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***** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK LITTLE MISS BY-THE-DAY *****

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LITTLE MISS BY-THE-DAY

BY

LUCILLE VAN SLYKE

_Author of "Eve's Other Children" _

_With A Frontispiece In Color By MABEL HATT _

1919

TO GEORDIE

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PROLOGUE

The older I get the more convinced I become that the most fascinating persons in this world are those elusive souls whom we know perfectly well but whom we never, as children say, "get to meet." They slip out of countries, or towns--_or rooms even,--just before we arrive, leaving us with an inexplicable feeling of having been cheated of something that was rightfully and divinely ours. That's the way I still feel about little Miss By-the-Day. Perhaps you, too, have been baffled by the will-o'-the-wispishness of that whimsical young person. Perhaps you, too, tried to find her but never did.

She sounded so casual and commonplace when I first began hearing about her that I let her slip through my fingers. She was just a little seamstress who had a "vairee" odd way of speaking; it was quite a long time before I realized that everybody who spoke about her was unconsciously trying to imitate her drawling voice. And then I noticed that everybody who mentioned her smiled dreamily and wondered where on earth she'd come from. I kept hearing, just as you probably did, odd scraps of things she had said, droll adventures in which she had

figured, extraordinary and fantastic tales about the house in which she lived. And presently, when it was too late, I found myself listening to regretful murmurings of scores of baffled persons who couldn't find out what had become of her. She suddenly vanished, leaving nothing behind her save her delectable house.

If you'll lend me your pencil a minute I'll show you on the back of this envelope just how that house was situated. You can understand the whole amazing story better if you keep in mind how the church on the corner and the rectory were tucked in beside that great house. For it is a big house, so huge that the six prim brownstones across the street from it look like toy houses. But I've been told that in Brooklyn's early days there was no street, just a long terraced garden that sloped down to the river.

For all that the streets have crowded so disrespectfully about it the whole place still has a sort of "world-with-out-end-amen" air--perhaps because of the impressive squareness of its structure, great blocks of brownstone joined solidly; perhaps because of the enormous gnarled wistaria vines that stretch above its massive cornices--but one does feel as Felicia Day herself did when some one asked her how long she thought it had been there. She said she thought it must have been there "Much, much more than Always--it must have been jamais au grand --forevaire and more than evaire!"

Maybe, like me, you've passed that house a dozen times and shuddered at the filth of the little street.

[Illustration: Town map.]

I used to hold my breath as I hurried by that dismal old rookery. I thought it the most hideous purgatory that ever sheltered a horde of miserable humans. But you needn't be afraid to pass it now! The immaculate sweetness and serenity of that wee street is like a miracle and the old house is a fairy dream come true.

Its marble steps are softly yellowed with age, an exquisitely wrought iron balcony stretches across the front above the high ceilinged basement and great carved walnut doors open into a wide vestibule with a marble floor exactly like a bit of a gigantic chessboard. The transformation had so astounded me that I was almost afraid to touch the neatly polished beaten silver bell for fear the whole house would vanish.

"Coom in!" cried a Scotch voice from the basement. So I stepped across the tessellated floor of the hall into the broad drawing-room and stared out through the long French doors of the glass room at the green smudge of Battery Park beyond the river. There wasn't a soul in sight in any of the rooms and yet I felt as if some one was there. Perhaps it was just that I was awed by the disconcerting loveliness of the portrait of the brunette lady that hung in a tarnished oval frame above the drawing-room mantel. I looked at her and waited. Presently I coughed apologetically.

"Could I please find out if a--er--Miss Day lives here? Or--if anybody here knows her?"

The Scotchy voice lifted itself grudgingly above the vigorous swish of a scrubbing brush.

"I dinna think ony one's home but th' Sculptor Girl--she's on th' top floor an' it's not I that knows whether she's in a speaking humor, but you're weelcoom to try her--"

It was raining, a miserable spring drizzle, yet the spacious hall seemed flooded with sunlight. There's an oval skylight fitted with amber glass; silhouetted against its leaded rims are outlined flying birds.

"Hark, hark! The lark at heaven's gate sings!" I read beneath the margins when I looked up to find the sunlight. I knew that I ought to feel like an impertinent intruder but I just couldn't! And I defy any one to go up those wonderful circling stairs and not smile! For at the head of each flight of steps is a recessed niche such as used to be built to hold statuary and in the one near the second floor is a flat vase filled with flowers--little saffron rosebuds the day I passed by --with an ever so discreet card engraved in sizable old English script that hinted:

"One's for you."

I was still sniffing at my buttonhole when I reached the second niche. There was a black varnished wicker tray heaped with fruit and a Brittany platter filled with raison cookies.

"Aren't you hungry?" the card above them suggested. I nibbled an apricot all the way up the third flight and almost laughed aloud when I reached the top, though of course I was expecting something. There's a yellow glazed vase there,

"For pits and stones
Or skins and bones"

and above it in the back of the niche through a marble dolphin's mouth cold water trickles into a bronze holder with a basket of cups beside it.

"Thirsty?" asks the dolphin.

"Dulcie Dierck" I read on the Sculptor Girl's doorplate. It took me a full minute to get the courage to tap her gargoyle knocker because I was so awestricken at remembering that she was the girl who won the Ambrose Medal and the Pendleton Prize and goodness only knows how much other loot and glory.

The door jerked open to let me peer into the cleanest, barest skylit

spot,--with flat creamy walls and a little old fireplace with a Peggoty grate just like the pictures in "David Copperfield." And a trig young person who didn't look a bit like an artist, because she was so neatly belted and so smoothly coiffed, waved a clayey thumb tip toward a bench by the fire.

"Sit down and get your breath," she suggested chirkily, "then you won't feel quite so dumfounded--"

An overwhelming sense of my colossal cheekiness made me stammer.

"Do--do you h-happen to know--" I burst forth desperately, "if there's really any such person as a--a Miss Day?"

"Does that fire look real?"

I nodded.

"Well, then put another stick on that fire and hang the kettle on the hob--" she was washing the clay from her hands in an old brass basin. "Don't get peeved with me because I'm grouchy and bossy--" she flung over her shoulder at me. "I always start off badly when I'm tired and that fool question always makes me just darned tired!"

She reached for a fat brown teapot and dumped in tea-leaves recklessly. "I'll be decenter directly I'm fed. I'm a beast just before tea--you won't find me half bad half an hour from now--"

We were both silent while the water boiled. She shoved her table nearer the fire, so near that I found myself looking down at the writing things that were arranged so primly at one end. There was an ink bottle on a gray blotter, a pewter tray for pens and a queer shaped lump of bronze, a paper weight I supposed. I wouldn't have been human if I could have kept my fingers off that bit of metal. I pretended to pick it up accidentally but I did it as guiltily as a child touches something forbidden. She didn't say a word, just watched me mischievously while she arranged the tea cups on the other end of the table. Presently she lighted a tiny temple lamp, melted a dab of sealing wax in its wavering blue flames--rose-colored wax it was--and it splashed out on the gray blotter like molten fire.

She took the bit of bronze from my fingers and pressed it firmly on the wax.

"It's a mouth--" I murmured. "It's lips--"

"It's her kiss," she answered me. "That's the most beautiful and the most difficult thing I ever made. It's Felicia Day's letter seal."

"Then she really is a real person--" I stammered fatuously.

"Real?" The girl's low voice lifted itself belligerently. "What do you think she is? Imitation? Why, she's the one REAL thing in this whole

sham world! I guess you've never met anybody who knew her or you wouldn't keep gulping out idiotic things like that! I guess if you ever talked with her even a minute you'd understand how real she is. She has the crispest--the sincerest way of speaking. Though of course it's not a bit like other people's ways. She probably doesn't talk like anybody you've ever listened to. Not like anybody I've ever heard of anyway." The girl's eyes were glowing. "Are you musical?" she demanded. "Because I need a musical word to tell you how she talks. She talks *_rubato_*. Her short words drawl ever so long and her long ones hurry so's to let her make up for the stolen time. And she has a sort of trace of accent like--well, it's not like anything except herself really. You see, her mother wasn't French but she was brought up with French people and Felice says 'evaire' and 'nevaire' and uses funny little Frenchy phrases she heard her mother use though she doesn't really talk French at all. And she has a bossy way of speaking, kind of --well, humbly bossing, if you can get me. Talks like a Lady Pied Piper and sweeps you along with her just about six minutes after she's begun coaxing you to do whatever she's decided is the best thing for you to do. Believe me, I know she does it! Because I was one of the first ones she swept along!" The girl's words were tumbling so fast now that I could hardly follow.

