It must be awful to be in a big city and know no one and have no money."

"Yes; it must," the doctor remarked dryly.

Drusilla looked at him quickly.

"What you speakin' in that tone of voice for?"

The doctor laughed rather hesitatingly.

"I'm afraid, Miss Doane, that you're what the small boys call

'stung.'

"Stung? What do you mean?"

"I rather imagine that was a little confidence game."

"What is a confidence game?"

"Oh, a man gets money from people on false pretenses. They work a lot of games. One of them is to go to people whom they have looked up, and claim to be a relation or from their home town."

"But he knowed lots of names I knowed."

"Yes; he might have found them in a local paper from the place."

Drusilla sat back in her chair.

"Well, do tell!" Then, after a moment's pause, "But I don't believe he's dishonest. He looked honest. He looked like a man from the country."

"That's where they're clever. But don't worry; you can stand the touch--it wasn't much. You got off easy."

"But I don't like to think I bin cheated. It makes me mad clean through. It always did. I remember once I bought a cow when mother was bad; paid forty dollars for her to Silas Graham. He said she was young and would give fifteen quarts of milk a day, and I figgered out I could give mother all the milk she'd need and sell the rest and in that way pay for her, because forty dollars was a lot of money for me in them days. Why, when I got that cow she never give enough milk to wet down a salt risin', and she was as old as Methuselah. All she could do was to eat, and she et her head off. I couldn't see her starve and I couldn't sell her. I kept her for two years, and finally a butcher come along and offered me eight dollars for her and I let her go. Wasn't I mad! I never could abide any one by the name of Silas after that."

"Never mind; you're able to stand this loss. But you'd better write up to Adams and see if what he says is true. You can find it out easy enough."

"No; I'll wait and see. I believe he'll send it back to me. But it makes me excited."

"But, Miss Doane," said Dr. Eaton earnestly, "I want you to promise me one thing. You must not be annoyed. If the word gets around that you are 'easy' you'll be bothered to death. Now the next time that any one comes claiming to be from your home town, and asks you for money, for anything at all, just send for the police and have them arrested."

"Oh, I'd hate to do that."

"But you must, Miss Doane. You must protect yourself. Promise me that no matter who it is, or what kind of a con talk they give you, you'll send at once for the police."

"Well--"

"Please promise this, Miss Doane. You must make an example, or you'll have every confidence man in town working you. Will you do it, no matter what or who it is? If you are asked for money, and you don't know the man, have him locked up, and the story'll get around, and you won't be bothered any more."

"Well, if you think it necessary--"

"It is most necessary. You will promise?"

"Yes, I'll promise. I'll do it, though I hate to."

"All right; I have your word for it. Now be sure to do it. Don't believe a word they say, if you haven't known the person before. He's sure to be playing the old game, and I don't want them to think they can work you."

"Well, all right. I'll send for the police if any one ever comes again and says he's from Adams. I guess you are right. Now let's change the subject. What did you come for particular, beside wanting to see me, of course."

"Well, I wanted to see you, first of all, just for the pleasure of seeing you, and then I want to tell you about the mothers we've got by our advertisement."

Drusilla was interested at once.

"Did you git some? I told you we would. Did you advertise in all the papers?"

"Yes; every paper in New York City--Jewish, German, Bohemian, Russian, everything; and I've found three mothers out of the bunch."

"Well--well, I'm glad. Where are they, and who are they?"

"One of them is little John's mother. You remember you thought she'd come and she did. The other two, we've had their stories investigated and found them all right. One is an American girl about twenty years of age whose husband deserted her when he couldn't get work, and she was practically starving, and the other is a little Jewish girl, who works in a flower factory."

"The poor things! Did you bring them right up?"

"No; I wanted to talk with you first, and with Mr. Thornton--"

"Never mind talkin' with Mr. Thornton. This is my affair and not connected with the estate, as he calls it. It ain't none of his business, and you know what he'd say. I don't tell him more'n I have to till it's done, then he can't do nothin' and he's learnt he's wastin' his breath talkin'. You see he talks slow and I talk fast, and he don't git much chance."

The doctor laughed.

"I'm glad I don't have to talk this over with him, as he isn't what you might call sympathetic."

"Yes; he's cold. Sometimes I look to see him drip like an icicle brought into a warm room, but I guess he's not so bad as he acts sometimes. But who's the little Jew girl?"

"She is that little Jew kid's mother."

"The baby with the black eyes and the big nose? Well, he ain't pretty, but he's clever."

"The girl couldn't make but five dollars a week and she couldn't pay any one to keep the baby, and she had no people, so she gave it to you. But she's a nice little thing, and willing to work and be with her boy."

"That makes four nurses, and perhaps there'll be more answer. Now you figger what I ought to pay 'em. I want to be just, but I ain't goin' to be extravagant. And send them up to-morrow. And, Doctor, I been a thinkin'. These mothers ought to be learnt somethin' so's they can make a livin' when they leave here. They can't live here forever, perhaps. Mis' Fearn was over here the other day and said somethin' about tryin' to get a good sewin' woman--some one who could make dresses in the house for the children and make over her old ones, and do odds and ends that she can't get the big dressmakers to do. She says she pays three dollars a day but that it's hard to get good ones. Why can't we get some one to teach our mothers to be dressmakers--real good ones--then they can always make a livin'."

"That's an idea, Miss Doane, and a good one. We'll think it over."

"Well, you figger it out; but we got enough to think about jest now. We've got a good start--twelve babies and four mothers. I think I'll stop with that. Twelve is a good number."

Just then James came to the door with a disgusted look on his face. He glanced from one to the other in perplexity. Drusilla looked up.

"What is it, James?"

James was plainly embarrassed.

"I'd--I'd--like to speak to Dr. Eaton. I think I'd better speak to him first."

"What do you want to say to him you can't say to me? Has some one sent for him?"

"No--no--"

"Well, is it private? What you so nervous about, James? You look foolish."

"Well--well--"

"Say it! What is it?"

"Well, ma'am--there's another baby come."

"_What!_" cried Drusilla, sitting erect in her chair.

"What!" exclaimed Dr. Eaton. "Where's the watchman?"

"I don't know, sir. The baby was found at the laundry door, and no one was in sight, though we all searched the grounds and the roads."

"Well, I swan! I thought we'd stopped. What'll we do with it?"

James said impressively: "We'd better send this one to the police station."

"James," said Drusilla severely, "I've told you I won't send a baby to the police station. Bring it up and let me see it!"

"But, ma'am, this is different--"

Drusilla sniffed.

"It can't be much different. A baby is a baby--"

"But, ma'am--Dr. Eaton--I--"

"James, I said bring it up. Now bring it up at once, I say!"

James turned desperately and left the room. Soon he returned with a clothes-basket and put it on the library table. Drusilla, Dr. Eaton and John rose and went to the table and looked down in silence at the basket's contents, with consternation plainly written on their faces. There was a moment's silence, then Dr. Eaton burst into a roar of laughter. He put back his head and laughed until the tears ran down his face, and soon he was joined by John; but Drusilla was too amazed to laugh. She looked down at the baby in the big clothes-basket, at the round, black, wondering eyes that stared up at her from the coal-black face of a negro baby. There it lay, the little woolly head

on a clean white pillow, a white blanket covering its little body. The baby looked at the laughing faces above it, as if wondering why the sight of him should cause such merriment; then, as if seeing the joke, opened his little mouth, showing the tip of a red tongue and dazzling baby teeth. It was too much for Drusilla. She sat down heavily in the nearest chair.

"Well, I swan--I _swan!_ A nigger baby!"

Drusilla went again to the basket, from which the squirming infant was evidently trying to get out. She looked at him for a moment and then turned to Dr. Eaton.

"Take him out. I ain't never seen a colored baby close."

The baby was found to be a boy about a year and a half old. He was not at all frightened, and stood up on his sturdy legs and tried to make friends in his baby fashion, showing his white teeth and rolling his round black eyes in a way that started Dr. Eaton and John off into another paroxysm of laughter.

Drusilla looked at the baby; then at the two men. Then, as she did not know what to do, she became exasperated.

"What's the matter with you two? Ain't you never seen a nigger baby before? What you laughing at?"

The baby was trying to toddle across the floor. His toes struck a rug and he fell, showing above his white socks a pair of little fat legs that seemed to be made in ebony, so clearly were they in contrast to his white clothing. Even Drusilla sat back and joined the men in their merriment. The baby looked at them solemnly; then put his chubby fist into his mouth and his face puckered up and great tears came to his eyes. Drusilla was all kindness in an instant.

"You poor little mite! They shan't laugh at you--no, they shan't! Come right here to Grandma--No, I can't be Grandma to a colored baby, can I? Well, never mind, come here to me."

She held out her arms to the weeping baby, and he came toddling to her. She lifted him to her lap and cuddled him down against her breast.

"There, there!" she soothed. "Now you're all right. Well," turning to the men, "he feels just like any other baby, black or white."

Dr. Eaton looked at the white head bent over the black one and again he started to laugh, but Drusilla looked up with a slight flush on her face and a sparkle in her eyes that plainly said that she had had enough of laughter, and he stopped.

"What are you going to do with this one? _Now_ we'd better send for Mr. Thornton."

Drusilla looked at him severely.

"Don't you be a fool, Dr. Eaton. I don't want Mr. Thornton to know nothin' about this one. I'd never hear the last of it."

"Well, then you'd better let me take him to the police station."

"Yes--" hesitatingly; "I suppose so. But--" and she looked down at the baby who was contentedly playing with the trimming on her dress--

"I jest hate to send a baby there."

"I'll tell you what I'll do," said Dr. Eaton. "There's a big colored orphan asylum out on the Elpham Road. Let's telephone up there, and I'll take it over myself."

Drusilla hesitated again.

"Another 'home.' I hate to--"

"It's the only thing to do, Miss Doane. You can't mix the colors."

"Well, perhaps you'd better."

Dr. Eaton left the room, and returned after a few moments with a shake of his head.

"No good! They say they're full. They can't take in another child. I telephoned another one downtown that they told me of, and they say the same thing. It seems there is a superfluity of colored babies just now. I guess it'll have to be the police station."

"What'll they do with him? If we can't find a place to-night, they can't."

"No; perhaps not. But they'll keep him until they do find a place."

"Well, if they can keep him, so can I. I'll keep him until we find a place for him. Ring for James and Fanny and we'll put him to bed."

James came and the little girl mother, and the baby was placed in James's outraged arms.

"Now, James, don't drop him--he won't bite you. Take him to the children's room; and you, Fanny, see that he has something to eat and a bath. Now you be jest as nice to him as to the other babies. Give him your baby's bed and take your baby in with you to-night."

As James left the room with the baby in his arms, which were stretched out as far from his body as he could carry them, and with his head held disdainfully in the air, Drusilla sat back in her chair and chuckled.

"Ain't James havin' new experiences? His back says, 'This didn't never happen to me when I was in the Duke's house!'"

Dr. Eaton rose to go.

"I'll find some place to put him to-morrow, Miss Doane. It's good of you to take him tonight."

Drusilla went with him to the door.

"Good night, Doctor. Things do seem to be kind of comin' my way. I've got Swedes and Dutch and Irish and Jews, and now a nigger baby. It's a mighty good thing for me that the heathen Chinees is barred. Good night."

CHAPTER IX

Drusilla waited several days for the return of the money that she had loaned her visitor from Adams, and when it did not come she was prevailed upon to write to the son of her old friend, Dr. Friedman, asking him regarding the man. The doctor answered that there was no man by the name of John Gleason in Adams; that the Spring Valley Stock Farm was owned by a man named Gleason who had no brother; and that this particular man had never lived in the small village, where every one was known. Drusilla was thoroughly aroused. It was her first experience with a confidence man. It hurt her pride, as she had said; but it hurt her worse to know that people did such things.

"It jest destroys my belief in human natur', and I'll never trust no one again," she said to John.

It was only about a week after the receipt of the letter from the doctor, when she was still smarting from her wounded feelings, that she was told a clergyman wanted to see her personally. She found a quiet little man, dressed in black.

"Miss Doane," he said with a smile, "I am the Presbyterian clergyman from Adams, your old home, and as I was in town I thought I would come to see you."

Suspicion jumped into Drusilla's old eyes.

"Won't you set down?" she said, rather coldly for her.

The stranger sat down.

"Did you take the place of old Dr. Smith?" Drusilla asked.

"Yes; he's had another call, to a higher land"--motioning upward--
"and I have his charge."

The man chatted very intelligently regarding the people in Adams,
and Drusilla began to thaw. She forgot her other visitor in her
enjoyment of hearing the names of the people in her old church.

"Miss Doane," the clergyman said finally, "we are in a little
trouble in our church, and I thought that you might help us."

Drusilla stiffened at once.

"What can I do?" she asked.

"We are trying to start a little fund to take care of some poor
children of our parish, and as it is very hard to raise money in our
little village, I thought you might be willing to head our
subscription. I thought it better to come and see you personally
instead of writing you."

Drusilla looked at him a moment and then rose.

"Will you excuse me a minute?" she said politely, and left the room.

She went directly to the butler.

"James, telephone for the police. There's another man in there from
Adams and I want him arrested."

She left the astonished James to carry out her orders, and returned
to the room.

"You say you have some children in Adams without homes?"

"Not exactly without homes, but they are dependent upon the town for
support. An Irish family moved in and the father died and the mother
is ill, and we want part of the fund to help the family until the
mother is able to support her little family of six. We want to keep
them together--instead of putting them in asylums and separating
them. And there are two children who have lost both parents--at least
the mother is dead and the father cannot be found--and we must take
care of them. They are too small to work and we thought we could get
some one to take them by paying a small sum per week and--"

He quite likely would have enumerated the rest of the charges of his
parish if there had not been a discreet knock at the door,
immediately followed by James, announcing:

"The men you asked for, ma'am."

Drusilla rose as the two police officers entered the room. She said,
pointing to the astonished clergyman, "I want you to arrest this man.
He is a confidence man."

"What--what--" sputtered the clergyman.

"I want you to take him to the police station," said Drusilla firmly.

"Do you make a charge, ma'am?" asked one of the officers.

"Yes. I don't know what it is, but I make it. Take him to jail."

"But--but--" said the bewildered clergyman, "this is an outrage!"

"I don't care what it is, you go to jail. I promised the doctor I'd arrest the next man who tried to git money from me by saying he was from Adams. I don't believe you're a preacher; you don't look like one."

The officers went up to the man, who was evidently struggling with emotion, trying to find some suitable words to express his surprise and anger.

"Come along with me," said the officer gruffly. "Don't make no fuss; it won't go."

They put their hands on his arms and he struggled.

"Take your hands off of me! What do you mean? I tell you, I'm the Reverend Algernon Thompson, of Adams."

"Don't you believe nothin' he says," insisted Drusilla. "Whoever heard of a name Algernon! He looks much worse'n the other man that was here. Just you take him along."

Drusilla looked scornfully at the man, who was struggling with the officers. They led him to the door, where he again refused to go, and the policemen took him roughly by the shoulders and pushed him into the hall. He struggled wildly, and his face became convulsed as he turned to Drusilla.

"I tell you I'm the Reverend Algernon Thompson; and this is an outrage--an outrage--"

The officers shook him roughly.

"Oh, can the hot air. We're used to your kind. Come along."

And the last Drusilla could hear was the wail of the clergyman: "I tell you I am the Reverend Algernon Thompson--"

After the noise had subsided and Drusilla knew the man was gone she went slowly upstairs to find John. He looked up from the book he was reading and said quickly as he saw her flushed face:

"What is it, Drusilla. Has something upset you?"

Drusilla sat down wearily in a chair.

"Oh, John, it was another man from Adams. He said he was a preacher this time, and I had him arrested. It's upset me awful. Ring for William; I believe I'll take a glass of wine. I don't believe in spirits, but St. Paul says there's a time for everything, and this is the time."

Drusilla was silent as she sipped the wine; then finally she looked up at John wistfully:

"John, do you think I'd ought to 'a' done it?"

"Certainly, Drusilla. The doctor told you to have any one arrested who asked you for money, claiming to be from your old home. He said you mustn't get the reputation of being easy, or you'd be bothered to death."

"Yes, I know; but then--"

"You did just right, Drusilla; so don't worry."

Drusilla sighed.

"I hate to do it, but I suppose I must. He didn't look a bit like a preacher, and he said his name was Algernon. He'd ought to be arrested for the name if for nothin' else, hadn't he?"

John laughed.

"Well, it's all right. Now let's talk of something else. Let me read you something."

Drusilla sat back in her chair.

"All right, John; read to me. I don't know nothin' that'll make me quiet and sleepy so quick as being read to. I can sleep as easy when you're readin' that poetry stuff to me as I can in my bed. Go on; it'll caam my nerves."

John read to her for half an hour, his voice having the desired effect. Drusilla almost dozed; but when John raised his eyes and, seeing hers closed, stopped reading, Drusilla opened her eyes quickly.

"I ain't all asleep, John, just half," she said; and John laughed and went on.

They were interrupted by James.

"Miss Doane, some one wishes to speak to you on the telephone."

"But, James, let 'em talk to you. You know I don't never talk on the

telephone."

"It is some one from the police station, ma'am, and they say they must speak to you particular."