"Did you ever find yourself in heaps of trouble? Too much trouble to stand? Did you? I was that way the day she opened my door. It made me perfectly furious to have her open my door. And she looked so little and so old and so frumpy--she'd been sewing all day for my beastly step-aunt and I'd been trying all day to get the courage to--to--" the girl's tears were streaming now and she didn't bother to wipe them away, she seemed utterly unashamed of them, "to get rid of myself. And just the minute I got the cork out of the bottle that little old angel opened the door. She was so darned different from anybody I'd ever seen in all my life and she talked so differently from anybody I'd ever listened to, I--well, I sort of forgot wanting to die because I was curious to find out where on earth she'd come from--or where on earth she was going to! She had a funny little dog under her arm; she gave it to me to hold. And the next thing I knew she was inviting me to go home with her. She thought I might like this room, she said. She told me it was filled 'with-an-abundance-of-weeds-we-have-not-any-names-for--' Wasn't that an absolute corker? That was her way of describing the Italian family with too many brats that were living here. She'd got that apology for 'em out of her great-great-grandma's garden book! Can you beat it? She talks about everybody as if they belonged in a garden. She called me--" the girl's lips quivered,--"a rosebush that had been pruned too much--roots cramped--she said-- anyway she picked me up to transplant me! Marched me into the 'orrible, messy, noisy, smelly hutch that this house used to be, up all those eighty 'leven stairs, and she kept her chin in the air as though it was a royal palace she was taking me into! She just kept saying,

"Come! You'll love, love, love it! And you're going to be proud, proud, proud to live here--"

"I was proud, all right," the girl's voice choked. "I wouldn't have missed living here those next two months, not for all the marble that was ever quarried nor for all the glory that was Greece! That first night we both slept in this room--" she paused dramatically and threw open the door in the east wall to let me peer into the narrow hall room, "there--see--"

Ah! that bare little room! So tidy! With faded discolored wall paper and a scrubbed pine floor! With its battered iron bed! There's an old table by the one window with a child's silver mug and plate and spoon on it, each of them with a great bee carved upon it. That's all there is in that room save a low chair and a superb but shabby walnut bureau.

"She loved it so much that she wouldn't change it when she was building Octavia House over--"

"Octavia House!" I cried. "Why, that's that queer house where all the young geniuses live! The one that the Peter Alden money built--"

"It's not a queer house!" the girl defied me. "It's--it's this house! And you can't say Money built this house! Money couldn't have done it! Not all the money in the world, couldn't! It wasn't Money! It was--Pride! Not the sort of pride that goeth before _de_struction but that mightier pride that goeth before _con_struction! No, no!" she murmured vehemently, "it wasn't Money! It was really almost done before the money came! And she didn't just build the house over, she built all of us over. And built the whole world over for us all. Just with her pride in us! Just with the pride she made us feel in ourselves! And do you know, we were all such self-centered idiots, that it wasn't until after she was gone that we grasped what she'd done with us? We didn't know the glory and the wonder of her until after she was gone--"

"She's not--?"

The Sculptor Girl answered my half-asked question almost ferociously.

"Of course she's not dead! She is the alivest person in this whole world--aliver than you or I can ever be! And yet,--we've lost her. She isn't just _ours_ any more. And when she was blessedly, absolutely just ours--we didn't appreciate her. You see, she was so frumpy and absurd and quiet we didn't think about her--we scarcely saw her. But oh--the minute when we did see her! It came in a flash for me! I just knew, all of a sudden, that she was perfectly beautiful--as beautiful as her own whistle--her lovely, lovely Mademoiselle Folly whistle--"

"Oh! Oh!" I gasped, "_You can't mean that she was--is--Mademoiselle Folly?_"

"Mean it? Didn't you know it? Didn't you ever hear her whistle? Oh, even now that she's gone it seems to me that I can still hear her whistling! And no matter what any one has said about it--they couldn't all of them, put together, say half enough--not even if they all said things as gushy as the Poetry Girl--she said it was like water

trickling in a moonlit fountain! I only know it's like what I tried to put into my little Pandora--that it was like what Barrie was thinking when he let Peter Pan cry, 'I'm Joy! Joy! Joy!--Even the Painter Boy, who has a silly pose that he hates music, used to hang around to hear her whistle--he pretended he was just looking at her so's he could paint her, but that didn't fool me--Listen, there's Nor' stumping up stairs now--he's awfully lame on these rainy days and _that_ moody--"

"Do you mean Noralla? The one who did 'The Spirit of Romance'? Does he live here?"

She nodded impishly.

"And Thad, the cartoonist and Blythe Modder and--" she began reeling off a victorious list of young celebrities.

"And that one little dressmaker discovered you all?" I asked, quite awestricken, "How could she? What sort of a wonder was she? How can you explain it?"

The girl swung her lithe self up on the table, clasped her narrow hands about her knees and smiled benignly down upon me. She seemed naively content with herself, relaxed and quiet after her tempestuous storm of words.

"You can't explain it, you just accept it--just as you accept sunshine and rain--you can't explain any more than you can describe. And she's the sort of woman that all of us who dwell within this house will go on all the rest of our lives trying to describe and I'll bet that not all of us put together can tell more'n half that there is to tell about her. Why, her very faults are different than other people's faults! She has a pippin of a temper and such stub-stub-stubborn ways! Don't you think Thad's cartoons of 'Temperamental Therese' are peaches? Well, they are nothing but Felice in her illogical crotchety unfair minutes--Thad says the only way to explain such heavenly rudeness as Felicia's is to remember that she began being rude in 1817--"

"How old is she?" I fairly shouted, "Oh, please get down to earth and tell me something definite about her! You're perfectly maddening!"

The girl jumped lightly to the floor and slipped across the room to swing the casement in the north wall and let me peer down into Felicia's garden. If you'll look on the back of your envelope you can see just how it was, just how the walls shut off the rectory yard.

"She's exactly twenty-seven," she sighed, "the most perfect age to be! And if you were really going to tell her story you wouldn't have to go back all the way to 1817, you'd begin it about--well, let me see--you'd begin it about 1897, I think, and right down there in that wee little garden. And of course you'd begin it with her whistling. And you'd ask anybody you were trying to tell about her whether they'd ever heard Mademoiselle Folly whistle--"

Did you? For if you have, I'm sure you've never forgotten the droll way that Mademoiselle Folly stepped out upon a stage in her quaint green frock and made her frightened curtsy. Can you recall her low contralto drawl and her inevitable,

"Oh, my dears, I do _so_ hope that you're going to be good at pretending! You all of you look as though you could pretend if you just started! So let's you and I pretend that--"

Oh, I do so hope that you, too, are going "to be good at pretending"! That you can make yourself pretend that it's twenty years ago and that you're a nice invisible somebody standing down in a wee back yard of Felicia's. From the garden you can't see the river because the walls are too high. But now you're so close to them you see that they're crumbly brick walls almost covered with vines and that at prim intervals along their tops there are elaborate wrought-iron urns, each filled with a huge dusty century plant. And in the side wall toward the rectory yard of the church you can see an unused iron gate, its rusty lock and hinges matted through and through with ancient ivy. Pretend that it's moon-light and it's spring and that it's early evening in the year of our Lord 1897 and that over there by the gate is Felicia Day, about seven years old, peering through the gate into the rectory yard, laughing softly as she always laughs on choir practise nights. There was a certain bald dyspeptic choirmaster who was most irritable as he drilled his unruly boy choir and on warm evenings, when the oaken door under the heavy Gothic arches of the church was ajar, she could watch their garbed figures and wide opened mouths as they giggled over Gregorian chants under the swaying altar lights.

Once the tallest, naughtiest boy of all, the one with the cherubic "soprano" voice that was just threatening to break into piping uselessness, had climbed to the top of the wall and dropped his little black velvet cap at her feet.

"Get down from that wall!" the choirmaster had shouted.

Though the boy had ducked from view as suddenly as he had appeared he had managed to demand of the small person under the wall,

"Who are you, girl?"

She was holding the cap tightly while she answered,

"I don't know, 'zactly who I are--" when she heard the choirmaster shrieking,

"Dudley Hamilt! Come here at once!"

And though she watched every choir-practise night for ever so long she never caught another glimpse of the mischievous-eyed boy, a nasal-voiced woman sang in his stead and she never, never climbed walls.

But Felicia always waited patiently with the small black cap in her hands until a night when she summoned courage to call softly through the barred gate,

"Dudley! Dudley Hamilt!"

A fat boy ran to her and jeered,

"He's expelled! He can't come back till he's a tenor!"

So that's what you must pretend! That you can smile in the shadows of that moonlit garden, that you can smile at a dear little stupid who is waiting joyously for the time when Dudley Hamilt will come back a tenor!

CHAPTER I

IN THE BARRED GARDEN

She was a distinctly droll looking child at the age of seven, our little Felicia Day! With straight black hair brushed smoothly back and bound with a "circle comb," with short-waisted dresses that left her neck and arms bare. Her slender feet were encased in short white socks and low black slippers. And at her dear little feet was usually-- Babiche.

Babiche was so old that she whined at the evening chill; she perpetually teased to be taken back to her comfortable cushion at the foot of her mistress's bed. She was really very amusing when she sat up on her haunches and begged to be carried. For she was so fat that she hated to walk and she was a very spoiled doggy, that wee spaniel! A sort of a dowager queen of a doggy, a nice little old grandma lady of a dog.

The gentle yap-yap-yapping that could always be heard beyond the rear wall was from the throats of some score or more of her expensive great-great-great offspring who lived in the stable in tiny stalls with their pedigree cards tacked neatly under their elaborate kennel names.

It was a cross to Felice that she was not allowed to go through the small arched doorway at the back of the garden that led to the stable that opened on the narrow cobblestone "Tradespersons' Street." The Major didn't approve of the manners of Zeb Smathers the kennel man, or Zeb's wife Marthy, though he knew there wasn't a pair with their patience and skill to be found for miles around. All the same Felice adored the stable yard and would have dearly loved to climb the narrow stairs up to the low-ceilinged rooms above the stables where Marthy

liked to sit.

Lean, grizzled old Marthy! There was usually a dog or two in her lap, either a sickly pup or a grieving-eyed mother dog whose babies had been taken away from her. Such tiny creatures, even the mother dogs-- those little Blenheim spaniels! Snub-nosed, round-headed with long silky flopping ears, soft curly coats and feathery tails. Felice liked the yellow and white ones, and always reached for them, but her grandfather coolly "weeded them out," as Zeb expressed it, because the Trenton ideal was a white dog marked with red.

Felicia knew when the dogs were going away. They always went the day after the Basket Man came with a pole tied full of oval gilded wicker hampers. Sometimes she, was allowed to stand in the gateway and watch them have their farewell bath, only of course she sniffed uncomfortably when Zeb let brown drops drip into the rinsing water from a fat bottle with a gay red skull and cross-bones on the label. "Scarbolic" was what she understood it to be, she mustn't touch it or she'd "go dead," whatever that was. But she forgot all about the smell as she watched the fluffy doggies drying in the sunny stable yard while Marthy sang vociferously to cheer her own drooping spirits; the silly old woman never could bear the days the dogs went away.

And so Felice on her side of the gate could listen rapturously to the throaty drone in which Marthy asked the world

"What's this dull town to me?
Rob-in's not here--"

or warbled heavily

"Churry Ripe, Churry Ripe,
Who'll buy my churries--"

or wailed

"Where have you been, Billy Boy, Billy Boy?
Where have you been, charming Billy?"

It almost made up for not being allowed to go out of the garden.

If Felice only could have been allowed to go around into the Tradespersons' Street just once! I wish she could have gone--just once! On one of the days when the swinging sign, that was gilded and painted so beautifully, was hung outside to announce

"KING CHARLES AND BLENHEIM SPANIELS
For sale within."

I'm sure she would have loved the line of carriages waiting in the cobble-stoned alley when the fine ladies came to buy. I think she would have clapped her hands at the gay boxes of geraniums and the crisp white curtains in Marthy's shining windows over the stable door.

But she could only stay in the garden with the thin visaged old French woman who taught her to read and to write and to embroider and to play upon an old lute and to curtsy and to dance. One thing she learned that the French woman did not teach her--to whistle! She remembers answering the sea-gulls who mewed outside in the harbor and the sparrows who twittered in the ivy and the tiny pair of love-birds who dwelt in a cage at her mother's bedroom window. She learned to whistle without distorting her lips because her grandfather had forbidden her to whistle and if she held her mouth almost normal he couldn't tell when he looked out into the garden whether it was Felice or the birds who were twittering.

Her first memories of her mother were extremely vague. She remembers she was pretty and smiling and that most of the time she lay in a "sleighback" bed and that in the morning she would say,

"Go out into the garden and be happy," and that at twilight she would say, "You look as though you had been very happy in the garden--"

Sometimes Maman wasn't awake when Felicia came in from her long day in the garden. And the little girl always knew if her mother's door were closed that she must tiptoe softly so as not to disturb her. There was a reward for being quiet. In the niche of the stairway Felice would find a good-night gift--sometimes a cookie in a small basket or an apple or a flower,--something to make a little girl smile even if her mother was too tired or too ill to say good-night. She never clambered past the other niches that she didn't whimsically wish there was a Maman on every floor to leave something outside for her. So after a time the canny child began leaving things for herself, tucked slyly back where the housemaids wouldn't find them. She used to hide her silver mug with water at the very top stair because she was so thirsty from the climb.

She was always happy in Maman's room and in the garden but she had many unhappy times in that nursery. It was at the very top of the back of the house. From the barred windows under the carved brownstone copings she could peer out at the ships in the harbor and the shining green of Battery Park. The nursery had a fireplace just opposite the door that connected with the tiny room in which the old French woman slept. Both these rooms had been decorated with a landscape paper peopled with Watteau shepherds and shepherdesses and oft-repeated methodical groups of lambs. On the cold mornings she was bathed beside the fire--which she very much hated--and once when she was especially angry at the sharp dash of the bath sponge against her thin shoulders she clutched at the flabby dripping thing with all her might and sent it hurtling through the doorway where it splashed against the side wall of the tiny room and smudged out the flock of a simpering shepherdess. And instead of being sorry that she had obliterated the paper lambs she remembers shaking her fist at the discolored spot and shrieking "Nevaire come back, nevaire!"

Mademoiselle D'Ormy made her tell Maman. Mademoiselle's disapproval

made it seem an admirable crime until Maman said ever so gently,

"I'm sorry you were unhappy!"

"_I was happy_,," persisted Felicia, "I was proud, proud, proud when I threw it!"

"But you made Mademoiselle unhappy and you've made me unhappy--and you can't be truly happy, Felicia, when you're making some one else unhappy--"

Felicia discovered that she couldn't. Not with Maman's gentle eyes looking into hers, so she threw herself on her knees and kissed her mother's hand. Just as she had seen her grandfather kiss it.

"Let's pretend!" she whispered, "Let's pretend I didn't do it! Now let's pretend I'm Grandy!"

Pretending she was her Grandfather Trenton was one of their most delicious games. She would tap on the door, delicately, and ask in mincing imitation of the French woman,

"Madame, will you see ze Major?" Then, with great dignity she would advance to the bedside.

"Ah! Octavia!" she would say, eloquently, "How charming you look to-day!"

For that was what Grandy always said when he came into the room to see Maman.

You'd have liked Major Trenton. You'd have liked him a lot. But you could have liked him more if he'd been a little kinder to Felice. For by one of those strange, unexplained twists of human nature this fine gentleman, who was so tolerant with his uncouth servants and so admirably gentle with his wee dogs, was unconsciously cruel to the small grand-daughter who so adored him. She adored his immaculate neatness, the ruddy pinkness of his skin; she loved his wavy white hair and the deep sparkle of his dark eyes. She saw nothing droll about the peaked felt hat and long black coat that he persisted in wearing, or about the ruffled shirt, with its absurd flaring collar and black satin stock. She even loved the empty coat sleeve pinned inside his breast pocket. She thought him the most beautiful human in the whole world. She lived in constant dread of what Grandy would or would not be pleased to have her do. And though she was unaware of it, her everyday behavior was exactly what that silent man had so ordered. She did not know there was a God because the Major was an atheist--who out-ingersolled Robert G. in the violence of his denial of deity. She did not know there was a world of reality outside the garden because he did not choose to have her mingle with that world. She was not taught French because he vowed he hated France and the French and all their ways. She was taught to curtsy and to dance because it pleased him to have a woman walk well and he believed dancing kept the figure

supple. She was taught needlework because he thought it seemly for a woman to sew and he liked the line of the head and neck bent over an embroidery frame. She was taught to knit because he remembered that his mother had told him that delicate finger tips were daintily polished by an hour's knitting a day. He was--though he wouldn't have admitted it--proud of her slender hands--they looked exactly as his wife's had looked. It was the only trait she had inherited from that particular ancestor and he had been inordinately vain of his wife's hands. Mademoiselle had been ordered never to let the child "spread her hand by opening door knobs or touching the fire-stones--or--er--any clumsy thing--" and it was droll to see the little girl, digging in her bit of garden with those lovely hands incased in long flopping cotton gloves--not to forget the broad sunbonnet that shaded her earnest little face. In short, he was jealous of her complexion and her manners--But beyond that and the desire that she absolutely efface herself, he did not concern himself with his granddaughter.

It was really her mother's gentle tact that fostered love for the stern old man. While Felice was still young, Octavia began to teach her child pride of race. The pretty invalid was pathetically eager to have Felice impressed with the dignity of Major Trenton's family.

"If you look over the dining-room fireplace you can see how fine his father was--"

So the child stared up the stately panelled wall at the gloomy old portrait of Judge Trenton with his much curled wig and black satin gown and the stiff scroll of vellum with fat be-ribboned seals attached and asked naively,

"If your father was a judge-man why aren't we judge-mens?" Grandy laughed his short, hard laugh.