"From the police station? Laws-a-massey! Well, then turn it on here."

She went over to the telephone table and sat down. Soon John heard:

"What's that you say?"

"Laws-a-massey, he's _real!_"

A murmur was heard from the telephone. Then Drusilla, excitedly:

"He has letters and cards that prove that he is the Reverend Algernon Thompson, from Adams, and has given names in New York and you found out he is _real!_"

Again the murmur.

"Wait a minute," said Drusilla; and turned to John.

"John, I've done it! That man's a preacher, after all, and he says he's goin' to sue me, and--and--John, what'll I do?"

John looked perplexed and ran his hand through his white hair.

"I'm sure I don't know, Drusilla--I'm sure--"

"What'll I do! What'll I do!" wailed Drusilla. "Just think of putting a preacher in jail. What'll ever become of me!"

Here John had an inspiration.

"Drusilla, send for Mr. Thornton; he is a lawyer and he'll know what to do."

Drusilla drew a breath of relief.

"John, that's the first glimmer of sense you ever showed, and it's the first time I ever wanted to see that lawyer." Turning to the telephone she said: "I'll send for my lawyer at once and he'll know what to do. Where's the man?"

After a moment: "I'll send a car down and get him. Have him come here at once if he'll come."

She left the telephone and turned a very scared face to John.

"John, I'm just a plain old fool. Send the car to the police station, and tell Joseph to get that man if he has to tie him up! And you go telephone Mr. Thornton to come here at once. Now he'll have a chance

to talk and I can't say a word."

It was a very frightened and meek Drusilla that greeted Mr. Thornton and Daphne when they came into the room.

"I came along, Miss Doane," Daphne explained, "because Mr. Brierly said you were in some trouble, and I thought perhaps I might help you."

Drusilla laughed rather shakily.

"I'm afraid, Daphne, this is a case for your father. I've arrested the wrong man."

"What do you mean?" said Mr. Thornton quickly.

"I've got a preacher in jail--or he was there unless Joseph can get him to come with him."

Then she told the whole story. Mr. Thornton could not keep a twinkle from his eyes as he listened. But he did not laugh; he saw that Drusilla was too frightened and upset.

"Now what am I goin' to do?" Drusilla finished. "You must get me out of this."

The lawyer thought a moment.

"The man wanted some money for some children, or the poor of his parish. Perhaps we can arrange it. Money is a balm that'll soothe most outraged feelings."

"Give him anything, anything!" Drusilla begged. "I never thought I'd arrest a preacher, and at my time of life. Poor man, and his name was Algernon, too!"

A very angry man was brought into the room, and was met by a courteous lawyer; but Drusilla brushed him aside and went up to the man and, laying her hand on his arm looked up into his face appealingly.

"I can't tell you how sorry I am! I don't know what to say or what to do! I won't never forgive myself, even if you forgive me, which I don't expect."

The man looked down at her and the angry flush left his face.

"I don't know what to say myself, Miss Doane," he replied. "It's rather a new experience for me, a police station--"

"Well, I'm so ashamed and so sorry I can't talk. Just set down and let lawyer Thornton tell you all about it."

The lawyer explained to him the circumstances of Mr. Gleason's visit, and that Drusilla had received instructions to arrest the next man who claimed to come from her former home.

"It was unfortunate for me that I happened to be the next man," the clergyman said with a laugh. "But I understand, and it is all right."

Drusilla looked at him gratefully.

"You're a good man, if your name _is_ Algernon, and if five hundred dollars will help them children Mr. Thornton will give it to you tomorrow. And now you'll stay here and visit me until you finish your business in New York."

The clergyman flushed, this time with pleasure.

"You are more than kind, Miss Doane. I believe I'd be willing to go to the police station every day if I could help the poor of our little town so easily."

"It is all right then," said Drusilla, "and jest you let me know when you want things and you can always count on me, 'cause I'm so relieved. But I know you're hungry. I'll have some supper brought up here and you can talk with John. Are you goin', Mr. Thornton?" as the lawyer rose. "Let Daphne stay a while with me. I want her to come to my room and talk a while. I'm real upset and tired and I can listen to Daphne without having to think."

"That sounds as if I talked nothing but nonsense!" Daphne pouted.

Drusilla put her arm around the young girl.

"Never you mind, dear; I like your chatter, so come with me."

And they went to Drusilla's room.

They drew up two easy chairs before the fire and as Drusilla settled into the luxurious depths of hers she chuckled to herself.

"Five hundred dollars! I always knowed preachers was a luxury--but-- Well, talk to me, Daphne. What you been doin'?"

"I'm so glad to get a chance to talk with you, Miss Doane. I've been intending to come over for a week, but I've been too busy. You know, Miss Doane, I have a real love affair on my hands, and it's giving me no end of trouble."

Drusilla looked at her quickly.

"Not your own love affair, Daphne?"

Daphne flushed under the sharp gaze.

"No," she said hastily; "Uncle Jim's."

"I didn't know you had an Uncle Jim."

"Oh, yes; Papa's younger brother."

Drusilla laughed.

"Well, if he is like your father I should think he could manage his own love affairs."

"He is and he can't. He's just like father, only worse. He's so sort of stiff and cold that he freezes people; but he can't help it. He's been engaged to the _nicest_ girl--Mary Deane. You know she lives in the big house on the Denham road. She's the dearest girl, and I adore her, although she's much older than I am. Oh, she's very old--she must be thirty. Uncle Jim and she were to be married, and then all at once she broke the engagement and went to Egypt. Uncle Jim would never say why it was, and I didn't know until she came back last week, when I found out all about it. She cried when she told me. She said he wasn't human; that she couldn't pass her life with him, he's always so cold and correct. She says he never unbends, sort of stands up straight even when he kisses her. Yet I know she loves him; and Uncle Jim hasn't been the same man at all since the engagement was broken."

"What are you going to do about it? You can't make him over."

"I know it; but if they'd only meet he might be different. She won't come to our house for fear she'll meet him, and he is too proud to go and see her. And I know they are just breaking their hearts for each other."

She was quiet for a moment.

"I wish I could find some way to have them meet accidentally."

"Let's make a scheme, Daphne. Your father is going to Chicago next week, and he told me that his brother--I guess he means this Jim--would take his place with me. Now, why can't I get in some kind of trouble--that's always easy for me--and I'll telephone him to come over right away, and then you come in by chance with this young lady. Tell her that I'm a feeble old lady that needs some one to cheer her up. Tell her anything that'll git her here."

"She'll come. I've told her about you and she said she wanted to come to see you."

"It's easy then, and we'll trust to something turnin' up right."

Daphne rose to go.

"You're a--a--brick, Miss Doane."

Drusilla shook her finger at the girl.

"Young lady," she said severely, "I know where you got that. Dr. Eaton."

Daphne's pretty face flushed and she put her cheek against the faded one.

"We must not talk of--of Dr. Eaton. Father doesn't allow it, and--and Dr. Eaton thinks I'm only a flighty little girl, who is never serious, if he ever thinks of me at all--which I am afraid is not often--" She was quiet a moment, her hand resting against the soft white hair. "But--well, good night. I'll let you know when Mary will come, and then you can get into trouble right away."

Drusilla laughed.

"You trust me for carrying out that part of it. Good night, dear."

CHAPTER X

The following Wednesday Miss Doane received a message to the effect that Daphne and Mary Deane were going in to the matinee that day and would stop to see her on their return. She passed the day wondering how she could legitimately get Mr. James Thornton to stop on his way home from the office; then Providence came to her aid, as it always did. James brought her word that the chef wished to speak to her.

"What does he want of me, James?"

James coughed discreetly.

"I think you had better see him, Miss Doane."

Drusilla looked at him sharply a moment.

"Well, send him here," she said.

The chef came into the room. She looked at the fat, mustached Frenchman for a moment before she spoke.

"What do you want to see me about, cook?"

The chef drew himself up.

"I wish to pay my compliments to Madame and say I can no longer serve her."

"You mean you want to quit?"

The Frenchman bowed.

"Madame comprehends."

"Speak English, cook. What did you say?"

"I said that Madame understands perfectly."

"Why do you want to leave?"

The Frenchman drew himself up tragically. "I can no longer serve Madame: it is not convenable to my dignity."

"What's hurtin' your dignity?"

"It is not for me to cook for a lot of babies, and--and--a nigger baby."

Drusilla looked at him silently for a moment.

"Um-um--I see," she said. "You don't think you ought to cook for babies. There ain't much cookin'; they're mostly milk fed now."

"There is the porridge in the morning, and the soft-boiled eggs, and --and--"

"Oh, you object to cookin' eggs and porridge. It ain't hard."

"It is not the deefeeulty; it is the disgrace. I am a great artist-- a chef--it hurts the soul of the artist to--"

"I don't want an artist in the kitchen. I want a cook. Artists paint picters; they don't boil potatoes. What do you mean?"

"You do not understand, Madame. I am an artist; I have cooked in the best houses."

"Ain't this a good house?"

"It was, Madame; and I was proud to serve you until the house was turned into an orphan asylum, a--a--home for children of the street, and--"

Drusilla flushed suddenly.

"That'll do, cook. I've heard all I want. Perhaps you're a great cook, but when you cook for me you'll cook for whoever is under my roof. And I want you to understand that this is not an orphan asylum. These children are my visitors; and so long as they're in my house, they'll eat, and if you don't want to cook for them, well--you can cook for some one else. You can go, cook. Mr. Thornton'll give you

your money."

And Drusilla sat down a very angry and ruffled Drusilla.

"Orphan asylum, indeed! He'll be callin' it a home next. What does anybody want with a man in the kitchen--especially a man who's got more hair under his nose than on his head!"

She was quiet for a while; then she laughed softly to herself.

"The Lord takes care of his own. Now I been wondering all day how to get that man here, and here's my chance. Jane, tell some one to telephone Mr. Thornton's brother to stop here on his way from the office. I want to speak to him particularly."

It was nearly six o'clock before the lawyer's motor stopped before Drusilla's door. When the lawyer came in Drusilla said to herself, "I don't blame his girl none. He's worse'n his brother;" but she turned smilingly to him.

"I'm afraid that I've called you in on business that'll seem mighty little to a man," she said; "but it's big to a woman. I'm changin' cooks."

Mr. Thornton smiled.

"I don't see where you require my services--"

"Oh, yes, I do. You know the expenses of this house are kept up by the estate, and you pay all the servants. Now I don't like to send a cook away unless I tell you. But this cook's _goin'_ and he's goin' sudden."

"Isn't he a good cook?"

"Yes, I suppose he is; but, between you and me and the gatepost, I won't be sorry to see the last of him. I guess he's a fine cook for fancy cookin', but I been used to plain things all my life and I'm tired of things with French names. When I have a stew I like to have a stew, and I'd like real American vittles once in a while. Some good pork and beans and cabbage that ain't all covered up with flummaddles so that I don't know I'm eatin' cabbage; an' I like vegetables that ain't all cut up in fancy picters, and green corn on a cob without a silver stick in the end of it. I liked his things real well at first; but he can't make pie and his cakes is too fancy--and, well--he got sassy and said he wouldn't cook for a lot of babies, and he's goin'. You just be sure of that, Mr. Thornton; he's _goin'." _

Mr. Thornton said dryly: "I presume it is a little lowering to the dignity of a French chef to cook for a lot of waifs--"

"Now you be careful, Mr. Thornton, or you'll go trottin' along with

the cook. I'm a little bit techy about them babies--"

The man flushed and rose to go.

"I did not mean to offend you, Miss Doane. We are at your service. What do you want me to do?"

"I want you to get me a woman cook--by the way, what did you pay that cook?"

"I think, if I remember rightly, he receives a hundred and fifty dollars."

Drusilla sat back in her chair aghast.

"One hundred and fifty dollars a month for a cook! Elias Doane must 'a' been out of his head!"

"I think that is not an exorbitant price for a cook with the reputation of this one. He was for many years with Mr. Doane."

"To think of it costin' one hundred and fifty dollars a month before you got anything to eat, and all give to that fat, lazy Frenchman! If I'd 'a' knowed it, his things would 'a' choked me. And your brother talked to me about the expense of keepin' my children! Why, you git me a fat Irish woman, who likes real vittles, and who ain't above cookin' oatmeal, and pay her about fifty dollars a month, and she'll suit me and we'll be savin' enough to pay for the babies."

She was quiet a moment.

"You talked kind of mean about my babies, and I know you was thinkin' about my colored baby." Then, looking at him suddenly: "Did you ever see a colored baby when he's nothin' on but a little white shirt?"

The lawyer shook his head stiffly.

"I'm afraid my duties have not called me in the neighborhood of colored babies dressed only in white shirts."

"Well," said Drusilla, "you've missed a lot. But I'm goin' to begin your education right away. It's just bedtime. You come with me."

And before the astonished lawyer could voice his protest he was being hurried down the hall and up the wide stairs to the big nursery, Drusilla pattering along at his side, talking all the time.

"You know every one wonders why I keep this little Rastus--the doctor give him that name--but I keep him just to make me laugh. Some of the other babies make me want to cry, they're so sickly and puny, but you can't cry at Rastus. He's goin' away next week to some people who'll take him till he's old enough to go to that big colored

school that's run by Mr. Washington, where I'm goin' to see that he's made a man of, and show people what's in a little black boy. But just look at him--here he is!"

She led the way down the long room, lined with beds on each side, to where a girl was preparing a very happy black baby for bed. As Drusilla said, he was clothed only in a little white shirt; and as his plump body lay over the nurse's lap he exposed to view a very fat little back and a pair of dimpled legs that were kicking in evident enjoyment of the rubbing his back was receiving at the hands of the nurse.

The lawyer stopped at the nurse's side and watched the baby for a moment. Then he broke into a jolly laugh.

"You're right, Miss Doane. You can't help it." And before he was really aware of what he did, he bent over the squirming baby and gave it a little spank.

The baby twisted an astonished face around the nurse's knee. Seeing the man looking down at him, he puckered up his little face and the big eyes filled with tears.

Mr. Thornton stooped quickly.

"You poor little tad!" he said. "Did I scare you? Here"--as the wails became louder--"come here." He took the baby into his arms and tossed him high over his head. "It's all right, baby; I didn't mean it."

As he was holding the baby above him, laughing into the now laughing face, a voice from the doorway said, "Jim."

Mr. Thornton nearly dropped the baby in his astonishment. He looked at the vision of the pretty woman standing in the doorway, and then hastily deposited the baby in the nurse's lap.

"Mary!" he said. "Mary!"

She came to him, seeing nothing in the room but the man.

"Oh, Jim, you are human after all. You are, you are!"

The astonished nurse saw a woman folded in a man's arms and a woman crying happily on a man's shoulders.

Drusilla watched them for a moment and then went to the door, where Daphne was waiting. The girl took Drusilla's hand excitedly.

"It worked, didn't it, Miss Doane; it worked!"

They waited in Drusilla's room for quite a while before two shamefaced but happy looking people appeared, hand in hand. Mr.

Thornton went up to Drusilla and took her hand in both his own.

"Miss Doane," he said enthusiastically, "start all the asylums--red, black, or yellow--that you want. Take the whole African race if you want to, and I'll see that you get cooks enough for them."

Mary Deane laughed--the laugh of a happy woman who has come into her own.

"And, Miss Doane," she added, "we'll do better than that. Rastus isn't your colored baby any more. He's Jim's and mine. We're going to see to his education, for if it hadn't been for Rastus--well--perhaps there'd never have been a happy Mary."

"Or," said Mr. Thornton with a glad laugh, "or a Sunny Jim."

CHAPTER XI

A light tap was heard on the door of John's sitting-room.

"John, are you still up? Can I come in?"

Before John could answer, Drusilla was in the room.

"John, I'm ashamed of you! Has this been goin' on all the time, and I didn't know it. It's past twelve."

John said apologetically: "It isn't late, is it, Drusilla? I didn't think of the time."

"Late! It's past twelve, I tell you, and you had ought to be in bed gettin' your beauty sleep. Nights was made for sleepin', John Brierly." John shook his head.

"Oh, no, Drusilla; nights were made for reading. There is no joy like a long quiet evening and Carlyle, for example, for company."

"He couldn't be company for me at this time o' night. But you don't ask me nothin' about my dinner party, my first dinner party, and my dance."

John looked longingly at his book, then carefully placed a marker in it and closed it.

"Now don't sigh, John. I'm goin' to tell you about it whether you want to hear it or not. I know you'd rather read, but I been in society and I must talk."

"I'm only anxious to hear all about it, Drusilla."

Drusilla pulled off her gloves and sat down in an easy chair before the fire.

"John, there's no more guile in you than in a stick of molasses candy, but you're like a sermon, comfortin', if sort of uninteresting, and I can talk at you if I can't talk with you. Ask me all about it, git me started somehow. I'm as full of conversation as an egg is of meat, but I don't know where to begin."

"Did you enjoy the dinner?"

"Did I enjoy the dinner! That's like a man to think about the vittles first. I never thought of them. They was numerous and plenty, one thing after another and too many forks. I couldn't help wonderin' how they ever washed all the dishes."

"Where was it, Drusilla? I don't remember if you spoke of it to me."