"Oh, because we've gone straight to the dogs--and very small bow-wows at that--"

It was about this time that Octavia began to teach Felice to play chess. The child hated it. It must have taken a sort of magnificent patience to teach her. For a long time no one save Mademoiselle D'Ormy had known what a struggle it meant for that gay little invalid to make herself lovely for that afternoon hour over the chess board. Yet, when the Major entered he would always find his daughter smiling from her heap of gay rose-colored cushions, her thin hair curled prettily under her lace cap and her hand extended for his courteous kiss. They were almost shyly formal with each other, those two, while Mademoiselle D'Ormy screwed the tilt table into place and brought the ebony box of carved chess men. It was leaning forward to move the men that took so much strength. Octavia was too proud to admit how weak she was growing. So she coaxed her small daughter,

"It will be a little stupid at first, Cherie, but we will try to make it go--and think what fun it will be that day when we tell the Major, 'It is Felice and not stupid old Octavia who is going to play with

you.' First you shall learn where to move the pieces and how to tell me what Grandy has moved--then, we shall tie a handkerchief over my eyes--as we do when you and I play hide the thimble--my hands shall not touch the men at all. I shall say 'Pawn to Queen's Rook's square' and you shall put this little man here--this is the Queen's Rook's square--" It must have been the oddest game in the world, really, between that stern old man and the blindfolded invalid and the grave little girl who was learning to play. Of course it was easier for Octavia--she didn't have to move her hands or keep her eyes open. She could lie lower on the pillows--she smiled--a wavering smile when her father's triumphant "Check!" would ring out.

"Alas, Felice!" she would murmur gaily, "are we not stupid! Together we can't checkmate him--" They talked a great deal about chess. And how you can't expect to do so much with pawns and how you mustn't mind if you lose them. But how carefully you must guard the queen--or else you'll lose your king--and how if "You just learn a little day by day soon you'll have a gambit," and how "even if you don't care much about doing the silly game, you like it because you know that it gives Grandy much happiness."

It was in those days that Felice learned that not only must she keep very happy herself but she must keep other people happy.

"It's not easy," Octavia assured her, "but it's rather amusing. It's a game too. You see some one who is tired or cross or worried and you think 'This isn't pleasant for him or for me!' Then you think of something that may distract the tiredness or the worry--maybe you play softly on the lute--maybe you suggest chess--maybe you tell something very droll that happened in the garden or the kennel--he doesn't suspect why you're telling him, at first he scarcely seems to hear you and then--when he does stop thinking about the unpleasantness--he smiles!--Watch Grandfather when he says 'Check!' and you will see what I mean--"

One comfort was, Felice didn't have to play chess all of the days. Never on the days when Certain Legal Matters came. Then Grandfather disappeared into the gloomy depths of the library and from the garden Felice could hear the disagreeable grumble of the burly lawyer as he consulted with his extraordinary old client.

"Absolutely no! Absolutely no!" her grandfather's voice would ring out, "I tell you I will not! A man who takes a pension for doing his duty to his country is despicable! And as for the other matter--I do not have to touch anything that was my wife's! I do not approve of the manner whereby she obtained that income--if Octavia wishes it, that is a different matter--it can be kept for the child if Octavia chooses to look at the matter that way--but for myself I will not touch it! I do not require it--I will not touch it--it was a bad business--There is nothing quixotic about my refusal, nothing whatever, sir! We differ absolutely on that point, as we do on most others!"

Felicia heard that speech so often that she could almost have recited

it, she heard it nearly every time that Certain Legal Matters appeared, he always put the Major in a temper. Grandy couldn't get himself sufficiently calm for chess on such days.

Nor did she play chess on the days when the Wheezy came to sew.

The advent of the Wheezy was an enormous affair in Felice's life. It was one of the first times that the child was taken outside of the house or the garden--that blustery March day when she and Mademoiselle walked around the corner to a small house in whose basement window rested a sign, WOMAN'S EXCHANGE AND EMPLOYMENT AGENCY. A tiny bell jingled as they entered and from behind the curtains at the rear emerged a little woman whose face looked like the walnuts that were served with grandpapa's wine, very disagreeable indeed. Felice always spoke of her as The Disagreeable Walnut. It was in this shop that she saw her first doll, a ridiculous fat affair constructed of a hank of cotton with shoe buttons for eyes and a red silk embroidered mouth and an enormous braid of string for hair. And it was while she was rapturously contemplating it that she heard the wizened proprietor say, "Do you wish to have the work done by the job or by the day?" Then the Disagreeable Walnut pompously consulted a huge dusty ledger from which she decided that a certain Miss Pease would suit their requirements.

"Two dollars a day and lunch," she informed them curtly and that was the way that Wheezy came into Felicia's life.

Short, fat, asthmatic and crotchety, she grumbled incessantly because there wasn't anything so modern as a sewing machine in the house and said that for her part she didn't see how people thought they could get along on nothing except what had done for their ancestors, that she certainly couldn't.

"Haven't you any ancestors?" Felice asked her eagerly. The Wheezy snorted.

"Of course. And they have been poor but they were honest," she added deeply.

Which Felice repeated gravely to Grandy in the garden and added eagerly, "Were our ancestors poor but honest?"

He smiled grimly.

"I shouldn't say," he answered her curtly, "that they were either conspicuously poor or conspicuously honest."

The Wheezy not only remodeled ancient dresses into stiff pinafores for Felice but she had to make the cushions that fitted in the dog hampers, down-stuffed oval affairs covered with heavy dull blue silk. The Wheezy sputtered that she couldn't see why "under the shining heavens, dogs should sleep on things traipsed out like comp'ny bedroom pin-cushions with letters tied onto their collars--"

Which so puzzled Felice that on one of those furtive occasions when she managed a few words with Zeb she demanded an answer. Zeb slapped his sides and chuckled.

"Because, Missy, putting on the frills and writing out the pedigree in French like he does makes folks pay jes' about twict as much for those dogs--"

Which was very bewildering, for Felice had not the remotest idea in this world what to pay for anything meant. How could she?

There was one very vivid recollection of Octavia. The recollection of the only time that the child remembered seeing her mother in a chair. How this miracle was accomplished only Octavia and Mademoiselle D'Ormy could have told, but on a certain day in a chair she was and the heavy rose silk curtains were drawn before the bed alcove and the room was gay with flowers and a ruddy fire glowed in the iron grate under the carved white mantelpiece. Felice sat adoringly on a footstool at her feet and they talked a great deal about a time when Maman should not only sit in a chair but should walk. It seemed that Octavia hoped to take her daughter to a place she referred to rather vaguely as The House in the Woods. Octavia had lived in this house in the woods when she was a girl and she was very much worried about what might have happened to the garden of that house. She thought that she and Felice ought to make it lovely again--if Piqueur were only still strong enough to help them. But before Felice had had time to find out just who Piqueur was, Mademoiselle had ushered in a curly-haired young man who carried a portfolio exactly like the one that Certain Legal Matters carried. And it was while Mademoiselle was taking Felice back to the garden that she heard her mother say,

"You must be patient with the silly fears of a woman who mistrusts all lawyers--these deeds are duplicates of those that another--"

In the garden Felice told Mademoiselle D'Ormy who the curly-haired person was--it was not for nothing that Felice had been staring at the pictures in the big Shakespeare Illustrated on the drawing-room table.

"It's the Portia Person who is talking with Maman--" she assured Mademoiselle gravely, "she looks like a man but she's really a lady--"

The Portia Person was surely as gentle as a lady when he hurried into the garden a little later and sent Mademoiselle back to his client by the fireside. He looked down at Felice--she was embroidering that day, seated primly before the ebony tambour frame.

"Felicia," he said chokily, "will you try to remember something? Will you try to remember--if--if your mother goes away and you're ever in trouble that you're to come to see me? That my name is Ralph--John Ralph? And that you'll find me at Temple Bar, here in Brooklyn?"

"Yes, Portia Person," she answered sweetly, after she had risen as Mademoiselle had told her to when a visitor should arrive. Although

she must have been eleven she was trembling with excitement, because he was her first visitor. "Yes, Portia Person, I will--only, how will I know--that I am in--Trouble--where is Trouble?"

Which seemed to make it hard for the Portia Person.

"I mean, if there's anything you need that you haven't--if there's anything you want some one to tell you about--now do you know?"

She nodded thoughtfully.

"Why, there are things right now that I want some one to tell me about--"

Before he could tell her any of them Mademoiselle came swiftly and let him out through the stable gate talking excitably and softly in French, which Felicia thought most unfair of her.

It is not at all strange that she does not remember when her mother died. You see sometimes there were several days when her mother was too tired or too ill to see such a vigorous person as Felice must have been. She merely remembers that there came a time when she was no longer asked to tiptoe past the door on the second floor landing. But she does remember that the thin visaged old French woman wept one day when she asked her,

"Shall we not go tell Maman I was happy today in the garden?"

She remembers it because they were the first tears she had ever seen and she clapped her hands and said "How queer, Mademoiselle! There are little rains in your eyes."

She did not ask to see her mother any more, for when she did Mademoiselle would answer "Not to-day." It was somehow a rather difficult time for them all; the Major was morose and sullen and Mademoiselle often had "little rains" in her eyes. She was not very patient with the lively young person who had grown tall enough to reach even the topmost drawer of the high walnut bureau.

Felicia was exploring them thoroughly one rainy afternoon while Mademoiselle dozed by the nursery fireside. She found a beautiful box with an inlaid cover that was filled with all sorts of fascinating trinkets; earrings and breastpins and droll bracelets of tarnished silver set with jade and coral--queer little letters folded in triangles with gay red wax seals, addressed in French, most of them--a soft black lace shawl--Felicia was trailing about grandly when Mademoiselle awoke to rage and scold.