"John Brierly, you'll be the death of me yet. You don't think you heard me speak of it, and I didn't talk of nothin' else for three days, tryin' to make up my mind whether I'd go or not, only Mrs. Thornton was so particular about me comin'."

"Yes, I do remember hearing you speak of it. It was at the Thorntons'."

"Well, it's about time you remember. Yes, it was a dinner dance--whatever that is. There was about forty people to dinner and a lot of young people come in afterwards to dance. I wish you could 'a' seen it, John.

"A butler about like James met us in the hall and we took off our wraps in a room and went into the parlor. 'Tisn't as big as our'n and I was a little late and they was all there, standin' around, and Mis' Thornton introduced me to a lot of people, and then a man handed around somethin' in glasses--cocktails I think she said; anyway it tasted like hair oil--and little pieces of toast with spoiled fish eggs on 'em; arid we et 'em standin' up. I thought I'd gag, but I said, 'Drusilla Doane, be a sport and do everything that other people do.' And I done it, although to-morrow I'll quite likely have to stay in bed. Finally everybody give their arm to some one else, at least the men did, and an old man come to me and I took his arm and we went into the dining-room. There was five small tables and they was pretty with candles and flowers and I had a little card at my place to tell me where to set. The old man was so feeble he couldn't hardly push my chair in.

"John, I'm glad you ain't doddering. Let's never git doddering and brag about our diseases. It seems that that's all some men have to brag about when they git old, how much rheumatiz they can hold, as if it's a thing to be proud of.

"I listened to that chronic grunter tell me his troubles for a while, then I turned to the young man on the other side, who was one of them shrewd-eyed business men; and I hadn't been settin' there five minutes before I knowed that he had asked to set by me and that he had schemes. Tried to git me interested in some business venture where they would be able to pay about eight hundred per cent. I told him I hadn't heard of nothin' paying eight hundred per cent, except guinea pigs or rabbits, and I didn't want to invest in them, and after a while he saw it wasn't worth while to try to git me interested in mines in Alaska or coal fields in Ohio, so he kind of laughed and we got to be good friends. He ain't bad, as he laughed when he saw it wasn't no use, and it's a great strain on a person's religion to laugh when he knows he's beat. Then lie told me who the people was and a lot about 'em, and then they all got to talkin' and a woman was there who believed in women votin' and being self-supportin' and not dependin' on their husbands, and I said I thought a self-supportin' wife was as much use as a self-rockin' cradle. They talked and argued but this woman was set in her ideas, and you might as well try to argue a dog out of a bone as a woman like that out of an idee once she's got it fixed in her head. I don't like a woman with one idee; it's like a goose settin' on one egg. They use up lots of time and git skinny and don't git much result after all.

"Then another man at the table who had a head three sizes too big for him talked a lot of stuff I couldn't foller, and the man next me said he was the brainiest man in New York. He looked as if he had indigestion and he didn't eat nothin', and I couldn't help thinkin' that a good reliable set of insides would be more use to him than any quantity of brains, but I didn't say it."

"I'm surprised you didn't, Drusilla."

"What's that? Well, I guess I would if I'd a thought of it in time, but I was interested in the talk about the 'new woman'--I guess that's what they called her. I said I didn't believe too much in the over-education of females. That I'd rather be looked down to in lovin' tenderness than up to in silent awe, and that men can't love and wonder at the same time. I don't think men want to set women so high up that they're all the time wonderin' how she got there an' if they dare to bring her down to their level. I said that it seemed to me that love exchanged for learnin' was a mighty poor bargain for the woman if she wanted happiness; and one of the women that set at the table--the kind of woman that can't hold a baby without its clothes comin' apart--said I represented the old school. That things was changed now; that marriage was not the ultimate objective--es, that's what she said, the ultimate objective of women. I asked her what was the ultimate objective, and she said, 'the cultivation of her own individuality, the freeing of her soul.' I asked, couldn't she do it just as well with a man? and she said, no, that man impeded woman's progress. I said that I guessed that most women who said that hadn't never had no chance to git close enough to a man to have him git in her way. I said I'd seen lots of women who said they hated men, but they generally hadn't had a chance to find out whether they could

love 'em. I guess I was like a blind mule then, kicking out in space and hittin' something accidental, 'cause she got red and then I was sorry and I sort of tried to make it up. I said, 'Of course there's lots of marriages that's mistakes, 'cause a lot of people git married like they learn a job, take about three weeks to it, and that's the reason there's so many poor workmen and poor marriage jobs, but marriage must be a pretty good thing after all, 'cause I never saw a widow who wasn't ready to try it again.'

"They all laughed after that and they got real talkative and human. One little woman was awful pretty, and, John, she had on the littlest amount of clothes above her waist that I ever saw on a person outside a bedroom. She said she envied me my motors and my money, and I laughed and asked her if she envied me my seventy years too. She said, 'No, but--' and I said to her, 'I know what you feel; I've wanted things too; and it's just as much misery to want a motorcar as it is to want a shirt.' One man there, who looked like a dried up herrin', laughed and laughed and said that he hadn't laughed so much for years. I said that it was good for him, and if he'd come and see me every mornin' I'd agree to make him laugh once a day, 'cause if you don't laugh before you die, you'll go out of the world without laughing, and you don't know whether there'll be anything to laugh at in the next. He said he was comin' to see me. Why don't you look jealous, John? Wait till I tell you who he is. That big John Craydon, who owns all of America as far as I heard. They say he's the hardest man in New York, and that when he come within an inch of dyin' last year no one would 'a' cared if he had 'a' come within an inch of bein' born, as he ain't done nothin' but make money. I'm goin' to show him my babies, especially Rastus, and I know he ain't hard. Any man that can laugh as hearty as he did, if he only does it once a year, ain't got an iron heart.

"The old man on the other side of me didn't like Mr. Craydon. He mumbled to me, 'What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul'; and I said it was accordin' to the size of the soul, and then he quoted that old thing about it being easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle--you know the thing people who ain't got money is always quoting about people who has. I said that, according to Scriptor, Heaven might look like a circus parade, it'd be so full of camels; but I didn't have a chance to explain what I meant and the women got up and went into the parlor, where we had coffee. Pretty soon the men come in and we all went into the dancin'-room.

"And, John, I've had a revelation. St. John's was nothin' compared to mine. A lot of young men come in, men with no chins and high collars, and young girls that had ought to have had gimps put in their dresses; and the way they slithered around that room hugging each other--well, for once in my life, I couldn't talk. I just looked. It wasn't only the young men with soft heads and loud laughs that danced. By the way, they was some of them the descendants of the big men we read about in the papers, and, between you and me, John, great descent was what most of 'em was sufferin' with. But old men and women danced--old men especially that had ought to been at home

rubbin' their backs with goose grease. I just thought as I saw them old men foolin' around, 'It's hard for an old dog to learn new tricks, but an old man hasn't got sense enough not to try.' And what do you think, one of them young nin-com-poops come and asked me if I wouldn't like to turkey trot. That's what he said, turkey trot. When I got my breath, I said, 'Young man, there's two things in life I ain't never prepared for. One's twins, the other's to turkey trot --whatever that is--so you run along to the chicken yard; you've mistook the place.'

"Then I moved over to a corner by some paam trees, as I was afraid one of them old men'd come and ask me to bunny hug next, and I always been respectable. As I was a settin' there, some one come and set down, and I couldn't help hearin' what they said. He wanted to go home and she didn't want to go, and he said he was tired and had to git up early and that he'd been out four nights this week, and she said he was selfish and didn't want her to enjoy herself, and they talked a lot and then he got up in a huff and went away. I heard a little sniffle and I looked around the paams and there set that pretty girl that got married about three months ago and lives in the Red House. I smiled at her and she stopped cryin' and tried to pretend she hadn't been, and then I got up and went and set down by her and took her hand an' kind of patted it, and let her dry her eyes. When she seemed better I said, 'Every wise woman buildeth her own home, but the foolish one plucketh it down with her own hands.' Isn't that what you are doin', my dear?

"She sniffed again and I thought she was going to begin all over, but she didn't. She said, 'Bert used to love to be at dances with me, but now he always says he's tired and wants to go home.'

"Well, dear,' I said, 'you're his wife now, and it's different. He can see you at home, and have you to himself. You're not just the girl he dances with. The things a man wants in his wife ain't the things he wants in the girl he just dances with, any more than the vittles he wants for breakfast is like them he wants for dinner. It's all different when you're married.'

"But Bert is selfish; he isn't trying to make me happy.'

"Does this give you happiness?' I asked.

"Why, of course; it's so gay,' she said.

"But is it _happiness_?' I asked again. 'Happiness and bein' gay is different, and you don't need to go to things like this for happiness. You find it at home if you stop huntin' for it outside. It's like my specs that I go lookin' all over the house for and find up on my forehead where they was all the time. Now, dear, don't make a mistake and go fishing for happiness with a red rag instead of a real live worm, and then think there ain't no fish 'cause they won't bite. You got the right kind of bait in your pretty self, in your nice home, and in that great big husband, who, a person can see as

plain as a wart on a white neck, is all over in love with you, and the sea'll be just full of fish for you."

"I patted her hand again, as I was afraid she'd think I was interferin', but she didn't. She set quiet a while, then she squeezed my hand, and I said, 'Now I'm goin' home. Git on your bunnet and find your Bert and I'll drop you both at your house; and when you git home git him something fillin' to eat and something he likes to drink, and light his seegar for him and set down by the fire and tell him that real hugs is better'n all the bunny hugs in the world, and you'll find you won't be lonesome.'

"And she did, John; at least I took 'em home, and they held hands all the way there, though they didn't know I saw 'em."

"Well, Drusilla, you did have a nice time after all. I suppose you'll be going out every night now."

"John, you got more hair then sense. I'm glad I haven't died before I seen this dinner dancin'; but it's like them spoiled fish sandwiches--one taste's enough."

CHAPTER XII

One afternoon Drusilla was working in her corner of the greenhouse transplanting lily bulbs. She did not notice the entrance of Daphne until she heard the fresh young voice at her side.

"Good morning, Miss Doane. I have come on business. I am an agent to enlist your services."

Drusilla pushed her near-seeing glasses up on her forehead so that she could the better regard the pretty face before her.

"Well, now, what company is hirin' you? They have a good agent. Is it a book or a washin' machine?"

Daphne laughed.

"Neither, Miss Doane. How shocking! I am working in a great cause--the cause of the poor."

"So--" said Drusilla. "What do _you_ know about the poor?"

"Oh, I know a lot, Miss Doane. I am one of the volunteer workers in a Settlement house in the slums."

"What's that? I seem to disremember what I have read about such things, if I have ever read about them."

"A Settlement is a lot of nice people who go down to live among the poor, and they have clubs where the boys and girls can come evenings, and they have sometimes a kindergarten or a day nursery where the mothers who go out to work by the day can leave their children while they are away, and they give free baths and have a medical clinic. Dr. Eaton gives his services to one twice a week, and there is a district nurse, and--Oh lots of things are done for the poor in the neighborhood of the Settlement house."

Drusilla put down her trowel and looked interested.

"Do tell! How nice of 'em. Are they paid to do it?"

"Yes; the workers who live in the Settlement get a salary. But girls like myself give a day a week, or every once in a while go there and help."

"What do you do?" asked Drusilla.

"I--I--teach sewing. I have a class."

Drusilla looked at her a moment in astonishment.

"_You_ teach sewing? _You_ have a sewing class? I didn't know you sewed."

"I--don't--_much_, but I can do enough for a class like I have. They're just making gymnasium suits, and we buy the pattern and I get along some way."

Drusilla laughed.

"Well, for a girl who has all her clothes made and keeps a maid to sew on her buttons, I think it is very nice of you to learn girls how to sew. You must be a great help in that work."

Daphne flushed.

"Now you're laughing at me, Miss Doane."

"No, I'm not laughin'; but it seems to me--how many girls you got in your class?"

"I have ten."

"How old are they?"

"About twelve to fourteen years."

"When do you learn 'em?"

"Saturday afternoon."

"Well--well! You must let me go down with you some day and see you learn girls to make their dresses. I'd surely enjoy the sight."

"That's why I came to you to-day. Our Settlement wants me to bring you down."

Drusilla looked up inquiringly and a little suspiciously.

"Why do they want you to bring me down?"

Daphne said rather hesitatingly: "Well--they would like to interest you in their mother's summer home."

"What's that?"

"They have a home in the country where they send some of the poor mothers who live in the tenements and can't get away for the summer."

"I s'picioned it was a subscription they want; but it sounds like a good thing, and I'd like to know about it."

"Won't you come with me to-day? We'll talk with Mrs. Harris, the head worker, and she'll tell you all about it."

"Well--I don't know--" looking at her plants. "I'd ought--"

"Oh, please come, Miss Doane. You haven't anything to do, have you?"

"I don't know as I have anything _particular_, though sence I got these babies, my days is as full as a wine cup. But if you want me--"

"That's right; I knew you would! Come right away--I must get to my class."

Drusilla wiped her hands on her apron and went into the house. Soon she was ready and they were being whirled swiftly toward the East Side, a part of New York that Drusilla had never visited. She was interested in the women as they sat upon the tenement steps, and in the many, many children playing in the streets. Spring was in the air, although it could hardly be recognized here except by the people loitering in the streets in order to get away from the crowded homes.

"What a lot of people!" said Drusilla. "Where do they all come from--and the children! I never saw so many children in my life."

"Oh, but you should see it in July and August," Daphne laughed. "Then it _is_ crowded, and the people sleep on the fire-escapes and even on the sidewalks in some of the smaller streets. It is so hot in their stuffy rooms."

Soon they drew up before the door of the Settlement, and were received in the parlor by the head worker. Daphne left Drusilla, to

go to her sewing-class, and Mrs. Harris conducted Drusilla over the Settlement. She was shown the kindergarten, the club rooms where the boys and girls of the neighborhood danced in the evening, the clinic, the public baths, and the play yard. Then she asked to be taken to see Daphne with her sewing-class, as she could not get over the idea that it was a joke of some kind for Daphne to teach sewing, knowing that the girl knew nothing about the work. They found Daphne absorbed in cutting out very full trousers and middy blouses by the aid of a paper pattern, while eight girls were basting and stitching them. Drusilla watched them for a while.

"Is this all the sewing-class you have?" she asked.

"It is all we have at present," Mrs. Harris answered.

"Do the girls in the neighborhood, the grown girls, learn it?"

"No; they all work, and have only their evenings."

"Why don't you have an evening class?"

"We have thought of that, but it is hard to get a girl like Daphne to come down in the evening."

Drusilla watched Daphne frowning over the intricacies of the pattern.

"Now I think it is nice of Daphne," she said, "to want to come here and help them girls learn to sew; but it seems to me that she'd be doin' a good deal more good to the girls if she hired a woman, some one who needed the work and knowed dressmaking, to come and really learn the girls to make their dresses. Learn 'em from the start, from cuttin' out the cloth to sewin' up the seams and makin' the last buttonhole. Them girls don't want to learn how to make them big pants and that shirt; they want to make their clothes--something pretty they can wear. I think a lot of Daphne, but she'd be doin' more good if she hired some one who knowed her business instead of tryin' to do somethin' she don't know nothin' about. Quite likely it does her good, but so far as I can see it don't do the girls much good."

The head worker flushed, as did Daphne.

"We like to interest the girls from homes like Miss Thornton's to come down and help the people less fortunate than themselves."

"Yes, that's good too; interest them. I saw Daphne pay five dollars for a box of candy the other day, and it's bad for her complexion. Instead of buying them things let her hire some one, I say. She can come just the same, but let a dressmaker or a sewing woman learn 'em to sew; not a girl who ain't even sewed a button on her own clothes or made a pocket handkerchief. And then she'd be helpin' the dressmaker too, who might need the money. If you had some sensible sewing learnt you might git some of the girls who work days to come in evenings and learn, but no girl is goin' to waste her time

fiddlin' around with things like that, that they ain't goin' to use, or don't have no need of."

"But they do need them. They are gymnasium suits."

"What's gymnasium suits?"

"Suits to take exercise in, physical exercise."

"Do they need special clothes to take exercise in? What's the matter with the clothes they got on?"

"They restrict the movements."

"You mean they can't move their arms and legs. Fudge and fiddlesticks! Put them girls out to play and they'd move their arms and legs quick enough without fancy clothin'. If they can't move 'em with the exercises you give 'em, give 'em other kinds. It seems to me that if these people are as poor as you tell me, exercise ain't what they want. They want to learn things to help 'em pay the rent at home, or save a little money once in a while by makin' their things."

Mrs. Harris was a little angry.

"I am sorry, Miss Doane," she said stiffly, "that you don't approve of our sewing-class."

"No, I don't approve of it. With a teacher like Daphne it's about as much use as squirtin' rose-water on a garbage tin. If the rest of your work is like this, I guess I'll go home--"

She started to leave the room, but at the door she stopped.

"What's that Daphne was tellin' me about a home for mothers in the country?"

The head worker's face brightened. Here she had something that would appeal to the old lady, who was reputed to be very fond of children.

"I am so glad you came to-day. I can show you some of the mothers we were hoping to take to the country. We want to enlarge our house, we can only accommodate twelve mothers with their children, and we should have a place for at least twenty-five, as we have so many applications."

"How long do you keep 'em?"

"We try to give each mother a two weeks' vacation; and she brings with her the small children she cannot leave at home."

"I like the idee. I like children and I like mothers, and from what I've seen it seems to me that it'd be heaven for these people to git away from the noise for a while. It most drives me crazy to hear it

for an hour, and it must be awful to live with."

"They get used to it; but they do need a change. Some of the poor mothers are completely worn out and break down in the hot weather. If they could get into the country, even for a short time, it would save many a life."

"Pshaw, is it so bad as that?" said sympathetic Drusilla.

"Yes; this year is especially bad. We had hoped to have the money to build an additional wing to the house and take all our people; but we have not been able to get the money, so we have to tell a great many whom we have promised that they cannot go this year, and--I am afraid it will be a great disappointment."

Here an inspiration came to Mrs. Harris.

"By the way, Miss Doane, I was going this afternoon to tell one of the mothers that she cannot go this year. Would you like to come with me, then you can see for yourself how very much the place is needed."

Drusilla brightened.

"I'd like to go," she said.

The worker hesitated.

"You are not afraid of contagion?"

"There ain't nothin' catchin' in the house, is there? I don't want to git the smallpox at my time of life, or the mumps--"

Mrs. Harris laughed.

"No, nothing as bad as that; but the tenements are not overly clean, you know."

"Pshaw, I don't care about that. If they can live in 'em all the year, I guess it won't hurt me to visit 'em for ten minutes."

They entered the motor, surrounded by a crowd of noisy children who clung to the footboard and hung on the back and made themselves into a noisy escort until the tenement was reached. There Drusilla and Mrs. Harris climbed three flights of stairs. In answer to the knock, a soft voice said, *Entre lei*, and they stepped into a room that was evidently the kitchen, living- and dining-room.

Near the only window in the room was a kitchen table. Around it sat the father, the mother, a little boy of nine, two younger girls, and a little round-faced boy of four, while two other children, mere babies, were playing on the floor. The people at the table were sticking marguerites onto wreaths, about ten flowers to a wreath. The flowers were in bundles stuck together, and the little boy took them

apart and handed them to the other children, who took yellow stems from other bundles, dipped them into paste, then into the center of the marguerite and handed the finished flower to the father or mother, who placed it in position on the wreath. They worked quickly, showing long practice.

The mother gave chairs to her guests; then went back to her work.

"I have come, Mrs. Tolenti," Mrs. Harris said, "to tell you about the country."

"Si," and the dark Italian face brightened. "I ready go any day."

"I am sorry, awfully sorry, but we have no place for you this year."

The Italian woman looked at the speaker uncomprehendingly.

"Si?"

"I am sorry," Mrs. Harris began again, speaking slowly, "that we cannot take you. We have not been able to enlarge the house, and there were so many applications ahead of you."

The woman looked at her blankly for a moment, then Drusilla saw that she understood. Her mouth drooped and quivered, her hands faltered in their work, but only for a moment. Mechanically she put the flower into the paste, then placed it on the wreath. She worked quietly for several moments.

"I hope next year, Mrs. Tolenti--"

But Mrs. Harris was interrupted.

"I no wanta next year. I wanta dis year, I wanta _now!_ I tired. I wanta see da country. I wanta see da flower, not dese tings--I hata dem." She gave the flowers in front of her a push. "I hata dem! I wanta see da rosa on da bush, I wanta see da leaves on da tree. I wanta put ma face in da grass lak when I young girl in Capri. I wanta look at da sky, I wanta smell da field. I wanta lie at night wi ma bambini and hear da rain. I no can wait one year, I wanta go _now!_"

"But, Mrs. Tolenti," Mrs. Harris said, secretly a little elated at the storm she had raised, which she could see was impressing Miss Doane, "I had no idea you felt it so strongly--"

"Yes," the low voice continued, "I feel it _here_," pointing to her breast. She was quiet for a while, then went on in the low, monotonous voice of the desperate poor. "This winter ver had. My man no work. Sometime go wood yard, but only fifty cents one day. He walk, walk, walk, looka for work. We must eat, we must pay rent. We all work maka da flower, but no can maka da mon. Fi' cent a gross for da wreath. It taka long time to maka one dozen wreath, and only git fi' cent. No can live. I canno' live every day, every day da same. Nine year I

stay here maka da flower, always maka da flower. Nine year I no go away from dis street. But dis year I tink I go to da country. When I set here maka da flower I say three mont more, two mont more, one mont more, den I see da grass, I hear da bird, I shuta ma eyes, I tink I again in my Capri--Oh, Dio mio!" She turned suddenly and let her face fall upon her arms, stretched out on the pile of flowers before her. "Der ain't no God for poor man, der ain't no God!"

Mrs. Harris looked at her sadly and said nothing; but the tears were streaming down the face of Drusilla and she impulsively rose from her seat and coming to the mother, put her arms round the shaking shoulders, and said quietly:

"You certainly shall go to the country with your babies. You certainly shall go. Don't think a moment again about it."

The woman did not raise her face nor seem to understand; dry sobs shaking her worn and wasted body. She seemed utterly broken and disheartened.

Drusilla turned to Mrs. Harris.

"Will you make her understand?"

The worker said something to the father, and he nodded his head and they went from the room. Drusilla stopped at the door to take a last look around the room, at the wondering faces of the children who watched her with great black eyes, but who did not stop their fingers from separating and placing the flowers together again. She saw the babies on the floor playing quietly, as if they too were oppressed by the tragedy that was always before them, and then she looked at the blank wall outside the window, and it seemed to her that the lives of these hopeless poor were like that window, only a blank wall to face.

They arrived at the Settlement house and Mrs. Harris ordered tea to be brought to her sitting-room. She was delighted at the effect of her visit, and her imagination ran riot in the thought of the additions that might be made to the summer home for mothers.

Drusilla was quiet during tea, but when it was carried away she spoke.

"Now tell me about your home. You say you want to make an addition, add an ell or something."

"Yes; we think by adding a wing we can double our capacity. But I have the plans of the new work, and a picture and plans of the present house."

She brought a book of views with an architect's drawings of the new hoped-for wing, and the pictures and plans of the present house. Drusilla drew her glasses from her bag and bent over the new plans; then she turned her attention to the house now in use.

"You say this is where they are at present? Which is the rooms you use for the mothers?"

The worker pointed them out.

"We have six beds in this room, and four beds in this, and five beds in this room. In this long room we can put about twelve cots for the children that do not have to be with their mothers during the night. This is the dining-room; this the living-room."

Drusilla caught sight of some rooms upstairs.

"What's these three rooms. Who're they for?"

"Those are for the workers who go out for the week-end."

"What do you mean by the week-end?"

"From Saturday to Monday."

"You mean the women who work here like yourself go out there and spend Saturday and Sunday?"

"Yes."

"But why do you need three rooms?"

"Well, you see there are a great many workers here, and they take turns, and often three or four of them go out."

"They each have a room to themselves?"

"Yes, you see they are in the noise here all the week, and they must have a place where they can rest and have quiet."

Drusilla looked at her sharply.

"What do you do with the rooms the rest of the time?"

"They are vacant."

"You don't put none of the mothers in 'em?"

"Certainly not. We could not use them if they had been occupied by the class of people we send out."

"Why don't you double up when you go out, and not take so much room? You could put four beds in that room and all be together and use them other rooms for mothers."

"That would be hard on our workers. They like their privacy. And then we would not like the mothers and their children so close to us. They would disturb us and we could not get the rest we need."

Drusilla was quiet for a moment, drumming lightly on the table with her fingers.

"I don't see how you can rest or sleep at night with a cry in your ears like that I jest heard from that mother. I'd sleep on a board by the side of the fence to let her get a chance to 'put her face in the grass' as she says. How can you talk about privacy and quiet when you see such misery and unhappiness as that I jest saw? No, don't stop me--" as she saw Mrs. Harris raise her flushed face and open her lips as if to speak--"I'm all wrought up. I'll hear that mother's cry and see her poor body bent over that table, and those babies settin' there workin' when they ought to be out playin' as long as I live. And you see them and hear them every day and yet can talk about havin' to have quiet and privacy! And you take the three best rooms in a house that's supported by people who think they are giving some poor Italian family an outin' in the country! You could all go in one room and that would mean that five or six more mothers could go; the woman we left up there could go--instead of keeping the rooms for women who have a nice place like your'n here." She looked with scorn around the cozily furnished room. "And you keep them for only one or two days a week! I can't talk, I'm all wrought up."

Drusilla sat back in her chair and fanned herself with the book of views.

The worker was aghast. She had not thought of any possible outcome except the one for which she had been planning.

"But you see, Miss Doane, when we have a wing--"

"I'd 'a' give you a wing, or two wings, or a whole batch of wings, if I hadn't seen them three rooms. How'd I know that you wouldn't take the best rooms for the rest of your workers; or perhaps your cook might need rest or privacy for a part of the week. No--" shaking her old head vigorously--"I'll build my own wings where I can watch 'em."

She rose then.

"I must be goin'. Will you send for Daphne? I want to think about what I can do for that family. I'll give her my own room if I have to, but she's goin' to the country!"

Daphne came in soon, and looked quickly at Drusilla's flushed, excited face.

"Did you have a nice time, Miss Doane? Isn't it a wonderful work?"

"Yes, I had a lovely time, and I learnt a lot. Thank you so much for your tea, Mis' Harris. I'm real glad I come."

And before the chagrined hostess could find words in which to try to

rectify her mistake, Drusilla was in the motor.

Daphne looked at the angry old lady curiously.

"Weren't you interested, Miss Doane? Aren't you going to help the Settlement? They need money so badly for their summer home--"

"Now, Daphne, don't talk to me about the summer home! You know we got a big lot of things and people that always is asking me for money. I git a heap of letters every morning from preachers, and charity workers and beggars and poor people, and people who are trying to make a fool of me, and git my money. I guess there ain't a person in New York or an institution that's got a want, but they feel that it won't do no harm for to try me."

"Why, I didn't know you were bothered. Why don't you have them all sent to Father?"

"Humph--mighty little attention they'd git. No, I go over 'em all myself, with Dr. Eaton. You didn't know he was my private advisor, did you? He's a fine young man and he's got a head on his shoulders; and him and me go over all the letters and them that he thinks that is honest, he sees, and then he tells me what he thinks we had better do. He's got sense and don't let me git foolish, because sometimes the letters or the cases is so pitiful that I can't help cryin', and generally them's the ones he finds is no good. I been visitin' institutions with him, orphan asylums, and rescue homes. We got a lot of new babies and their mothers comin' to the house next week; we got them from the hospitals. He's workin' out a plan for me, and now I want to talk to him about them mothers and the country. We are going by his office, as I can't wait until he comes out to-night."

Daphne flushed.

"We might take him out with us."

"That's a good idea, Daphne. You go up to his office and tell him to come down an we'll take him home. I want to talk and he can stay to dinner."

"Can't I stay too--" shyly said Daphne, slipping her hand into Drusilla's.

Drusilla looked down at her and laughed.

"No, you can't. Your father wouldn't like it, and besides if you are there the doctor won't talk sense. He'll jest set and look at you."

Daphne laughed happily.

"I wish I thought he liked to look at me, but--"

"But what?"

"Well--he doesn't ever seem very anxious to see me. He's invited to lots of places where he knows I will be, and he doesn't come."

"You mean dances and things like that. Laws sakes, Daphne, ain't he got nothin' better than to go to dances and daddle around the room with a fool girl--"

"But I'm not a fool girl."

"No one would know it by your actions sometimes."

"I guess you are right, Miss Doane. I do act as if nothing were worth while but having a good time."

"Yes; I seen a lot of your friends and I often think that a young man's takin' a lot of risk by marryin' one of you unless he's got nothin' to do in the world but to go to parties and to make money to buy you clothes and motorcars. But never mind--here we are. You go upstairs and get the doctor. Tell him I want to talk to him particular."

Daphne was gone longer than was actually needed to go to an office and fetch a man to the motor car, but Drusilla only smiled when they came down.

"Did we keep you waiting? I am so sorry," murmured Daphne.

Drusilla laughed.

"Yes, you look worried to death; but I won't scold you. You don't git much chance to talk alone together, and I suppose you wanted to discuss the latest improvements in medicine. It's a big subject and would take time."

"Oh, no, we didn't talk at all--the doctor--was busy--"

The doctor laughed.

"What is it you want to see me about, Miss Doane?"

"I want to talk to you about mothers and their babies. I'll tell you all about it after dinner. Daphne's goin' home and you and me and John'll set down and talk it all over. John ain't no good; he ain't what you call sensible, but he's comfortable. And I got some new things on my mind.

"Yes," broke in Daphne. "Miss Doane has been visiting our Settlement."

The doctor smiled.

"What do you think of it?"

Before Drusilla could reply, Daphne said: "What do you think Dr. Eaton calls them, Miss Doane? It's dreadful. He calls them the 'decayed gentle ladies' refuge.'"

The doctor flushed.

"Daphne--"

"Do you?" queried Drusilla, interestedly. "Why?"

"Well--" the doctor said rather apologetically, "perhaps I shouldn't; but most of the settlements that I know are filled with workers who are charming women, too good to be stenographers or clerks or housekeepers. They come to the settlements, where they receive a good salary and keep their social position, which they feel they could not do if they worked. You see it's rather a fad to be a social settlement worker, and most of the women couldn't make their living to save their soul at work that really took trained brains or executive ability."

"Do tell!" said Drusilla. "I kind of thought something like that when I saw Mrs. Harris, but she seemed to be real pert."

"Oh, I am only generalizing. Some of them, the heads especially, are competent women, but the great average--" and he spread his hands out expressively.

"Well, anyway, Dr. Eaton--you remember that big blue pencil that we use to draw across the names that ain't no good?--I got a new name to-day to add to that list--settlements--and I want to git home and sharpen the pencil."

CHAPTER XIII

Drusilla had one neighbor whom, to use her own words, she "couldn't abide." Miss Sarah Lee lived across the road from her, in a small house left her by her father. This old man had also left her money enough to live in a modest way, and an unkind Providence had left her high and dry on the matrimonial shores, and she was embittered. She had been born and reared in Brookvale and had seen the other girls married and settled in their homes, with their children growing up around them. She had tried for years to get a husband, but finally, at the age of thirty-eight, had given up the fight; and instead of sharing in the happiness of her lifelong neighbors, she had drifted into being the neighborhood gossip, picking flaws in everything and searching with microscopic eye to find the failures in the lives of those around her, trying to find satisfaction in her unmarried state by seeing only the darker side of the matrimonial adventures around her. If a man came home late after dining well but not wisely with

his companions, be sure Sarah Lee heard of it. She would take her sewing and go to some neighbor and say in her softly purring voice, "Isn't it too bad that Mr. Smith neglects his wife so dreadfully, and it is shocking the way he drinks. Now the other night, etc., etc.," until her garrulous tongue would make a great crime of perhaps only a small indiscretion. Drusilla had been a joy to her, as she was new in the neighborhood, and she regaled her with all the gossip, much to Drusilla's disgust and discomfiture; but she was too kindly to be rude to the bitter-tongued woman, who was the only one of her neighbors who "ran in" or who brought their sewing and sat down for a "real visit."

One morning Drusilla was sitting in the sun parlor, looking at a great box of baby clothing that had been sent her from the city, when Miss Lee came in. She had her tatting with her and Drusilla saw that she was in for a visitation. She tried to interest her guest in the wonders of the baby frocks, but Miss Lee only shook her head and would not notice them.

"I don't care for children nor their clothing, Miss Doane, and I can never see how you care to burden yourself with all those waifs at your time of life. Now I, if I had your money, would enjoy myself."

"But I am enjoying myself," said Drusilla. "Why I take more comfort in them babies than I've ever had in all my seventy years."

"But they are such a care, such a bother."

"Bother, my aunt!" said Drusilla emphatically. "They ain't no bother. They give me something to think about. Now, look at these clothes. I been all mornin' lookin' at 'em and sortin' 'em out. Look at that petticoat. See how soft and warm it is. I wish I'd made it myself. I can sit here and imagine how some mother'd feel makin' a petticoat like that fer her baby. I'm goin' to buy a lot of cloth and git some patterns and let the mothers make 'em themselves. When it's a little warmer they can set under the trees and sew while the babies is playin' around them."

"But the mothers you have here--will--do you think that class--those kind of mothers will care to sew?"

Drusilla flushed and an angry gleam came into her kindly eyes.

"Sew? Why shouldn't they sew, and what do you mean by that class? All the mothers I got here seem jest like any other mothers."

"We must admit," went on the refined, querulous voice, "that they are not the usual mothers--with husbands--"

Drusilla's eyes distinctly darkened, and the flush deepened.

"Never mind about their husbands. We don't need 'em to sew--and a mother's a mother, and she likes to make things fer her baby."

Miss Lee noted the flush and changed the subject.

"I hear you are going to take some Italians and their children here for the summer."

Drusilla's eyes lighted up, and the angry gleam fled instantly.

"Now, how did you hear that?"