The child was beginning to long for freedom, she was constantly questioning. Octavia's gentle raillery, Octavia's delicious half answers to the "Whys and wheres and whens and whats" had satisfied, but Mademoiselle's abrupt, "I can't tell you--" "It does not concern you--" "Zat is not of consequence--" were teaching the child to

scheme. She was perpetually trying to find out for herself the things that Mademoiselle declined to tell her. She was especially curious about Maman's closed door. Mademoiselle refused to open it.

But there came a day, when Mademoiselle wasn't looking, when Felice tapped gently at her mother's door and opened it and went in. And when she saw the empty bed and the empty chair she ran in great glee to her grandfather.

"Oh, Oh," she cried, "Why didn't you tell me that Maman had gone to the House in the Woods? Why didn't you let me go with her? For she said we would make the garden together!"

He did not answer her at once.

"How did you know?"

"Because Babiche is gone," she answered triumphantly. "And Babiche wouldn't be gone from the house unless Maman were gone--so they've gone to the House in the Woods--to attend to the garden--with--" she frowned until she remembered "with Piqueur--unless he is too old to help--and now I will go--"

It was curious how his voice faltered, he looked tired and more unhappy than in the days when Octavia had made a game of making him happy.

"Felicia," he groped for words as he faced the questioning-eyed child, "I--we--you--cannot go to the House in the Woods just now--I have Certain Legal Matters that must be attended to--but we--we will go some day--"

She accepted this with all the earnestness of her eleven years. But at the door she paused, shyly. He looked very "cross and worried."

"This afternoon, if you wish," she said, "I will play chess with you. I can do three gambits. I tried them alone yesterday. We'll not play in Maman's room--but in the garden--"

But for some strange reason he did not smile at all when he called "Check!" He only bent his head over her hand and kissed it as he had kissed her mother's. It was the first caress he had ever given her. She put the hand against her cheek and loved it when he was gone. And clambering up to bed she paused outside her mother's door.

"Maman, we were a little happy in the garden--" she whispered, "were you happy in your garden?"

Interminable days followed, dreary days punctuated with quarrel after quarrel. It sometimes seemed to Octavia's unhappy daughter that there was nothing she could touch without Mademoiselle's disapproval.

The garments that had hung in the wardrobes, lovely things that

tempted the beauty-loving child, were all packed away in the storeroom back of the linen closet; the bits of ornaments and jewelry that Octavia had let the child play with were all tucked away.

"It was Maman's--do not touch it!" "That was Louisa's, you cannot have it!" Or most fearful cry of all, "Put that shawl back, Felicia! It was Madame Josepha's--Louisa herself never wore it, it cost so much!"

The storeroom key was kept in the pocket of Mademoiselle's black silk apron. Gradually the miserly soul locked away all that seemed desirable or lovely to Felicia.

Of course there came a day when she stole the key and when she hid herself a whole blissful afternoon and rummaged joyously through dusty bandboxes and huge curved-top trunks. She had opened an iron-bound box last. And in the top had found a case marked,

"Mme. J. Trenton,
8 Rue de la--"

the rest was blurred. There were a lot of papers--all of them in French, in a queer old case of crushed leather. And when she thrust them carelessly underneath she found the tiniest muslin garments she had ever seen. They puzzled her greatly; she held one against her cheek instinctively.

"What a very little woman must have worn you--" she whispered, "As little as--" she frowned, "the thing made of string in the shop where we got the Wheezy--as little as Babiche. I wish--I wish I could have seen as little a woman as that--"

She sprang up startled, Mademoiselle was coming. Felicia had the door locked and was standing outside, a slim, dusty, shining-eyed figure when the woman began berating her. The girl slid cunningly along the wall, for Mademoiselle's wrinkled, trembling hand was stretched out as she demanded the key.

There was a grating, a round bronze grating in the side wall for the furnace pipe. Felice moved toward it. She was not answering Mademoiselle; just breathing hard, just staring.

Suddenly the key dropped. The two could hear it tinkling, down, down, through the rusty metal of the furnace pipe.

And that was the moment that the infuriated little French woman struck Felice.

The child was nearly as tall as the woman, she could have struck back, but instead she ran. She fled down the stairway, her angry breath coming in choking gasps. She flung herself against the door of her mother's room.

"Maman! Maman!" she screamed.

And that was where the Major found her.

"I hate--hate--hate--Mademoiselle!" And down the stair came the thin visaged French woman crying.

"And I monsieur, I hate zis ongrateful child! I theenk I hate your whole ongrateful race--I served your wife like one slave! And for Miss Octavia I was like two slaves! Zis child has ever hated me! I am weary of your whole race--I shall go back to ze country where I belong--"

So there they stood, those two antagonists, the woman with her eyes snapping and the outraged child with the tears streaming.

"Felicia," the Major's tone was terrifying, "you must apologize at once!"

Felicia was silent. She shook her head. The Major bowed to the French woman. "I apologize for her," he continued. "But I think Mademoiselle D'Ormy, you are right. She is growing into a woman and you are growing into a child--" And whatever else he said after Felice had fled to the garden doesn't matter. Yet two days later when Mademoiselle bade her farewell the two enemies flung themselves on each others' necks and wept. Much to the disgust of the Major, who fairly shoved Mademoiselle away and who appeared not to see the sobbing and impetuous young person who dashed headlong to the nursery.

But after that life was much more serene, much sweeter. To be sure she could no longer ransack the storeroom. She never had to explain to the Major what had occasioned that last tempestuous quarrel but she roamed at will through the whole dusty house and possessed herself gloriously of all its treasures.

You should have seen her in those days, tricking herself out in what finery she could muster from the walnut bureau. For after Mademoiselle's departure the afternoon chess prolonged itself into twilight and Felicia proudly dined with the Major instead of in the nursery.

She knew how one should look for dinner because there was Maman's portrait over the drawing-room fireplace, in the frock she'd worn when she had dined "with her family in France--" Mademoiselle had dressed Octavia for that wonderful party and she had never tired of telling Felicia how beautiful the eighteen-year Octavia had been.

"It is a woman's duty to think of her charms," Mademoiselle had said, "that is what the husband of Julie, Madame Recamier, said, it is what Madame Louise taught Miss Octavia--"

And so Felicia naively parted her hair and brushed it satin-smooth and coiled it neatly on the nape of her white neck with the same big carved coral Spanish comb tucked into the shining mass that Octavia had worn when she sat for the portrait. Sometimes she wore the lovely

black lace shawl, sometimes the creamy white embroidered silk one, and always the delicate coral and silver jewelry. Yet she couldn't possibly have known from the pale image that stared back at her from the dim shimmer of the drawing-room mirrors, how exquisitely lovely she was, not even when the Major bent over her hand and said, as he had said so often to her mother,

"You are very charming today, my dear!"

He did not know himself, the grim old stoic, how much he adored her.

At length there came a certain spring, seductive, too early warm, when the Major grew thoughtful, when Certain Legal Matters came frequently in the evening and left Felicia to ponder over her embroidery frame or wander restlessly in the bit of garden. She was seventeen now, a glowing, radiant seventeen, so divinely happy that the Major smiled whenever he looked at her.

For it had come, the Beautiful, Wonderful time when they were going to the House in the Woods! Already the rooms were filled with trunks and packing boxes, Marthy and Zeb and the housemaids were sorting and folding incessantly. And around them, wandered, starry-eyed, a useless young person who hugged to her heart a joyous dream of a woman in a garden--a woman in a little lace cap and a trailing rose-colored dressing-gown, a woman who would say,

"Oh Felicia! I hope you'll be happy today in the garden!"

You mustn't blame the Major too much that he did not know what a cruel thing he had done--he did not even dream that Felicia believed she was going to find Octavia in the garden. Those long ago evasions that had silenced her little-girl questions he had forgotten. Indeed I think he never let himself remember those days in which the child had asked, "Where is she gone?"

And so they had come to the last night of all, the night before they should start their journey.

Inside the gloomy library grandfather and Certain Legal Matters discussed stupid details about where the furniture should go to storage and whether they should change the route and instead of going around the coast by steamer and down the St. Lawrence, travel part of the way overland--they consulted long yellow time-tables.

Felicia drifted across the dismantled library. She was pulling Octavia's adorable white lace shawl about her firm young shoulders, the flickering gas lights made her rather pale.

"It's hot--" she remarked plaintively. "I think I'll go into the garden--" Her grandfather nodded. She slipped through the French windows out to the narrow balcony and down the circular iron stairway.

A thousand million stars above her, shining through the tops of the

old trees of heaven--a tender breeze that blew Marthy's curtains ever so gently and let the wistaria banners stream back and forth--if she shoved it carefully, that smallest iron bench, and then stood tiptoe upon it, she could peer through the top of the gate into the rectory yard.

Fairy land! A score of merry young humans dashing about--a babble of noise and laughter and the dyspeptic choir master nearly wild with the confusion--"Order! Order!" he screamed, "Ladies and gentlemen! Boys! Kindly remember this is the last rehearsal, the final rehearsal! When the organist begins the choir should file in very slowly--the principals remain outside until the choir is in--I would like the tenor and the baritone soloists' voices to sound as far off as possible as they approach--will those gentlemen be so good as to stand at the extreme end of the yard?"