"It's all over the neighborhood. And--"

"Is it? Then I suppose I might as well let the neighbors git it direct. Yes, I been visitin' places where I've traipsed up and down stairs till I'm most knee sprung, but I've learnt a lot of things, and sense I've seen how some of 'em live, I couldn't sleep nights unless I done somethin' fer 'em; and givin' a mother and her babies two weeks in the country is the least I kin do. Why, I look at all this grass, jest made fer babies to roll on, and I see the trees that ain't doin' what a tree should do unless it has some one under it, and I lay awake nights to plan things; and Dr. Eaton don't git no time to see his patients, I keep him so busy. Him and me's been goin' over the house and there's twelve spare bedrooms goin' to waste besides the settin'-rooms that's jined to 'em. And we was talkin' about the big armor room, that place with the tin men and horses. Now, I don't care much fer tin men, although John moons over 'em a lot, but there's a lot of people who like to look at 'em, and don't git a chance' cause they're shut up here doin' no good to no one. Dr. Eaton says that the Metropolitan Museum in the city'd be glad to have 'em as a loan, and then everybody who likes such things could go and see 'em, and I can make the room into a big playroom or day nursery, as folks call it."

Miss Lee looked up, horrified.

"Do you mean to say that you are goin' to spoil this beautiful house and these beautiful grounds?"

"Spoil 'em? How'll it spoil 'em? They're goin' to waste as it is."

"Why, having that class of women in your house, and the children on the lawns, will certainly take away from their artistic beauty."

"Will it? Then it'll have to be not so artistic and more useful. Nothin' ain't beauty unless it's doin' something fer somebody, and God didn't intend no sixty acres of His land to be lyin' here jest fer me and a lot of rich people to admire, when women and children are pantin' fer air in hot tenements. And as fer the house, land knows it's big enough, and I feel like a lone pea in a tin can shakin' around loose in it, and I won't never need to see no one unless I want to. But I want to see 'em, I want to see life around me, and life that's bein' made a little happier because of Drusilla Doane. What do you suppose God give me all this big place fer, and

all the money, if it wasn't to use for His people?"

"What shockin' ideas you have, Miss Doane, to bring God into the subject! You are most sacrilegious, dear Miss Doane."

"Yes, I guess I am; most people seem to be afraid to mention Him."

"But the neighbors are feeling very indignant that you are turning the show place of the country into an orphan asylum and a mother's home."

Drusilla looked up quickly, as word had come to her of her neighbors' disapproval.

"I don't see that it's none of their concern," she said.

"But, you see, it lowers the value of their property."

"Let 'em move away."

"Oh, but they can't."

"Well, let 'em stay."

"But it's very annoying to see a lot of dirty children."

"They won't be dirty children, and the neighbors don't need to look over the hedge if they don't want to. It's high enough."

"I am just telling you what they say, Miss Doane. There was a meeting the other day of the people of Brookvale, and they decided to appoint a committee to wait upon you and express their disapproval of your actions, and request you to change your plans in some way."

Drusilla looked over her glasses.

"You don't tell me!" she ejaculated. "When be they comin'?"

"Mr. Carrington, the chairman of the Committee, is coming to see you to-night, I am told."

"Who's he?"

"He lives in the big gray house near the river, and he feels very strongly on the subject."

Drusilla said with asperity: "Well, he'll feel stronger when he leaves."

Miss Lee felt that she had gone far enough on that subject, so she changed it.

"Poor Mrs. Carrington! They feel very bad about children since they

lost their little boy about a year ago."

"How did they lose him?"

"He died, and they have never recovered from the shock."

"If they lost their child, I should think they'd want to see other children happy, then. They must be queer people."

"It has changed them a great deal, as sorrow often does."

"It hasn't changed them the right way, as true sorrow does. What've they done?"

"Mrs. Carrington--she was Elsie Young before she married Robert Carrington--is a very beautiful woman, and she was wrapped up in her boy. But since his death she has given herself wholly to society, and they say--now of course I don't know how true it is, but they say--that she and her husband have grown apart since the child is gone. He kept them together, and now--well, she simply lives for amusement. And--now, of course I don't say it is true--but I do know that she is going to Europe in the summer and they say--that is the ladies who know her well--that it means a separation. She is going to get a divorce in Paris."

Drusilla put down the dress in her hand.

"You don't tell me! Just because she lost her baby! Why don't she have more? Lots of people have lost babies, but it ain't cause for divorce. It'd ought to bring 'em closer together."

"Yes," sighed Miss Lee; "but it hasn't in this case. They've just grown apart. They are never together. She goes her way and he goes his, and their paths never seem to meet. It is very sad, because she was such an exceedingly fine girl. So many marriages end unhappily."

Drusilla sniffed.

"I guess if they was poor people and had to work or if she had to git the dinner for her man and wonder if he liked chicken with dumplings better'n with saleratus biscuit, she wouldn't find time to want to go to Paris. The trouble with the rich women around here is that they are thinkin' too much of how to pass the time, instead of doin' somethin' for their men."

"But what can they do? They all have servants to do the work for them. You can't expect women like Mrs. Carrington to cook." And Miss Lee plainly showed what she thought of a woman who cooked.

"No, I suppose they can't cook; but a man's a man, and he likes to feel that his woman is thinkin' about him and what he'll eat, and not leave it all to a servant. A man's like a baby: he wants a lot of attention, especially about his vittles. Now I know John don't like

some things and he does like others, and I see he gits 'em; and I know he likes to smoke just as soon as he's done eatin', and I see that his pipe and tobacco is put where he can reach it when he's havin' his coffee. It ain't much, but it tells him I'm thinkin' about his comfort, and men like their comfort in their own way."

Miss Lee was quiet a few moments.

"You--you are speaking of--of--this old gentleman who is living here?"

Drusilla looked up suddenly.

"John ain't so old. He's only two years older'n me, and I don't call myself old yet--unless it's to git me out of doin' somethin' that I don't like to do, like makin' calls."

"Is--is Mr. Briery a relation of yours?"

"No, John ain't no relation; he's just a friend."

"Is he--is he making you a long visit?"

"I hope so. He's goin' to live here always with me if I can make him."

Again Miss Lee tatted industriously. Then she looked up with what she tried to make a most friendly smile.

"Now you know, Miss Doane, I never gossip, but I am a friend of yours and I think you ought to be told. The neighbors think it queer that you have this man live here, who is no relative of yours."

"How's it queer?"

"Well, it's unconventional, to say the least."

"What do you mean by unconventional?"

"I don't know how I can say it so that you will understand. Not quite proper, you know."

Drusilla sat back in her chair. A bright spot appeared on her faded cheek and there was an ominous light in her eyes.

"So my neighbors think I'm improper! Well, that's news and I'm glad to hear it. I've always wanted to do something unconventional, as you call it, but I ain't never had no chance. I always had to do what was expected of me. I had to live a life just about as broad as a needle, just because I had to make my livin' and couldn't afford to do nothin' that'd be different from what other folks done. But now I got a chance, and I'm glad I ain't too old yet to shock my neighbors. I'd keep John now if I had to tie him in his chair."

Miss Lee saw the light in the eyes, and hastened to say:

"Now, please, dear Miss Doane, don't think that I am blaming you. I understand perfectly--_perfectly_. I just feel that you ought to know what is being said."

"You're real kind, Miss Lee. People won't miss what's bein' said about 'em if you don't git paralyzed in your tongue."

Miss Lee flushed and gathered her threads together.

"Well, my intentions are always of the best, I assure you. I must be going. I see my maid talking to one of your gardeners. It must be stopped."

"Yes, I'd stop it if I was you. She might be enjoyin' herself. Good-by. And when you stop at your next place, tell 'em that I'm waitin' for that Committee, and that I'm enjoyin' John Brierly's visit, and that he's goin' to live here, and so's my babies, and that they don't need to know what's goin' on in my grounds if they don't stretch their necks to see over the walls when they ride by. Good-by."

Drusilla watched the woman as she went down the road and as she disappeared she heaved a sigh.

"Well, the Lord sendeth and the Lord taketh away. Blessed--I guess I'll go see John."

She went up to the small library where she knew she would find him poring over a book.

John looked up as she entered the room, and Drusilla sat down in a chair and looked into the fire, as if seeing pictures there. John went on with his reading, but finally, seeing Drusilla looking at him intently, he spoke.

"What is it, Drusilla?"

Drusilla said softly: "John, do you remember when we used to walk down Willow Lane in the moonlight, and one night some of the neighbors saw your arm around me and they went to mother and said we was carryin' on and it ought to be put a stop to? Well, the neighbors say we are carryin' on again."

John closed the book in his hand.

"What do you mean, Drusilla?"

"The neighbors say we are carryin' on. They think that because you ain't a relation that's it's unconventional, them's her words, unconventional that you stay here."

A pained look came into kindly John's eyes.

"Why, Drusilla, I hadn't thought of that. Perhaps I'd better go."

Drusilla reached over and patted his hand.

"Just you set right still, John Brierly, and don't get excited. I ain't felt so young sence mother scolded me for walkin' out with you." She laughed a little happy laugh. "Why, it takes me back fifty years!"

"Oh, Drusilla," murmured John. "If it makes you talked about--"

"Makes me talked about! Why, who'd 'a' thought when Mis' Fisher come to mother when we was young and said that our carryin's on was disgraceful, that in fifty years another Mis' Fisher-kind would say the same thing. Oh, John, why don't you laugh?"

"I don't see anything to laugh about, Drusilla."

"You never had a sense of humor, John; but you was born without it. But, I tell you, it makes me young again. Why, it makes a woman old to feel she can do just as she pleases and not git talked about; and I feel I ain't got one foot in the grave to know that I can still be carryin' on--Oh, I guess, I'll go and put on my new dress that's just come home. I ain't seventy--I'm still a girl!"

And, chuckling to herself, she went out of the room, followed by John's wondering eyes. He sat quietly a moment, then went back to his book, feeling that woman's reasoning was far beyond his ken.

That night, as she and John were sitting down to their seven o'clock dinner, a frightened nurse came running in.

"Oh, Miss Doane," she said, "one of the babies is very sick. He don't seem able to breathe."

Drusilla put down her napkin and started immediately for the nursery, where she found one of the younger babies struggling for its breath, evidently in the earlier stages of pneumonia. She looked at it a moment, then said:

"Now you git one of the babies' bathtubs filled with hot water and I'll be back in a minute. Have some one telephone for Dr. Eaton."

She hurried to her rooms and put on a big white apron, then to the linen closet and got a piece of white flannel, and was just starting for the nursery again, when a card was brought her. She read on it: _James Carrington_.

"He's part of the Committee," she said; and as she passed through the hall she went up to him.

"You're Mr. Carrington," she began abruptly.

"I'm real glad to see you. I know what you come for, but I ain't got time to talk now. You come with me and we'll talk afterwards."

And before the chairman of the Committee could say a word he was hurried upstairs and into a small room, where a couple of frightened nurses were looking at a baby whose flushed face and labored breathing showed that he was very ill. Drusilla went to the small bathtub that was placed on the floor.

"Come here, Mr. Carrington," she said; "you're stronger than I am. Lift this up on them two chairs. So--that's right. Now put this thermometer in the water and see if it's 100 degrees. I can't see to read it. Is it right? Now--we'll take the baby--take off your coat and hat--yes, you'd better take off that coat too"--seeing that the man was in evening dress--"and turn up your sleeves--you'll git your cuffs wet. Now take off the baby's clothes, Mary. So--poor little thing!--take 'em all off, shirt and all, and we'll put him in this piece of flannel. Now you hold him like this, Mr. Carrington. Hold him in the hot water. There--jest so's his face is out--don't let him slip! So--now he's breathin' better already. Don't let the water git cold, Mary. Put a little more hot water in--there--that's right. Yes, he's gittin' red, Mr. Carrington, but he wants to git red. See, he's breathin' better. Does your arm ache? Hold him a little longer; I'm goin' to git some goose grease that I brought along with me from the home. I'll be back in a minute. Don't let the water git cool."

She returned in a few moments with a bottle in her hand, and handed it to one of the nurses.

"Warm it, put it in hot water till it runs. Now--"

Just then the door opened and a woman stood in the doorway, an angry look on her pretty, petulant face. She was covered with a big white evening wrap, and was most impatient. She looked at the scene before her without comprehending it, and her voice said angrily:

"Robert, we will be late for the opera! What do you mean by--"

Drusilla looked from the baby to the woman in the doorway.

"Come right in, Mis' Carrington. I'm glad you come. Take off your coat. Yes, we need you. Lay it over there on the bed."

And before the astonished woman knew what she was doing her wrap was laid upon a small white bed and she was standing in her elaborate evening gown looking down at a very red baby being held in a hot bath by the hands of her husband.

"Now, Mis' Carrington, lay that other piece of flannel on the bed, and we'll put the baby in it. I think he's boiled most of his cold out. So--that's right, roll him out--and we'll rub him with the grease. You do it, Mis' Carrington; your hands is younger and not so stiff as mine. Put lots on his chest and around his throat. And turn

him over on his back, Mr. Carrington. Put a lot on his back. So-- that's right. Rub it in well. And now we'll put him in the bed. There, poor little mite, he breathes better now, don't he?" They stood around the bed, looking down at the child, whose regular breathing showed that he had stopped fighting for his breath and the battle was won. Soon his eyes, which had been staring so pitifully closed, and with a little sigh the baby slept.

Drusilla turned to say something, to speak a few words of thanks for their help; but she stopped at the sight of the two people standing on opposite sides of the little bed. The man with his coat off, his white waistcoat and shirt gleaming in the light, the woman opposite him clothed in her decolette' gown, with jewels glistening in her hair and on her neck. But she did not notice the dress, when she saw the light in the woman's eyes as they rested on the man. They looked into each other's faces for a full moment; then the woman reached over her hand, and in a low, broken voice said, "Robert, is it too late? Shall we try again?" The man's quivering lips could say nothing, but the hand that clasped the one that came to him so timidly was answer enough.

The doctor entered at that moment and the baby was turned over to him, while Drusilla's guests put on their wraps and followed her downstairs. At the door of her sitting-room Drusilla turned to them.

"Won't you come in? You wished to see me about--"

Mr. Carrington said hastily:

"No; we will let the matter wait. We are on our way to the opera--"

"No, Miss Doane," the wife interrupted; "we were on our way to the opera, but now--we're going home, Robert." Turning to the man beside her she repeated: "We're going home, Robert. Do you understand, we're going home!"

Drusilla stood in the hall until the motor started.

"The Bible says a lot of things that's true," she murmured to herself, "and one of 'em is, 'A little child shall lead 'em.'"

CHAPTER XIV

The next morning Drusilla was at breakfast when she heard the chug-chug of a motor. Mrs. Carrington's card was brought in; but before she could say to William that she would see her visitor, the happy laughing face of Mrs. Carrington looked in at the door.

"May I come in? I am sure you will see me."

Drusilla rose with a smile on her sweet old face, and extended her hand.

"Yes, do. You're just in time to have a cup of good coffee with me."

"Am I so early? I motored down with Robert this morning and felt that I must stop and see you on the way home."

"No, you're not early at all; but I'm gettin' lazy in my old age. I git up early in the mornin' and have some coffee and then go and see all my babies. I like to see 'em git their bath, and then I help dress 'em. Then I come back and have my real breakfast. Now, you set right there, so's the sun'll shine on you, and William'll git another cup and plate."

"But I have had my breakfast."

"Pshaw, one can always drink coffee in the mornin'. And you've been clear down town."

Mrs. Carrington settled herself comfortably in her chair, threw back her coat, and smiled across at Drusilla.

"Yes, I've taken Robert down town the first time for more than a year. Oh, it seemed just like old times to take him to his office again."

Drusilla looked at her smilingly.

"Well, it seems to have made you pert-lookin' this mornin'. Your face is a-shinin'. Do you take one lump or two? Cream? Is that the right color? I'm particular about the color of my coffee."

"Yes, that's just right. It smells delicious," said Mrs. Carrington, taking the cup. "No, I won't have anything to eat. Well--I don't know whether I can resist those hot rolls. Just a half of one, then. Is that honey? I ought not to eat sweets--I know my fate if I do; but I can't resist hot rolls and honey."

She was quiet for a few moments. Then she looked up at Drusilla and said, half hesitatingly, "I presume you are wondering why I have come to make this early morning visit, Miss Doane?"

"No; I ain't wonderin' at all. I'm just glad you come."

"Well," and Mrs. Carrington laughed happily, "I'm so happy I just had to talk to some one. You know I have not been to see you before, because I expected to go to France next month for--for a--for rather an extended trip. And I thought there was no use in calling when I was going away so soon."

"Yes; I heard you was goin' away," Drusilla said.

Mrs. Carrington looked up quickly.

"Oh, did you? I didn't know that people knew it. Who told you?"

"The circulatin' family story-paper," laughed Drusilla, "Miss Lee."

Mrs. Carrington frowned for a moment; then she laughed.

"Oh, well, if Sarah knows it, it is no secret in Brookvale. But I am not going away, so her story will have to be revised. What else did she say, Miss Doane?"

"Well--I jest can't remember all she said--but--you said jest now you was happy. Miss Lee'll lose all interest in you now. There's nothin' so uninteresting to old maids as their married friends when they're happy."

"I might just as well tell you myself, and it's all past now and I can talk without breaking my heart. Did Sarah tell you that we lost our little boy about a year ago?"