Felicia, behind the ivied gate, caught her breath. For as the rather disorderly procession drifted away through the arch the soloists moved easily toward her. One of them was disgracefully fat, he puffed as he mopped his brow, but the other walked lightly, tossing his cap boyishly as he walked. Close to the wall, he laughed, a youthful, buoyant laugh,

"Jove!" he ejaculated, "Now I _have_ done it--my cap's on top of the wall--"

The music was growing softer, fainter, the fat man had cleared his throat for singing.

Felicia's heart stood still. The moon shone gloriously, it made little white eyes of the narcissi that stared up at her from the garden border. The wind stirred in the ivy. Felicia sighed. His head, beautifully rumped, topped the wall, he was still laughing softly, talking to the man below.

"Second cap I lost here, lost one when I was a little shaver--there was a girl--"

He was looking straight into her eyes now, he caught at the rusty top of the gate and stared.

"Why--girl!" he murmured.

Oh! if you could have seen Felice! Felice, with her hair coifed smoothly on her dear little head! Felice, with the big carved Spanish comb holding that hair in place! And her white, white throat and the tangle of old lace about it! He stared into her grave young eyes, he looked at that lovely young mouth of hers, that mouth that was wide enough for laughter but small enough for kisses. They swayed toward each other, those two, as naturally as a butterfly sways toward a flower. He kissed her.

As she leaned toward him the treacherous bench toppled too far. She

dropped away from his caress as suddenly as a star falls in the heavens. She lay in a little crumpled heap crushing the sweetness of the narcissi. She didn't know what had happened to her, she just lay there and laughed softly and put her hand to her mouth gently.

A perfect din of voices blotted out her consciousness. After all you know, a sprained ankle is a sprained ankle even if you don't know you have it.

CHAPTER II

THE HOUSE IN THE WOODS

However good at pretending Felice might wish you to be she would never like you to pretend you were the crumpled little person that Major Trenton and Certain Legal Matters picked up from the narcissi border. It wasn't only her sprained ankle that frightened her, though that hurt dreadfully of course, but it was all of the persons running with lanterns, the housemaids from the kitchen and Zeb and Marthy from the stable, and from over the top of the wall had vaulted an enormously tall young man who had insisted on dashing off for a doctor. Just having so many persons about all at once terrified her.

But when the ankle was bandaged and the doctor had left her lying comfortably on her own bed with Marthy beside her, Grandfather came and sent Marthy away. It was nearly midnight, the world outside was still save for the hoarse sounds of the shipping craft outside in the bay.

"You may as well know," said the Major sternly, "that I happened to look out of the window, just before you fell--this young man who was kissing you has been chivalrous enough to insist that it was quite all his fault, that you did not know he was going to kiss you--but of course I am not so stupid as to believe that you did not expect something of the sort when you climbed up to the top of the wall. Knowing the women of your race as I do I might have suspected something of the sort--" he folded his arms, and looked so stern in the dim light of her bedside lamp that Felicia shivered, "et I hardly thought you would have the opportunity, carefully guarded as you have been. I have told the young man that he must make no further attempt to see you. And the doctor assures me you will be able to continue the journey that we have planned."

And when he was gone and Marthy had come back to put out the light Felicia asked just one thing.

"Did Maman have to stay in bed because she fell off a bench?"

Marthy's gruff voice cleared itself in her throat, she wasn't sure

whether she wanted to laugh or cry at the absurd question.

"Not for that," she answered briefly, "don't let that fret ye, my precious lamb, that foot of yours will be good as new in the matter of a week maybe."

"Even if it wasn't evaire," Felicia persisted, "I'd be proud, proud, proud I climbed the wall--I shall tell Maman so--"

There was a long silence in the room. The lamp was out now; Marthy was at the door ready to go. Felice could only feel her approaching the bed. Her rough kindly voice blurred out of the darkness.

"Precious lamb, were you thinking to see your mother?"

In spite of her aching ankle the girl sat up in the bed. She laughed softly.

"Silly old Marthy! Don't you know? That's what we're going to the House in the Woods for--to see how Maman has made her garden lovely--I was so proud, proud, proud when I knew Grandy was going to take me--I've waited so long since Maman went away--"

"God forgive him!" moaned Marthy, so softly that the girl did not hear her, but aloud she said compassionately, "Don't be settin' your heart too much--on seeing her--" and shut the door softly without saying goodnight.

But when the kindly soul came to help her down the stately stairway in the morning the tears were coursing freely over her lean and grizzled cheeks. She talked in a husky whisper all the way down.

"We've not been in the manner of friends, him being so careful and all of ye, but oh, Miss Felice, it's proud I am that I watched you in your bit of a yard and it's sorry I am that you're going--and it's long the days will be till you come back--and if there's anything that Zeb or I could do for you--"

They were in the hallway now, the Major was waiting and some strange men were carrying the last of the baggage outside to the carriage. Suddenly Felice put her two arms around Marthy's neck and whispered, whispered very softly and lifted her face away blushing,

"You can tell Dudley Hamilt I've gone to the House in the Woods--when he comes to ask you--" she said.

The Major was very impressive in his travelling coat, so stern and solemn that Felicia hardly dared to look at him until after they were on the steamer. He was really very gentle with her, he tried his best to make her comfortable, he did not refer at all to the events of the night before as he wrapped a steamer rug about her and helped the whining-voiced stewardess to prop a pillow under the bandaged ankle.

It was a desolate day, gray and overcast. The shore-line was blurred out before Felicia had so much as a fair look at it. The wind blew, raw and cold, but she shook her head when they suggested she let them take her into the cabin. She just lay with closed eyes and cuddled a little black velvet cap, a boy's cap, under her chin and with every chug of the engines her heart echoed,

"This is too far for Dudley Hamilt to come--he will nevaire find me--"
She scarcely spoke to the Major. Poor Major! He walked the deck, his thin cane, tap, tap, tapping and his great caped coat bundled tight around him.

The morning of the second day they changed to an even smaller and dingier steamer. That was the day that the spring rain fell heavier and heavier. Felice lay bundled in blankets in the narrow stateroom and cried softly. There wasn't even a stewardess on this steamer to comfort her. Sometimes the Major stopped outside and asked her quietly what she would like. There was nothing she liked, but in the mid-afternoon she pulled herself together and let the Major wrap her coat about her and leaned on his arm to limp out of her stateroom and down the wobbling gang-plank and across a dirty, water-soaked wharf to the platform where the local train awaited. And after that she sat another dreary hour, while the ancient engine complainingly coughed its way through the bleak, gray woods to the ugly brown station that was their destination.

It was late afternoon. The rain had not really ceased to fall, but the sky was clearing a bit in the west as the girl stared curiously about her, while the baggage man helped the trainmen with their luggage. Suddenly the girl cried out with joy,

"Look, there is Maman's cart--"

For around the corner of the station space crept an ox-cart driven by a half grown boy. But in the hollow of the plains, just before he had reached that dreary town, the boy had stopped his cart and gathered sprawling boughs of wild cherry blossoms, those first harbingers of spring in that bleak northern country, and fastened them to the wooden yoke that held the oxen to the wagon and tied the lovely things sweet with rain, to the poles at the rear and made a sort of fairy chariot for the little lady who was coming to dwell in the woods.

He smiled at her under his slouchy cap as he stumbled stiffly toward the Major.

"The horse," he stammered, "--her foot got sore las' thing--this were all we had to fetch ye in--Piqueur--he's too old fur drivin' to the village any more, so Margot--she sends me--"

There were chairs in the back of the ox cart, odd chairs built of bent hickory with buffalo robes tucked in them. The boy swung Felice into one of them easily. He tucked the soft fur about her vigorously.

"Better wrop up good," he warned her solemnly, "S'cold." He was perfectly good-humored at the Major's sharp reprimand at the way he handled the luggage. The Major clambered in, the oxen started slowly. As soon as they had passed through the ugly village they turned out of the woods into a narrow road through sandy plains, an interminable road it seemed to Felice. Last year's sere leaves rattled on the scrub oaks; the wind-blown juniper bushes made dark spots against the wet brown of the sand and the cart swayed lumberingly through the heavy road. The girl was cold and tired and hungry but she held her head high and gazed straight before her into the fast falling twilight.

Up hill, the narrow winding road across that almost endless plain led. Sometimes the boy let the oxen stop to rest and the rising steam from their wet flanks told how hard even those sturdy beasts found the climb. Just as she was thinking that she could endure it no longer, Felice glimpsed a faint light on a plateau-like place above them. The boy gestured with his whip.

"Thar, Major," he called back cheerfully over his shoulder, "We're a-gittin' thar--"

They were through the plains at last, ascending a sharp, rocky road for the last quarter of a mile which grew still narrower but was lined with enormous bare trees that creaked and moaned in the evening wind. Felice was really very frightened.

"Now that's luck," cried the boy cheerily, looking back at her. He was pointing with his crude whip. It was quite dark now save for a faint light below the horizon of the sand dunes, but over her shoulder as she looked where he gestured Felice saw the thin crescent of the new moon.

When she looked ahead again she could glimpse the dark outlines of the great stone house. It looked cold and formidable. It was set far back from the rising road, a long way back from the massive gate posts beside the tiny gate house where flickering lights burned on the sills of three little mullioned windows. They drove through the gates, across the flagstone-paved drive of the stable yard and came to a slow stop under the inky shadows of the wooden gallery that was built across the front of the house. A woman was hurrying down the sagging steps, such a fat, comfortable woman that Felice unconsciously leaned toward her even before she could see the alert black eyes and the wide smiling mouth. She held a lantern high above her gray curly head. It shone upon the figure of a bent old man, who stood, his cap in his hands, at the foot of the steps. He was weeping. His voice was throaty with suppressed sobs and Felice couldn't understand at all what he said because he cried out in French when he saw the Major. But she could understand the welcome cheer of the fat woman's greeting as she called,

"It's all ready--supper and all--just as though it were twenty years ago, Monsieur! Ah--" sympathy rang in her voice as the Major helped Felice descend, "I did not know--she is--lame--" Her lantern was on

the ground now, her sturdy arm had encircled the slender figure in the coat, "Margot will help--so--"

And that was the way that Felice went into the House in the Woods. That was the way she entered the broad and draughty hall, with the formidably big rooms on either side dimly lighted by the queer candle lamps and the faint glow from the fires on the chilly marble hearths.

A table was set before the fire in the dining salon. It looked dismayingly long, with its deep lace cover and the branched candelabra. The very height of the carved chairs that were placed at either end seemed appalling.

But when Felice was seated in one of them, with her coat still huddled about her, she looked around with artless curiosity, and watched as in a dream, while the Major put his hand on Margot's sturdy shoulder.

"You've kept it well--" was all he said. But when he had dropped his hand Margot was wiping her eyes on her apron.

Piqueur served supper, his old hands trembling as he placed the dishes before them. A hot thin soup, that warmed Felice and made her send a wavering smile across the table, a platter of ham boiled in apple cider whose delicious odors made her sniff hungrily, and after he had served the meat the old man put thin glasses beside their plates and brought a bottle of wine, wrapped carefully in an old napkin, and stood behind his master's place.

And the Major, standing after he had filled Felice's glass, lifted his own high:

"Felicia," he said slowly, "We will drink to your home coming--"

It was all so, strange that she did not notice until Piqueur set a dish of custard before her that all the silver with which she was eating was marked with the same odd mark that had adorned her silver drinking mug back in the nursery in Brooklyn. She stared at it as she held a thin spoon aloft.

"Look, Grandy," she cried, "it has my honey bee!"

He nodded.

He scarcely seemed to heed her, already he had risen and was pacing restlessly about the room, peering out the windows, addressing staccato questions in French to Piqueur. He pulled the shabby silken rope at the doorway and a bell trilled somewhere faintly. Margot came running.

"It is good to hear" she said as she entered. And helping Felice up the circular stairway she murmured tenderly, "You cannot know, Miss Felicia, how glad we are, my uncle Piqueur and I, that the house is opened once more--you're not so tall as your mother, are you?" She was

positively chattering now. Felice caught her arm more closely.

"Oh, where is Maman?" she demanded. Margot shook her head. She sighed. She was opening the door of the upper room. She did not answer for a full moment. Her lips worked nervously before she spoke.

"She is not here. But this is the bed where she always slept when she was young--the bed at which she laughed so much--ah, Miss Felicia, don't you think you will like it? See how droll--" her brown wrinkled hand rested on a beautifully carved corner post, "These are little monkeys climbing for fruit--when she was a baby Mademoiselle Octavia used to put her hands on them so--"

Felice smiled.

"I know. She used to tell me," she confided. "She told me that Poquelin, the father of Moliere, made it." She was wan with fatigue, poor child, even after she lay, warm and cozy, in the great bed that had been her mother's. And the last thing she saw as she closed her eyes in the wavering candle light was Margot's fat and comfortable figure, trudging toward the fireplace to spread out her coat to dry--

It had been a fearful week for Margot, this week since the Major's curt message to make the house ready had come. For all that she was forty-five and sturdy and skilful at the myriad tasks that her uncle Piqueur's rheumatism and age had gradually let fall upon her shoulders during the slow passing years, this had been a job that put her on her mettle. Eighteen years of dust and disorder had Margot somehow or other weeded out of that building. But even with the pale spring sunshine and wind to help her and even with the huge fires they had kept kindled all day in the broad fireplaces, the corridors were still damp and cold and musty. And she was weak with fatigue and excitement. She sat down beside the fireplace, her tired body relaxing as she stared through the gloom at the figure in the canopied bed.

"She is not so beautiful as Octavia--" she thought, "but she is very sweet--and her eyes--they have that same longing to be happy--" she sighed as she tiptoed clumsily out of the room and down the draughty stairway. She stood respectfully beside the Major's chair. "Monsieur," she said gravely, "does Miss Felicia know anything at all about all of us?"

He looked up at her quickly, his dark eyes sparkling with anger at her audacity, but something in her sober, respectful gaze quieted him.

"I do not desire that she shall--" he answered. "It is better not to have her--but--" his voice faltered. "I regret that she does not understand that her mother--that Miss Octavia--" his thin old hand tightened its grip on the frail arm of the chair, "I do not know," he ended miserably, "just how it came about that she is expecting to find Miss Octavia here--in the garden. Perhaps you can tell her something to comfort her--perhaps--"

Gray-haired, wrinkled, her skin brown from exposure, Margot leaned forward, her eyes shining with excitement.

"Sometimes I think," she said distinctly, "that Miss Octavia is in the garden, Monsieur--" She laughed softly at his start. "Do not think I am out of my wits--" She tapped her head significantly. "I do not mean like a ghost--I do not see her. Only there is something, most of all in the springtime--that makes me happy. Perhaps Octavia's daughter will feel it. Perhaps that thing, whatever it is, will make it easier for me--" she wiped her eyes, "to answer all things she will ask me--"

Upstairs in the four-poster bed that Poquelin had carved, Felicia slept, she smiled as she stirred in her slumbers. She was very tired. "Maman," she muttered drowsily as the Major paused outside her door on his way to his room, "In the garden--" and the Major listened and sighed.

She awoke to the diddling drone of Piqueur's quavering voice. In the clear sweetness of the May morning above the twittering of the birds it raised itself, the quaint measures delighting her ears. Even in Piqueur's thin falsetto the old melody sang itself--tender, graceful, spirited, never lagging--he was dropping pea seeds into the trench that Margot had prepared in the kitchen dooryard, he was always content when he was planting.

Felicia limped to the window across the moth-eaten carpet with its faded doves and roses. She flung the casement out and listened eagerly.

"Piqueur," she cried entreatingly "tell me just what it says--that song you sing." But it was Margot who leaned on her hoe and looked up at the girl and laughed.

"He sings of a girl--of more than one girl--who takes care of sheep--the song tells them to hurry up--that time drips through the fingers like water--" Margot's own throaty voice joined lustily into her uncle's refrain, but a second later she was translating once more. "You must find your fun in the spring forests--when you're young--"

The girl in the window above them clapped her hands. A slender black-haired, eager-eyed dryad, whose shabby brocaded dressing gown trailed around her bandaged foot--

"Oh, wait! wait!" she cried, "Wait until I can do it--" her lips pursed themselves delicately and a second later the lilting trill of her lovely whistle took up the refrain of Maitre Guedron's song.

She stretched out her young hands toward the woods. The tardy tree tops were budding at last, their lovely bronze and red and tender green shining in the morning light.

"In the spring forests," she cried, "you must find your fun!--are those the words of the song, Margot?--Oh, look, look!" she pointed

joyously to a blackbird on top the swaying maple outside her window. He whistled--she whistled, saucily back.

"Oh!" sighed Margot. "It is good to be young. It is good--go back to your bed, little one, I'll bring your breakfast."

But Felicia couldn't go back to bed. She hobbled delightedly from window to window, staring out at the open space in front of the house, with its descending terraces and the gray jungle of underbrush that hid the edge of the clearing. She turned eagerly when Margot entered with a tray. She was bubbling with joy.

"Is Maman comfortable this morning?" she was chattering. "Will she be in the garden? Where is the garden? I've looked and I can't see it--or is she in her bed yet? And is it up-stairs?"

Margot's hands trembled. She put the tray down on the bedside table and pulled the girl across the room and coaxed her into the bed, rubbing the small bandaged foot, cuddling the quilts about her, as she tucked the pillows. "So many questions!" she evaded. "Eat your breakfast and I will help you dress--"

Felicia snuggled under the covers and nibbled her toast hungrily.

"Yesterday," she confided, "I was unhappy; it seemed too far to come-- I was afraid, from something Marthy said, that I wasn't going to find Maman--she said I mustn't set my heart on it--"

Margot sighed. She came close to the bed and took Felicia's hands in hers.