"Yes; she told me, and I'm sorry for you. It must be a sad thing to lose a baby."

"It nearly killed me, and--and--I began to think about myself too much--I can see that now. I began to feel that Robert did not understand me, that he did not miss our boy nor care as much as I did --that he was hard and occupied himself too much with business and neglected me--and--and--"

"I understand," said Drusilla. "You didn't know that to a man work is the whole dinner, and love the pie that he has to finish it off and make the dinner perfect for him. Perhaps you didn't understand him no more than he did you?"

"Perhaps that's so, but he didn't seem to share my trouble--"

"Now, my dear," said Drusilla, reaching over and softly touching the pretty hand that was lying on the arm of the chair, "it ain't so much the troubles and sorrows they share, but the bridge parties and dances that they don't share that makes most of the troubles between husbands and wives."

"Yes; perhaps that's so. I did get to caring too much for dancing and society, and went out too much without Robert. I was bored--"

"That's the kind of tired feelin' women git who ain't got nothin' to do."

"Oh, but I have had a great deal to do. I belong to a great many clubs and take an active interest in charities, and go to so many committee meetings--they can't say that I have had nothing to do."

"But that ain't the right kind of doin'. Let people like Sarah Lee sew shirts for the heathen and go to the clubs; and as for charity, I seen a lot of charity done by women who go to church and then turn their hired girls out of doors if they git in trouble. That ain't what you want, women with husbands and babies--"

"But I have no baby--"

"But you got a husband. _Have_ babies, just swathes of 'em. You can afford 'em. It's women like you that ought to have big families. Don't your husband like babies?"

"Yes, he adores them, but--"

"Of course he does! Ain't he a man? Men just love babies when they're their own. It feeds their vanity to show the world how they're improvin' the human race. Now look here, Mis' Carrington, let an old woman talk. I'm old and I got wrinkles in my face but there ain't none in my heart, and the only way to keep 'em out of your heart is just to fill it to bustin' with love. Keep the skin tight; don't let it git slack. Why, you'll find you been goin' without love and it's like eatin' without an appetite. It's fillin' your life with somethin' that don't satisfy. Even if you feel you ain't got the best man in the world, make the best of the one you got, and, just 'cause he's yourn, you'll believe after a while you drew the only sweet orange in the grove and all the rest was sour. We all know that marriage is like the weather, mighty uncertain, but that ain't no reason for you to live in the cyclone cellar expecting the tornado to come. Set in the sun parlor and you'll git more enjoyment."

"But--"

"Now, let me talk. I like to talk, and when I git on the subject of love, though I ain't had much of it in my life except what I give myself, I know what it is, and I learnt that you mustn't pick it to pieces, any mor'n you'd pick that rose beside you to pieces and expect to have it keep its color and its smell. If you do that there ain't nothin' left in your hands but dead leaves. And, dear, don't look at it through a microscope; it'll make the little things look too big. Quarrel once in a while if you must, but don't criticize his kind of love. A person's love is his own kind, same as his nose--"

"Oh, we never quarrel. Robert is a perfect gentleman."

"Now that's too bad. Perhaps if he wasn't such a gentleman, instead of goin' to his club when he was mad, he'd turn in and you'd have a real old-fashioned row, just like common people, and when the storm was passed you'd have a chance to kiss and make up. Don't be too much of a lady, just be human and act like people, and things'll come out better. It's these awful polite people who grate on one, especially when you're mad!"

"I know I am not a good wife--I wish I were better--but my temperament--"

"Don't say it! I can't abide that word. It's only rich women who have temperament; in poor women it's just a nasty disposition. But, my dear, you are good enough. Don't try to be an angel--you'd bore your Robert to death. He'd rather see you with a pretty hat than a halo any day; and I know your kind, Mis' Carrington. You'll go into fits and have to be put to bed if your dress don't fit, but if your Robert lost his money, you'd give him your diamonds to sell so's to start him again--and I'm sure he knows it too."

Mrs. Carrington was quiet for a few moments. Then she looked up with the tears glistening on her pretty lashes.

"Oh, Miss Doane, you do make me feel that we are going to be happy. I am going to understand Robert better and he will understand me--"

"Don't worry about him understanding you. Don't think about your inside feelin's; just talk it all out with him. If he don't understand what you're thinkin', shake him and tell him he is stupid, and he'll laugh and you'll laugh--and then you'll kiss each other--and then, where are you?"

Mrs. Carrington again was quiet. Drusilla watched her for a moment; then she rose and came over to her chair and, bending down, put her arms around the young shoulders.

"Dear, jest do this--so fill your heart with sweetness that there won't be room for the memory of any wrong."

Mrs. Carrington reached up her hands and drew the kindly old face to hers and kissed the lips; and the tears that had been in her eyes rolled unheeded down her cheeks.

"Oh, Miss Doane, you are so good! I love you. We are going to begin all over again."

"That's right, dear. Go to lookin' for the lost heart's desire and if you look in the right place you'll find it."

As Drusilla was standing by the chair James entered, and, seeing Mrs. Carrington, started to leave the room. Drusilla turned.

"What is it, James?"

"It's no moment now, Miss Doane, the matter can wait."

"Well, but what is it? Does some one want to see me?"

"Yes; the laundry man. I took the liberty of telling him that you might see him--"

"Is he in trouble, James?"

"Yes," hesitatingly; "and as I have known him for a great many years and know he is pretty straight and honest, I--as I said, ma'am--took the liberty of telling him you might see him, as you are so kind to so many that come here for help."

"Ssh--ssh--James; you mustn't talk about it. Tell him to come up."

Mrs. Carrington rose to go.

"No, don't go," begged Drusilla. "You know," looking around the room, "I'm just like a girl that's afraid of gettin' found out. I see a lot of people that I don't let Mr. Thornton know about. He tried to keep me from seein' any one who comes here in trouble, but I get around him. I see every one who comes. James has his orders from Mr. Thornton to keep 'em out, and he has his orders from me to let 'em in, and he's more afeared of me than he is of Mr. Thornton."

"But, my dear Miss Doane, I should think you would be worried to death."

"No, it keeps me alive. I got a chance to hear people's troubles and understand what they're fighting against, and I'm seein' life and gettin' a chance to help people in my own way."

"But don't they impose upon you? Aren't lots of the people dishonest?"

"Well, I don't do nothin' sudden. I hear 'em talk and then I git Dr. Eaton to find out if it's true; and he's a clever young man, Mis' Carrington--they're pretty sharp to git around him. We call it the Doane Eaton Associated Charities. But"--laughing--"I'm awful selfish in it. I like people, and I like to be in their lives, and if I done what Mr. Thornton wanted me to do, I'd set here and die of dry rot."

James entered then, followed by a little man who bowed awkwardly to Miss Doane.

"This is Mr. Henderson, Miss Doane," James said.

Drusilla looked at him critically.

"Set down, Mr. Henderson. James tells me that you are in trouble."

"Yes, Miss Doane. I hardly know which way to turn. Mr. Hawkins told me you might be good enough to help me."

"What is it you want? You are the laundry man, ain't you?"

"Yes; I have done the outside work for the place here for twelve years, and"--turning to Mrs. Carrington--"I think Mrs. Carrington will remember me. I work for her and worked for her mother before her."

"Certainly I know you, Mr. Henderson," said Mrs. Carrington. "I remember I used to coax you for a ride in your wagon when I was a little girl."

The man smiled.

"Yes, I've given all the children in Brookvale a ride some time or other."

"Now that we know who you are," said Drusilla, "jest tell me what the trouble is."

"It's this way, Miss Doane. The last year business has been bad and I have had to buy new machinery, and I put a mortgage on the place to pay for the machines, and then my wife was sick for most eight months and the doctor's bills and the nurses eat up all my ready money, and I find I'm in a corner and can't pay the interest on the mortgage, and can't get good help, because I can't pay the wages. I'm afraid I will lose my business."

"Is it a good business?"

"Yes. It's always been able to give me a good livin', nothin' more, but it's all I got, and I don't know nothin' else to do. If I lose it I'll have to go into some one else's laundry, and it's hard after fifteen years--" He looked down with a catch in his voice.

"How much will it take to put you on your feet?"

"If I could get eight hundred dollars it would pay up the debts that's pressin' me and would give me a start."

"Can't you borrow at the bank?"

"No, because I've no security. The place is mortgaged all it can stand."

"Well, now you give your name and address to James, and I'll talk it over with Dr. Eaton, and we'll see what can be done. You understand we ain't givin' you the money, even if we find out you're all right. We'll lend to you, and Dr. Eaton asks interest the same as at the bank, but we take your word for security. You understand, we're a lending on your reputation, and what you stand for in your community."

"I understand, ma'am, and I'm willin' to stand on my reputation in the neighborhood."

"Well," as he rose to go, "Dr. Eaton'll come and talk it over with you, and we'll see. How's your wife now?"

"She is much better."

"Is she in bed?"

"Yes; she only sets up a couple of hours a day."

"Pshaw, that's too bad! Wait till I see James."

She rang the bell and James appeared.

"James, fix a basket of things to eat and send it home with Mr. Henderson. Perhaps a change of cookin'll make her eat better. A sick person gits awful tired of the same kind of vittles."

When the man left with a new look of hope on his face Drusilla turned to Mrs. Carrington.

"Now, Mis' Carrington, them's the kind of people that need help. You ain't no idee how many men in this city have got little businesses that's jest makin' them a livin' but nothin' over for a rainy day, and when the day comes they've nothin' to fall back on. And if they could tide themselves over the bad times, whether it's sickness or bad business, they'd be all right. That's just like the truck gardener down on the Fulham Lane. Ain't you seen his place? The hail broke all his glass cases, and he couldn't buy new and he most lost his little place, and if he hadn't 'a' been helped he'd 'a' had to git out."

"Did you help him?"

Drusilla looked rather shamefaced.

"Now, don't you whisper it to a soul. I'm so feered that Mr. Thornton'll find it out that I'm scared to hear a door slam for fear he's heard somethin' and comin' to talk to me. I didn't do nothin' for him as he knows on, but Dr. Eaton went his security at the bank so's he could borrow, and he'll be able to pay back in a couple of years."

Mrs. Carrington laughed.

"Oh, you are a dear!" she exclaimed.

"No, that's jest what I can't make Dr. Eaton see either, that I'm selfish in it all. I like to talk to people, I like to know about 'em. I've always set outside the fence before and peeked into the ball game, now I kin set in the front row and sometimes catch a ball that comes my way. You know, Mis' Carrington, I set up nights wonderin' how I kin leave my million dollars so's it'll do some good and not be fooled away. I pester Dr. Eaton to death to find a way, and he thinks he's got some kind of a poor man's bank figgered out. He's brought up some men and we've talked ourselves hoarse trying to figger out a charity that ain't a charity. By the way, what is your husband?"

"He is a banker."

"Now, that's jest the thing. Bring him over some night and we'll git 'em all together and have a real talk about it all. Tell him what I'm tryin' to do. No--I'll send Dr. Eaton to talk with him. I like your husband, Mis' Carrington. A man that can hold a sick baby so tender in a pan of hot water has got heart; and what we want in this is heart as well as brains and money."

Mrs. Carrington rose to go.

"I'm glad I came to you this morning, and I'm glad you like my husband, because, Miss Doane--let me whisper it to you--I believe I do too!"

CHAPTER XV

Drusilla was called to the 'phone and a nervous, trembly-voiced Daphne spoke to her.

"May I come over, Miss Doane? I--I--want to get away from the house and talk to some one--May I come over?"

Drusilla answered quickly: "Come right along, and come to spend the day. I got to go to the home, and I'll take you with me."

Soon Daphne came up the driveway and stopped to look at two big baskets being put into the motor car, and before she could ring the bell Drusilla dressed for driving came to the door.

"Git right in, Daphne," Drusilla said, putting on her gloves. "Push that basket more to the front--there, that's right. Have you got that bundle, Joseph? Don't lose it out. Now go just as fast as you can, but don't git arrested." As she sat down by the side of Daphne she added: "I'm always in mortal fear of being arrested, 'cause I like to go fast. I don't care about the arrested part, but it'd git my name in the papers again and then your father'd make me one of his 'severity' visits, and I don't seem never to git used to them. When James tells me your father is waitin' for me it makes me feel jest like I used to when I done somethin' wrong and was called into the parlor, where I always got my scoldings, 'cause mother knew the kitchen wouldn't awe me. But"--and she chuckled--"I'm gittin' kind of used even to him, and I'm gittin' so independent there ain't no livin' with me. I even show it the way I walk. When I was ordered around by everybody, I used to sort of tiptoe around so's not to call attention to myself. Now I come down so hard on my heels I have to wear rubber ones so's not to jar my spine. But"--she looked keenly at the pale face beside her and the eyes that showed signs of recent tears--"what's the matter, dear? Have you been cryin'?"

"Oh, I'm in _such_ trouble, Miss Doane," Daphne said with a choke in her voice.

Drusilla patted her hand.

"It can't be great trouble, Daphne."

"Yes, it is, Miss Doane. No one has such trouble as I have, I'm sure."

"Hush, dear, hush! Wait a minute. Let me show you a letter I got last night from Barbara, and then you'll know what real trouble means."

She drew from her bag a folded piece of paper and handed it to Daphne.

"Read that," she said; and Daphne read a badly spelled, badly written scrawl, in the writing of an old woman unused to holding a pen:

DEAR DRUSILLA:

I wish you'd come and see us. Mis Abbott has took poison that she got out of the medcin closet, cause she's lost her money and can't pay her board no more and she says she'd ruther die than be charity, cause she's always looked down on charity, and bin so stuck up about her family. They got it out of her with a stumak pump and she won't die this time but she says she'll do it again cause she can't live and be charity. Won't you come and see her and perhaps you can do something with her, we can't.

BARBARA.

Daphne handed the note back to Drusilla, who put it carefully into her bag before she spoke.

"Now, do you see what real trouble is? Do you remember me tellin' you about Mis' Abbott, whose father was a general and whose husband was some sort of official down South? Well, they're all dead and her only daughter died when she was a little girl and she hadn't nothin' left but memories and just enough money to keep her in the home. It was in some railroad stock and now I guess it's gone too. She was awful proud, and I can see how she feels. She always looked down on me 'cause I was charity, but I don't hold it agin her. She's had her arms full of sorrow and now they're too old to carry more."

"Poor woman!" said Daphne softly. "What are you going to do?"

"I ain't got it all figgered out yet. I talked it over with John till late last night, and then afterward it come to me. I guess I can do somethin'. The main thing is to make her want to live, make her think some one wants her. You know, Daphne, that's the great sorrow of the old; to feel that they ain't needed no more; that every one

can git along just as well if not a little better without 'em than with 'em. When they see that, they want to die."

"Oh, I'm sorry I said anything about my troubles--they are so little! Yet they seemed so big last night--and this morning--this morning--"

"Well, what happened this mornin'? Tell me, dear; it'll make you feel better and then you'll see they ain't so very bad after all."

"This morning Mother talked to me, and Father was nasty to me at the breakfast table and--" and again the pretty eyes filled with tears.

"Who is it about this time?"

"There's no _this time;_ it's always the same. It's--it's--Dr. Eaton."

Drusilla laughed.

"I knowed it! I seen it a-comin' a long time. What you and Dr. Eaton been doin'?"

"We haven't been doing anything. Only I walked home with him from your house last night, and we walked a while and--and--Mother and Father talked to me, and--"

"Yes, your father's held some forth to me about Dr. Eaton, but I only laugh at him. I like that young man."

Daphne snuggled her hand into Drusilla's.

"That's the reason I can talk to you; you will understand--because--"

Drusilla laughed again.

"Because--because--you like him too." Daphne's pretty face colored.

"Well, why shouldn't you?" said Drusilla.

"Mother says that he's only a poor doctor, that he's not the kind that'll ever make money."

"Money--money! Why, he'll always make enough for you to live on, and more money'd only be used to buy amusements to keep you from thinkin'; but the way you and him could live together, you'd like to think. So what's the use of money?"

"But Mother says--"

"Now, Daphne, I don't want to say nothin' about your mother. She's been real neighborly to me so far as she knows how, but she's too society for me, and we ain't got one thing that we can talk to each

other about. She thinks more about the polish of a person's fingernails or the set of her dress than she does about the color of a soul or the heart that looks out from the eyes, but--I shouldn't say that--your mother is your mother and she means well by you, and you must respect her judgments."

Daphne looked up with a twinkle in her eyes.

"Her judgment in regard to Dr. Eaton, too?"

"Well," said Drusilla, "I wouldn't go so far as _that;_ but--what else did she say besides that you wouldn't have enough to eat?"

"Oh, of course she didn't say that, but she said that he could never afford to give me a motor car or--"

"Well, if you don't have but one car you'll have to ride around with him in his'n, and that won't be no hardship. Just think what a nice time you could have ridin' around these roads in that noisy, smelly little car of his, and waitin' at the gate when he went in to see the Smith baby. Why--why--I'd like to do it myself!"

"Yes, I'd like it too; but Mother is always saying that it's a pity that he is a general practitioner instead of a specialist. It's only the specialists that make money and get on."

"Pshaw, you tell her that Dr. Eaton is a general practitioner in his business, but a specialist in his love affairs, and that's all that you need worry about."

"Then, you don't think it would be hard to economize?"

"Daphne, you won't have to economize on love, and with lots of that you won't miss the other things. Now, Daphne, I suppose I shouldn't meddle in this, it ain't none of my business, but I like Dr. Eaton, and I more'n like you, and I don't want you to make a mistake. Dr. Eaton won't promise you a life of roses and leave you to pull out all the thorns. I know him. And I jest want you two young things to share the very best things in life when you're young, and when you grow old together you won't see the bald spot on his head gittin' bigger, and he won't see your gray hairs a-comin', 'cause you won't ever be lookin' above each other's eyes. You know, Daphne, I'm seventy years old and I've looked on lots of things with my old eyes, and it ain't always the rich that have found the most precious jewel; it's the poor couple who've got just enough to live on--and each other."

Daphne smiled up at Drusilla.

"Oh, Miss Doane, you make it seem so heavenly!"

"Yes, it is Heaven, and love is the bridge that you cross on, and when you git across you can't always be singin' the weddin'-march --but afterwards--well, you can hum a lullaby."

"Now we're comin' to the house"--as they turned into the drive--
"and I jest want to say this, dear--" She took Daphne's face in her two hands and looked into her eyes. "Life is a wonderful garden, dear, a garden where the air is filled with perfume, a garden filled with flowers, with heart's-ease and forget-me-nots, and if you wander down its moonlit pathway with your loved one's hand in yours, you're bound to find the enchanted palace where love's dream comes true--So dream, my dear, jest dream.

"Now, there's Miss Smith," as the motor stopped. "How do you do, Mis' Smith? How do you do, Barbara? You was lookin' for me? Yes, I come jest as soon as I could. How is Mis' Abbott? Take them baskets on the porch, and that bundle goes upstairs. Can I go up and see Mis' Abbott?"

"Yes, come right up. I told her you were coming, but she says she won't see you. But I think she will," said Mrs. Smith.

"Of course she will. I'm comin' right along. Daphne, you go out on the porch there with the ladies and open them baskets. I worked half the night and kept the cook up the other half to get the things ready. The names is on the things. You give 'em to the ladies, and jest stay and let 'em look at you. It'll be a treat as good as the things in the baskets."

She followed Barbara up the long stairs. At the door she turned.

"Don't come in, Barbara; I'll go in alone." And she went into the "best" room of the home, because Mrs. Abbott had been able to pay a little more than that paid by the other guests.

Drusilla found the little woman in bed, with her face turned to the wall. She did not move until Drusilla put her hand on her shoulder.

"I've come to see you, Mis' Abbott."

The woman looked up at Drusilla a moment, then put her faded old hands over her face.

"I don't want to see you, Drusilla, I don't want to see you."

"Pshaw, now," answered Drusilla, "yes, you do, Mis' Abbott. I come jest a purpose to see you."

"Oh, but I don't want to see you," wailed the feeble old voice. "I always called you 'charity' and now I'm charity myself. I wish I could die, I wish I could _die!_"

"No, you don't," said Drusilla softly. "You want to live and you're glad to see me."

"I ain't! I tell you, I ain't! I called you charity!"

"Yes, but I didn't mind, and if I hadn't been charity, Elias Doane wouldn't 'a' found me, and I wouldn't be here goin' to take you home with me."

"What!" said the old lady, looking up. "What'd you say, Drusilla?"

"I said I'm goin' to take you home with me."

"You are--you are--going to take me away from here--here where all the ladies'll laugh at me because I'm charity? But--but--Oh, I'll have to come back again even if you do take me, I'll have to come back again and be--Oh, I want to die--I'd rather _die!"_

Drusilla took the hands from the wrinkled face and held them in her own.

"Now let me set here on the edge of the bed, and you listen to me, Mis' Abbott. When I got Barbara's letter last night, I jest set for hours thinkin' it all over, and it all come to me of a sudden. Why, I need you so bad, Mis' Abbott, I wonder how I got along without you all this time. You know I got a lot of young people at my house, and no one with sense but myself to watch over them, and we need some one like yourself bad, and if you won't come I'll have to look around for some one else, and it'll put me to a lot of trouble."

The old lady looked up wonderingly.

"But what can I do, Drusilla?"

"Oh, there's lots of things you kin do, but one thing special. When I went into the nursery last night and saw Mary Allen settin' there alone by the window, I said to myself, 'Mary needs a mother. She don't ever remember havin' a mother, and then I remembered you lost your little girl most forty years ago, and if she'd 'a' growed up she might 'a' had a little girl like Mary, and I want you to come and be a mother to my Mary and a grandmother to her baby."

"Oh, is she grown up and married?"

"Never mind, she's only a little child, a lovin' little child with a baby--and a sorrow. But you'll come and see your Mary in her eyes, and she'll have a mother and you a daughter again, and you'll both find happiness in each other. She needs you, Mis' Abbott, and you need her--Say you'll come."

The old lady looked for a moment into Drusilla's eyes; then she broke into the hysterical sobbing of the old and helpless.

"I didn't think no one needed me--no one wanted me. I thought I jest cumbered up the earth. Drusilla, do you think she really needs me, that any one really needs me, that I don't have to be a burden the rest of my days? Oh, if I thought some one wanted me--Perhaps it's

my Mary come back to me--my Mary--my little girl--my little girl--"

Drusilla let her cry, patting her hand softly from time to time.
Then, when the storm had spent itself, she said:

"Yes, it's your Mary come back to you. Don't you remember that you said your Mary had brown eyes--"

"Yes,--yes--" and eager fingers were tugging at an old-fashioned locket hanging to a slender chain around her neck. "See--here she is --her eyes are brown and her hair all curled around her face, and her lips was just like a rose--and her face--oh, her pretty face--"

Drusilla studied the picture carefully.

"Yes, it's jest like this other Mary. Her hair is all in little curls around her face and her brown eyes jest like a child's, a wonderin' child's whose waitin' for her mother."

The old lady rose from the bed.

"Can I go now, Drusilla? Can I go _now?_" _

"Are you well enough? Can you stand the trip?"

Mrs. Abbott laughed.

"Only sorrow makes one feeble, sorrow and loneliness; but hope makes one strong, and I got hope again--I want to live, Drusilla--I want to _live!_" _

CHAPTER XVI

"John," Drusilla's hand carefully opened the door and Drusilla's head peered warily into the opening, "Are you alone? Has he gone?" She looked around the room. "Yes, he's gone. I'll come in." She closed the door behind her and came to her favorite seat before the fire.

"John, I didn't adopt the Reverend Algernon Thompson, did I?"

"Why, no, Drusilla; I don't think you adopted him. Why?"

"Well," breathing a sigh of relief, "I'm glad to hear you say it. I didn't know but that night when I was so relieved and so scared about puttin' him in jail, that I hadn't said more'n I meant. I know I asked him to come and stop here whenever he come to New York, but I didn't mean to _live_ here. I don't see how his church gits along without him so much."

"What's the matter with the Reverend Algernon, Drusilla? I like him. His knowledge of chivalry is--"

"Yes, I know you two pore over them old books and study them tin men, and he seems to be a great comfort to you. But he ain't no comfort to me, John. I guess I'm gittin' old and finicky. I jest can't put my finger on the spot that riles me, but that man riles me. He's always so good and so sort of angelic, and I don't like people who are too good. A man without a few failin's is like underclothes without trimmin', useful but uninterestin', and--and--then, John, he's one of them fussy little men who's always puffin' around and never doin' nothin' worth while, just like a little engine in a switchyard that snorts and puffs and makes a lot of noise pullin' a dump-wagon. And--then, sometimes, I wonder about his religion, he's so narrer, he's got lots of religion but not so much Christianity. He kind of thinks that Heaven's goin' to be made up of him and a few Presbyterians, mainly from his congregation. He kind of seems to think that Heaven's going to be a special place for him where he'll strut around the only rooster and his flock'll foller after singin' praises to him instead of to the Almighty."

"Why, Drusilla, I thought you said when he was so interested in those children of his parish that he ought to be a very good man."

"So he ought to be a good man, and a man's legs ought to reach from his body to the ground but sometimes he has one short leg that don't quite tech. Now the Reverend wasn't interested so much in takin' care of them children as he was in showin' how he could raise money. I remember when I was in the Ladies' Aid of the Presbyterian Church and we made clothes for the heathen, we wasn't so much interested in clothing the heathen as we was that we had a bigger box at the end of the year than the Baptists had. Just as when some of these societies git to raisin' money for the poor or for some new buildin' or something, and they divide their 'raisers' up in bands, the people who ask you for subscriptions fergit what it is for in their hurry to show that they raised more'n some other band."

"I'm afraid, Drusilla, that Mr. Thompson has got on to your nerves."

"I ain't got no nerves, John. I leave that for women with husbands to work 'em off on. I don't know what it is with this preacher. He's a good man accordin' to his lights, but he makes me fidgety a rumblin' away about his work and his creeds and things like a volcano that don't never blow up. I wish he'd let off a little steam once in a while, or spit out a few rocks and stones jest to liven up things a bit."

"I'll admit he is a little bit self-centered."

"What's that? Oh, you mean he's got ingrowin' feelings. Yes, everythin' that he has to do with is big. Why, John, he's the kind of a man that'd entertain his wife by talkin' about his corns, and think

it interestin' because they was his'n."

John laughed.

"Perhaps if he was married and had a wife to tell him a few things--"

"John--John!" Drusilla sat up very suddenly in her chair. "Why didn't I think of her before?"

"Think of whom, Drusilla? I thought we were talking about the Reverend Algernon, and he's a _he._"

"Sarah Lee."

"Sarah Lee? I don't follow you, Drusilla."

"John, some men are ugly, most men are conceited, and all men are thick-headed, and you're a _man_. Think of what a wife she'd make him!"

"Why, Drusilla!" John looked a little dazed. "I thought--I thought you didn't care especially for Sarah Lee. I heard you, if I remember rightly--"

"Never mind, John. Your memory's too long to be convenient. Never mind what I said--I take it all back. She's jest the wife for him. They jest fit together. They ain't neither one of 'em got a sense of humor. She's the kind of a woman who'd tell him a funny story when he's shavin', and he's the kind of a man that'd ask her where she put his clean shirt when she was doin' up her back hair with her mouth full of pins. It'd be too bad to spile two good families with 'em."

"But, Drusilla, they're neither one of them thinking about getting married. Perhaps they don't want to."

"Shows how little you know about human natur', John, especially woman human natur'. Sarah Lee'd jump at the chance. She'd been settin' in the station for a long time waitin' for the express to pick her up; now she'd be willin' to take a slow freight."

"Well, she might do worse. He's likely and healthy--"

"Humph--so's an onion. But he's a good man, John, and I trust Sarah to make him over into anything she wants. She's a managin' woman."

"But--but, Drusilla, I don't think he wants to get married, even if she does."

"Of course he don't. No man does; they have to be led up to it."

"Well, I don't know about this. He might not want Sarah. He looks to me like a man who knows his own mind."

"He ain't got a wide acquaintance if it's all he knows. But I mustn't be mean. 'Cause I couldn't live with him ain't no reason that a lot of women couldn't stand him. He's been a batch too long and always had his own way, and he's been a preacher where he could talk to people and they dassent talk back, but Sarah'd change all that, and make him real human before a year was past. I'm glad you thought of it, John."

John looked up, surprised.

"Me? Drusilla! It never entered my head."

"Didn't it? Well, you ought to 'a' thought of it before, and it'd all be done now. Here we've wasted all these months, and I've been pestered to death with 'em both. She's done more tattin' settin' in my sun parlor than'd trim all the petticoats in Brookvale. But, John, her heart is good and is kind of thawin' about the babies. I seen her a-givin' yards o' that stuff to Mary Allen the other day to trim her baby's dresses; and when little Isaac got most run over she got as white as a sheet and we both cried over him together, which kind of brought us closer. And if she marries Algernon, they'll have babies and she'll jest blossom right out."

"You seem to be planning rather far ahead, aren't you?"

"No one has to be a prophet to say a preacher'll have babies. That's ginerally about all they do have."

"It's your business, Drusilla; but I can't understand why you want these two very worthy people to marry--"

"Can't you see through a fence-post, John? If Sarah marries the Reverend Algernon, she'll have to move to Adams, and she'll keep him hoppin' around so fast that he won't git time to come visitin' me so often."

"Oh, you are killing two birds with one stone!"

"Say it any way you want to, but they was made for each other, and I want to see Sarah married with a growin' family on her hands and then she won't have so much time to think and talk about her neighbors. She does it jest because she ain't got nothin' else to do; but if she has to watch Johnny through the measles, and Lizzie through the mumps, and see that Willie's stockings is patched, she won't have time to tatt or tattle, and it'll make her a real woman, instead of jest an old maid. Is he comin' back tonight?"

"No; he has gone to his room."

"Well, I didn't know I'd ever be sorry not to see Algernon, but I'd like to begin on him tonight when it's fresh in my mind, and I could put spirit in my work. What you goin' to do with him to-morrow?"

"We are goin' to go over again those last books on chivalry that I bought--"

"Now, you leave them old books go, and when you git him alongside of one of them iron men, that must 'a' had a derrick to heave him on his horse, come down to earth and talk about women. Point out that that man must 'a' had a wife to buckle all his straps, or somethin' like that, and then tell him how all men ought to be married. Show how you're a shinin' example of how a man looks that ain't had a wife to see that he don't spill egg on his shirt bosom or make him change his underclothes Saturday night. Flatter him. Tell him he is a big, strong man--all little men like that--but tell him that no matter how strong a man is he ain't strong enough to put the studs in his own shirt--and so lead up to Sarah. You can do it, John, if you go about it right. Git him interested, and I'll take care of Sarah."

"But it's a great risk, Drusilla. They might be so happy that they'd always be grateful and both want to come and visit you."

Drusilla raised her hands and then dropped them in despair.

"The Lord forbid, John."

"Don't you want them to be happy, Drusilla? If you don't think they would be, you hadn't better meddle in it."

"Certainly, they'll be happy. Sarah's a good woman. Her milk of human kindness is a leetle bit curdled now and sets hard on her stomach, but marriage'll be the soda that'll clear it all up. And her husband won't have to put a tin mask on her face to keep from bein' jealous, and she won't need to fear his gettin' in temptation, 'cause she won't let him come to the city alone long enough to git real busy huntin' it up. Sarah's jest the wife for a parsonage. She's turnin' more and more to religion and preachers as she gits older, like a lot of women do when they find they're not excitin' enough to interest the other kind. Now, John, be careful what you say. A man is like a kitten--try to catch him and he'll run. Don't fling Sarah at his head --it'd be like flingin' a bone at a cat; jest chase him away instead of drawin' him to her. Now I'm goin' to telephone her and ask her to come over to-morrow, and I'll prepare the way. And you, John," and Drusilla rose and shook her finger at him, "now you be careful what you say, but say it."

The plan worked even better than Drusilla had hoped. Under Miss Lee's very evident admiration, the Reverend Algernon seemed to grow at least three inches in height, and his rather prosy compliments did not fall upon too critical nor blase' ears. Sarah blushed and fluttered and stammered as would any young girl with her first sweetheart. She even grew pretty; took to arranging her hair in a more becoming style and was particular about her dress. One morning she came over with a fluffy little gown that certainly took ten years from her age, and Drusilla looked at her in amazement. She confided to John: "I've heard that women had an Indian Summer but Sarah's

surely having her early spring. And, John, I always thought that courtin' was like cookin'--you had to learn by experience; but them two seem to take to it natural. It's makin' Sarah over, I tell you. Why, I even heard her say that she thought Bessie Grey was pretty, and she used to say about any girl that was so pretty that a blind man'd have to admit it, 'Yes, she's pretty, but it is the kind that'll fade early.' Why, she ain't shot a poison arrow at nobody's good luck sense they met."

"You seem to give them chance enough to see each other."

"Yes; I want them to find out each other's beauties. I set up nights tryin' to find errands to send 'em together down town in the motor. Take a man and a woman and put 'em close together, in a rich, soft motor car, with nice cushions to lean against and a chauffeur who can't hear 'em, and something is bound to happen if they're human beings. And I git her to serve tea under the trees and let him see what a nice housewife she'd make, and how she'd show off to his women in the church. Do you notice she don't talk so much? jest sets quiet and smiles, which is wise of her, as she looks best that way. Why, she used to be like an electric fan buzzing away all day and fannin' up nothin' but hot air. John, I feel I'm doin' some good in the world. If I keep on, it'll be a temptation to die just to read the epigraphs my friends'll write of me. But I ain't goin' to die fer a while; I'm goin' to set right down and go over them invitations we sent for the people who's comin' next week for my birthday. Dr. Eaton and me went over the house; it's all ready, and the children and the mothers'll move in on Monday."

Drusilla was silent for a few moments. Then she reached over and took John's hand in her own.

"John, Wednesday I am seventy-two years old. And it's more'n fifty years sense you and me went walkin' down the lane together first. And you're here now beside me. You can always find some one to share your money and your joys, but you can't ask everybody to share your sorrows and your troubles; and it makes me feel a sort of peace and quiet to know that you'll always be near me, and if things that I've planned don't come out right, that I kin come to you and talk it over and you'll understand. Lots of people when they hear what I'm goin' to do will say that I'm an old fool, that I'm impractical, and lots of things that'd maybe hurt, if I didn't have some one to go to and talk it over with who I know won't be critical but will see down beneath it all what I'm tryin' to do, and who'll understand. That's what love is, John, for people who grow old--just a great, great friendship, and--an _understandin'._"

"Come right on to the stoop, Dr. Eaton, and let's set down and cool off. I'm real het up."

Drusilla settled down in a big porch rocker and fanned herself with the paper in her hand.

"Now let's talk, and you tell me all about it. What did you say that last club was we was to? You been a-takin' me to so many places lately that I fergit their names."

"That was the big Socialists Club."

"Socialists--yes, that's what you called it. Ain't them got something to do with dynamite bombs and blowin' up people and things?"

Dr. Eaton laughed.

"No; you are thinking of Nihilists or Anarchists. These people are very mild; they only have ideas how to run the old world in a new way, and they are especially interested in the question of labor and capital."

"Well, they've idees enough, if that's all they need. But it seems to me, Dr. Eaton, that these people are all going at it wrong-end-to. Instid of workin' with people in bunches, they want to take 'em man by man and git a little of the old-fashioned religion into each one singly. There's two commandments give us to live by. One is, we should love God; the other is to love our neighbor as ourself. Now, if each one got that second command planted deep in his heart, the hired man'd do his work as it ought to be done, and the man who hires him'd pay him right--so there wouldn't be no need of Socialists or Unions or dynamite bombs. No, you can't make people do the right thing by laws, and you can't put love in their hearts by meetings and committees and talk. Each man must git it for himself and then he'll do the square thing because he wants to, not 'cause he's forced to. You can make laws against thievin' and build prisons to put men in who steal, but if you don't change a man's heart, if he wants to be a thief he'll find some way o' doin' it--prisons or no prisons."

She was silent a few moments; then she chuckled softly to herself.

"I wanted to laugh when you introduced me as a woman who wanted to give away a million dollars. Why, I thought fer a minute I'd be run down, if one was to judge by their eyes. But they kind of caamed down when they learnt I wanted to find a way to leave it in my will so's it'd do the most good, instead of givin' it away right there in five-dollar bills. By the looks of a lot of 'em they could 'a' used it right then in gettin' a hair cut and a good meal of vittles."

"Yes; some of them do look rather lank and hungry; but there are some very clever men among them."

"They certainly talked a lot. Who was that young man who talked so

much and then got me into a corner. He was kind o' wild-eyed."

"That's Swinesky, a Russian Jew."

"A Roosian! I always heerd tell that them Roosians know what to do with other people's money--and a Jew too! Well--well--and I got away without spending nothin'. He told me a lot of ways to spend my money, but most of 'em sounded like--like--what is it you call it--"

"Hot air."

"That's jest the word--hot air. They all was perfectly willin' to tell me what to do with it, as it wasn't there'n, but what I want is to find a man with an idee that he'd think good enough to carry out if the money was his'n. We've talked with a lot of people about the best way to dispose of my money where it'd do the most good, and most of their plans wouldn't hold water. But it's good of you, Dr. Eaton, to take me round, and I git a little idee here and another there, and some day maybe I'll find the right one.

"I see the newspapers is takin' up now what I'm askin' everybody. 'What will she do with her Million Dollars?' They'll git a lot of answers, 'cause every one's got an idee what they'd do if they had that money.

"But let's not talk of it no more--my head buzzes. I dream of it at nights and see it all hangin' round the bedposts, and a lot of people takin' it that I don't want to, and me not bein' able to git up and chase 'em away. Tell me about that loan you asked me about last night, and I didn't have time to talk."

Dr. Eaton sat up, interested in a moment.

"Do you remember my telling you about the man who has the button factory in Yonkers?"

"He is the man who wants two thousand dollars, isn't he?" asked Drusilla.

"Yes," said Dr. Eaton. "And I have been to see him and I think it is a poor loan unless his business is looked into more closely. Now, Miss Doane, I have an idea. My friend, Frank Stillman, has just started into business as an efficiency engineer."

"What's that?" asked Drusilla, interested at once in anything new.

"He makes it his business to study firms that are going to the wall and locate their trouble and puts them on their feet again, if possible. I took him with me to Mr. Panoff, and I believe he could go there a while and find out what the difficulty is. It used to be a good business when Panoff bought it, but he seems to have lost his grip some way, and he can't see far enough ahead because he is so crowded by the daily troubles. An outsider will be able to see with a

better perspective."

"Are we goin' to let this Mr. Panoff have the money?"

"No; not at present. Here is my scheme. I want you to put Frank in there for a time and let him find out if there are any possibilities of getting the business back on its feet. If Frank succeeds, we will let Panoff have the money on his personal note, if he agrees to follow out the suggestions of Frank.

"I have another idea that I have been thinking about. There are a lot of small business ventures that are running to seed, where the owner is getting discouraged, and lacks the broad outlook that would keep him going, and needs some one who is a professional setter-up like Frank, to put him wise, and to readjust his business. I suggest that we hire Frank, for at least a part of his time--he won't be expensive, as he is just starting--to look into the affairs of the men who come to us for money. The owner must agree to allow Frank to readjust things for him, and then when his affairs are prospering again, he will pay a certain sum for Frank's services, taking the expense away from us. It is also a better guarantee for our loan, because Frank is a pretty level-headed business man and if there are any possibilities in the run down business, he will find them, and if there are not he will report to us. What do you think of it?"

"I think it is a good thing; but is there enough things like that to keep him busy?"

"Well, we need take only a part of his time; but I can think of half a dozen little manufacturers who would welcome the chance to find out what is wrong. That publishing house I was telling you about. The manager is impractical, is paying too much out in salaries, hasn't any method in his establishment, and has a dozen leaks that he can't find, but which could easily be located by a professional leak finder. There are a lot of men in business who are honest and willing to work, but who are in a rut and can't see the new things coming, and who could be put on their feet by an injection of a little outside ginger and a readjustment of their business on more modern methods. They are the ones who need help and who will be good for their loans; and that's one thing we are going to try to make sure of, because we aren't going to give any money away if we know it. It's going to be a real service too, Miss Doane. I don't think there is anything more pitiful than a man, who has been in business for himself, to have to give up and say he is a failure. It hurts to be compelled to go into some one's shop as a clerk or mechanic when you've once been your own master. It'll put jasm into a lot of men that have lost their nerve and only need some one to set them straight. You won't lose by it, Miss Doane; I am sure of that."

"I ain't thinkin' about that. Yet I ain't makin' a charity; it's a business, and I don't want a lot of salaried people to eat up everything. That's too much like most of them charities we looked into. I want this a business that'll sound sensible and that'll be

sensible, and I don't want a lot of failures to think they can work us. I want 'em to find that they got the wrong pig by the ear if they try to do the Doane fund.

"Bring that young man Frank to me and let me look him over. I ain't very worldly, but I like to look a man in the eye if he's going to do something for me. I want the men who's goin' to be with us, ambitious, upright young men that's willin' to work. I hate a lazy man--I can tell one a mile off. A lazy man's worse'n a dead one, 'cause a dead one's put away and can't do no harm while a lazy one's always around, spoilin' the ambitious one's work.

"Now, we won't talk business no more. Let's go into the yard. Daphne is there with some of the babies. Let's go out to her."

Dr. Eaton hesitated.

"I think I had better be going on to the hospital. I--I--"

Drusilla looked up at him quickly.

"Dr. Eaton, what's the matter with you? I don't understand young men of to-day nohow. Here I been for more'n a year tryin' to have you and Daphne see somethin' of each other, riskin' her father takin' my head off, and now you shy off as if you thought she would bite you. Don't you like my little girl?"

Dr. Eaton flushed under the clear brown of his tan.

"It isn't that, Miss Doane. You must know what I think of Daphne."

"Well, what is it, then? You're clear beyond me."

"Well--well--" and the doctor hesitated.

"Well, go on. Tell me all about it."

"It's this way, Miss Doane. I'm only a poor doctor without much of a practise, and it'll take me several years to work into a good one. And Daphne--you know how she has been brought up--and the kind of things she is used to having--and the crowd she goes with--"

"What's that got to do with it?"

"I--you must see, Miss Doane--that I can't give Daphne the things she is used to and that she'd quite likely expect as a matter of course--not that she is any more mercenary than any of the rest of the girls of her set, but she doesn't understand not being rich--she has never known anything else--"

"Oh, stuff and nonsense! I know Daphne."

"Yes, but her people; her father--and, O Lord, Miss Doane--her

mother--"

"I confess she is some pill to take; but there's one consolation-- you don't have to live with your mother-in-law in these times, and you ain't marryin' the hull family. Is that all?"

"No--but, then--"

"But then _what?_ There is somethin' else?"

"Yes, there is, Miss Doane. I guess--I--I am old-fashioned, but I want a home-wife--a woman who'll love babies, and have them and not feel that they are an impediment to her career. I--I'm--a little dippy on children--I guess--"

He laughed a little shamefacedly. "I want babies in my home--babies that'll climb around me when I come from work--boys and girls that I can love and do for and see grow up into men and women, that'll make me feel that I have really done something for the world--and--and the way Daphne's been brought up--well, her set don't believe in babies--and--rather think motherhood is degrading--and--"

They had come to a corner of the veranda overlooking the part of the lawn where a merry group of little children were playing ring-a-round-a-rosy, and a tall, laughing girl was standing in the middle of the ring, her face flushed, her eyes sparkling, as the clear young voice sang the simple play song. The doctor's face softened and he forgot what he was saying. They stood there a while, watching the happy group. Then, the children becoming tired of the game, Daphne sat down in a rocking-chair under a tree, and they grouped themselves around her feet. She took one of the tiniest into her lap and, cuddling it against her breast, began to rock slowly backward and forward. The words of the old lullaby came softly:

"Rock-a-bye, baby,
On the tree-top,
When the wind blows
The cradle will rock--"

Drusilla looked up at Dr. Eaton and her face broke into tiny little love wrinkles as she saw the look on his face. She put her faded old hands on his shoulders and looked into his eyes for a long moment; then she said softly:

"Go on, my boy; and God bless you!"

And the doctor went.

At three o'clock on July 16th, there met in the Doane library Mr. Carrington, Mr. Raydon--the multi-millionaire and great friend of Drusilla's--Mr. Thornton, Dr. Eaton, and half a dozen of the residents of Brookvale.

"Gentlemen," Drusilla began when the men were seated, "I suppose you wonder why you are all here. I'm goin' to tell you, because you are all my neighbors and I have heard that you are worryin' about what I am goin' to do. We've all got a right to expect happiness in Heaven, but I believe we git what we give, and I want to give as much happiness here as I kin, so's I'll be sure to have somethin' to my account on the other side. I been lookin' around fer two years, tryin' to find a way to leave my million dollars so's to give as much happiness and joy to them that hasn't their share, or so's to benefit the most people in the most lastin' way, and I haven't found it yet. But I have found a way to invest my income, and a little of the money that's come in through the good business head and investments of Mr. Thornton.

"I've always loved babies, and I've always wanted to be a mother; but it didn't seem to fit in with God's plans fer me. Perhaps He knowed that I'd have a chance to mother a bigger family than I could raise myself, no matter how hard I tried, and he sent me these babies. Now, these are my plans fer them. I ain't goin' to start an orphan asylum, nor a house of refuge, nor no kind of a 'home.' I ain't goin' to take more'n I kin git along comfortable with and make a real home fer, not an institution. I'm goin' to educate 'em and make 'em men and women you'll be proud of, but I ain't goin' to try to make ladies and gentlemen of 'em, whether they're born fer that or not. If a boy has a head that'll make him an architect, then we'll make him an architect, but if he was jest intended fer a good carpenter then he'll be a good carpenter; and if a girl has it in her to be a school-teacher, she'll have a chance at it--if not, she kin always make a good livin' as a dressmaker or a milliner. They're goin' to be made into good middle-class men and women; and when they git their education, I'll have 'em sent out into the world with a trained brain but empty hands, and if they've got the right stuff in 'em, they will soon fill their hands.

"I know there's been lots of objections to the mothers of some of my babies comin' to the neighborhood; but the ones that's willin' to come are the ones who's wantin' a chance to become self-supportin', self-respectin' women; and that's what most women want--jest a chance. They'll be learnt a trade, somethin' that they have leanin's to, and they'll go out in the world agin able to take care of themselves, without help from no one.

"I got a lot of spare rooms in the house that's doin' no good to no one, and I'm goin' to ask some mothers and their little ones to spend a few days with me in the hot weather. I've been to see 'em, and I'll always know the ones I ask. They'll be friends of mine, jest like you ask your friends to visit you fer a few days. It won't be a mothers'

home nor a summer home nor nothin' charitable. I'm jest goin' to give a little sunlight to some of my friends in the hot tenements, whose sack of happiness ain't been full to overflowin'.

"Now, that disposes of my income and the new money saved, but it ain't done nothin' with the million dollars. I been visitin' institutions and charities, I've talked with every one who's got an idee about it. Dr. Eaton wants me to endow a home fer children and mothers; but I won't do that, as I can't live always to watch it. I know that I could make Dr. Eaton manager of it, and you gentlemen directors and my idees would be carried out as long as you was alive; but you all got to die sometime, and it'd git to be a business thing, payin' a lot of officials, and it'd drift into an institution like lots I've seen, with no heart in it. I've thought a lot about them foundations that leaves the money to be used as the times sees fit, and they seem kind of sensible, because times change and what I'd leave it fer now might not be needed in fifty years. New things would come up with the new generations, and my fund'd be way behind the times and not fit in. I'm a little leanin' towards that kind of leavin' the money, yet--yet--I don't know. I'd like to git something new, something different, that'd go on and on in the right way doin' good.

"Mr. Raydon kind of has leanin's towards a people's bank, lending money to poor people who ain't got nothin' but their honesty and reputation--but he's goin' to figger that out by himself and in the meantime he's waitin' to see what I find out, as he's got more money than he kin take with him. He says he's only interested 'cause he likes me and I make him laugh, but way down deep inside of him he's got the biggest kind of heart; but he don't want his money to be wasted when he's gone, no more'n I do.

"Gentlemen, I want you to think it over, ask every one, the same's I'm doin', git some new idees about the way to spend a million dollars and spend it right."

They rose and went to the lawn, where the neighbors with whom Drusilla had made friends were waiting to greet their hostess. As Drusilla passed little groups of mothers playing with their children under the trees, the men with her saw tired faces light up, and gratitude in faded eyes of weary mothers, while tiny children clung to her dress or ran shyly forward to take her hands in their baby fingers. Love shone from Drusilla's face and was reflected in the eyes of all these poor and helpless who followed her with loving glance as she crossed the lawn.

As they were waiting for the tea to be served Mr. Carrington stood upon a chair and called for attention.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, Mothers and Babies," he said. "To-day is a great day for us all, but more for the people of Brookvale than for the others. Two years ago Miss Doane came to us, and found a great many of us hard, self-centered, worldly. Why"--and he laughed--"I

remember I was chairman of a committee who was to wait upon her and persuade her that she must not bring babies to our aristocratic neighborhood. I never waited--but that is another story.

"There is a great chemist, and he dissolves selfishness and worldliness with a little invisible powder called love. Miss Doane brought stores of that powder with her, and scatters it over her doughnuts and her gingerbread and her cookies that she sends us, and she does it up in little packages that we can't see and slips it into our pockets when we're not looking. It has spread like a fine mist over Brookvale. And I am speaking for Brookvale, and I want to say that we are glad to have her with us, that we are glad to see her family growing up around her"--waving his hand toward the groups of children on the lawn--"and on this, her seventy-second birthday, we want you all to give three cheers for Drusilla Doane, OUR Drusilla Doane!"

And he led in the cheering that made the air resound.

Drusilla flushed and wiped her eyes, and in answer to the calls of "Speech! Speech!" she said:

"I ain't never made a speech in my life, as I hold with St. Paul that women should be seen and not heard. But--I want to say that I been happy a whole heartful since I been with you--and I want to share it--and I want you to feel that in passin' it on to others--I'm passin' on your love that you all been a-showin' me. So you'll git it all agin, as love always comes back. But--but--I can't talk--I can't tell you how I feel; I jest want in my small way to make the world a little bit glad that Elias Doane hunted up a charity home and found in it Drusilla"; and she shyly drew back into the crowd.

When she saw the people sitting at the tables drinking their tea, or walking over the beautiful lawns, her eyes looked for John. Finding him, she went up to him.

"John, let's go up on the porch off my room. I'm tired, and we can look at 'em all from there. I want to be alone with you."

They went up to the veranda and stood overlooking the happy scene. Mothers were sitting at the small tables happily watching their larger children playing under the trees. Babies were rolling on the grass, their baby prattle and laughter coming faintly to the ears of John and Drusilla. The soft afternoon sun filtered through the trees and seemed to cover them with a golden glow.

As Drusilla watched them, she slipped her hand into one of John's and leaned forward, looking up at him with a soft light in her dear old eyes.

"John," she said, "when we were young, we used to dream that we'd grow old together and see our children's children playin' round us."

She was silent for a moment. Then:

"John,"--she motioned toward the lawn--"let's play our dream's come true!"

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