"Listen carefully," she entreated, "the thing I have to tell you is hard. You see when Octavia went away from you she did not come here, she--"

"Where did she go?" demanded Felicia sitting bolt upright.

"She went--" Margot's throaty voice dragged painfully, "She went where all good women go when their work is done--"

"Her work wasn't done," objected Felice. "She said it would be a great deal of work to build the garden over, she said she was afraid it would be all weeds--Piqueur was so old--she said--Oh! why are you weeping, Margot?"

"When she went away from me first," moaned Margot, "I thought I could never stand it--it was so still and so lonely here in the woods without her--and now, after all these years that I have learned to live without her--it is as if she had gone away again to have to try-- to tell you--" she knelt at the bedside, her lips moved piteously. "Try to understand, little one, she is gone--neither you nor I can find her--"

"Nor the Major?" asked Felicia incredulously.

"The Major least of all," said Margot firmly. "She is not--"

"Not what?" demanded Felicia..

She was sitting on the edge of the bed now looking very little in the ancient dressing gown.

"She is not living any more," sighed Margot.

There was a long pause, a pause in which the drone of Piqueur's voice, still singing Maitre Guedron's old song, floated through the open casement.

"Not living?" questioned Felicia, her eyes widening with frightened--comprehension--"Oh! Oh!" her voice rose tempestuously, angrily, "You shall not say such dreadful things! They are not true! The Major said we should come to this house in the Woods, he said--" she paused, her mind groped back over the years.

The rising tide of her anger swept her fear that this strange woman was telling the truth farther and farther out of her thoughts. She rose, absurdly majestic as she steadied herself with one slender arm against the quaint carved post of the bed. She pointed toward the doorway.

"You'd better go away, Margot," she ordered clearly, "You can't stay here and talk so to me--" the childish simplicity of her phrases was absurdly inadequate to express her scorn, "You do not know that I have a vairee bad temper--I make myself proud, proud, proud when I lose it --but it will make you vairee unhappy if I do--I say and I do most dreadful things when I'm angry--If I call for the Major he will come and send you away--for always and forevaire--as he did Mademoiselle D'Ormy--and no matter how sorry I am afterward he will not let you stay--"

Indeed, this idea of appealing to her grandfather had come the instant before when she heard his voice outside interrupting Piqueur's song. She limped swiftly across the space toward the window, she leaned far out and called to her grandfather, who stood in the courtyard below, gravely inspecting the lame mare that the boy had brought from the stable. So intent was Felicia with her question that she forgot her recent fear of the Major.

"Grandy!" she called, her clear tones ringing down to him, "Grandy, you will have to come and send this Margot away--you will--"

He came up the stairs to her slowly, pausing formally outside her door to tap for Margot to open for him; but even before he was in the room, looking very pale and stern and old with his beautiful head lifted high above the ruffled shirt and his peaked hat held in his hand, the

girl's eager appeal had begun.

"This Margot," Felicia's words tumbled impetuously, "She's been telling me lies--she says Maman isn't here--that she isn't in the garden--or in the house--she says she--"

"You'd better stay, Margot," said Major Trenton, "I think Miss Felicia will need you. Felicia, let Margot wrap that gown about you, it's chilly here. Felicia, we do not know how to make you understand about your mother--we did not want to make you sad when you were little so I did not tell you. It was her wish that I should not distress you--" his face worked pitifully, "--with the manner of her going--what she said to you about the garden--you did not understand, my dear--She had a notion, my little Octavia, that we do not die--that only our bodies die--many other people believe this--are you listening, Felicia? She thought that her spirit," he groped for words, "the Something she called the 'Happy part of her' couldn't--'stop'--as she called it--she said-" his lips were quivering, "that part of her would always try to stay in the house where you lived so long and in this garden and house in which she lived when she was young--like you--that is all--What Margot tells you is quite true--she is not living--she has not been living since you were eleven--she died--" his words trailed miserably, "She is not living--" he repeated feebly.

The girl's eyes had never left his since he had begun his inadequate explanation, she did not cry out, she merely stood there, pale, unbelieving and stared at him.

"And she said the Happy Part of her would be here?"

He nodded.

"Then," said Felicia calmly, "If she said so, she will, and you and Margot are both stupid and bad to tell me that she won't--If you will find my shoes--" she turned petulantly to Margot, "I will walk until I find her--"

"But you cannot find her, she is gone--" the deep agony of his voice rang in the great room, "Quite gone--"

"Where has she gone?" demanded Felice stubbornly.

He gestured his despair.

It was Margot who came to the rescue, sane Margot, who had collected her senses once more. She pattered across the room to the wardrobe, calling over her shoulder as she tugged at the door.

"Wait, wait," she entreated, "You will understand some day! Just now we won't talk about it any more. She's not here but she has left so many things for you! So many messages for you! So much for you to do! Look, Miss Felicia!" She held aloft a broad sun-hat and a pair of gauntleted gloves, "Just where she hung them--as if she knew you might

want them! These are the things she wore when she worked in the garden--here's her wicker basket with the trowel and the hand fork-- and here's the garden book--" She was standing before Felicia now holding out the treasures. "If you'll sit over there by the window I can tell you about the day she found this book--"

The hurt look was fading from the girl's eyes; she reached out her hands for these things that had been her mother's; she was quite docile as the Major helped her to the chair by the window. She had the garden book cuddled under her arm; she was holding the gloves against her cheek; she looked like a child instead of a grown-up person.

You won't have to pretend you can see Felicia's great-great-grandmother's garden book--you can really see it in the library of Octavia House if you care to ask the Poetry Girl to show it to you-- but perhaps you'll like to pretend that you can see the seventeen year old Felicia, wrapped in that shabby brocaded dressing gown sitting beside the window staring at the stained title page, trying to read the faint inked inscription. Perhaps you'll like to pretend too, that you can hear her grandfather's voice steadying itself as he leans over the back of the chair and translates the inscription for her. The book's in English, you know, but that written inscription is in French.

"It says," read her grandfather, "something like this:

"To my little Madame Folly
Whom others call Prudence Langhorne
I present this book, for I have heard
A woman can be very happy building a garden--"

"And whose name is this?" Felicia put her finger on the broad sprawl after the inscription.

"It's the initial of the man who gave it to her--J.--" said her grandfather grimly.

"And J. gave this book to Maman?"

Margot chuckled.

"No--no--" she explained. "Your Maman found this book over there in the cupboard--it's a very old book, Cherie. It is a book that a man gave to--" her fat fingers checked off the generations lightly, "a lady named Prudence--she was the mother of Josepha--and Josepha was the mother of a Louisa. It was this Louisa who was your mother's mother--now do you see? And think, Miss Felicia--" she waved her hand toward the opened door of the wardrobe, "what many, many things they've left here for you! When Octavia was just as old as you she rummaged and rummaged every day--" Margot wiped her eyes with the back of her hand--the Major moved toward the window and looked down upon the garden. "She put them all in order, each one's clothes in a different place, I was the one who helped her. And she used to laugh

while we sorted the things and say what fun it would be for the next one who came to see them--that's you, Miss Felicia--"

"Oh! Oh!" breathed Felicia, her eyes shining like stars. "How sweet of her! How sweet of you, Margot, to keep them all for me! You are sweet, sweet, sweet to bring me her gloves! Once she told me about this hat, I knew its ribbons would be blue! I know how they tie in back so's it won't make me warm under my chin--she told me--look, isn't this the way?" Her slender hands lifted the hat to her hair, so sweetly rumped from her pillows, "Look, Grandy, look at me! I am wearing Maman's hat --she told me I could wear it when I came to the House in the Woods! Do you think it looks well on me?" Her naive vanity almost broke their hearts. "Do you, Grandy? Look at me!"

He turned slowly. He stepped bravely toward her and lifted her hand and kissed it.

"You look very charming, my dear," he murmured, he was breathing hard, "very charming--I'll go back to the stable, if you'll excuse me-- Margot will show you the other things--" he was in the doorway now, his head held high, "as she told you they've all been kept for you carefully. I hope they will make you very happy."

He closed the door softly.

Things to make her happy! Ah! Margot! Cunning Margot! spreading the treasures of those dear dead women before their imperious little descendant! Wise old Margot, who must speak so carefully that she will not break that girl's heart! Margot, who must undo all the trouble that years of evasions from Grandy and lies from Mademoiselle D'Ormy have stored up for her!

With what infinite tact did she bring them out, those vanities And trinkets of those girls of bygone days; with what adroit eloquence did she introduce all their foibles and virtues to Felicia! Oh, but she was a fine old gossip, was Margot! She couldn't quite trust herself to touch Octavia's clothes that first day. She plunged wildly into Louisa's.

While Felice's hands were busy over a shagreen jewel case filled with hideous garnet and gilt breast-pins and bracelets of the sixties, Margot leaned from the casement and called,

"Bele, oh, Bele! You careless boy! Bring some wood for Miss Felice! Make a fire up here! It's damp!"

And while the boy, embarrassed and awkward, was kindling the fire Margot fled to the kitchen to juggle wildly with her pots and pans and leave a thousand directions for Piqueur about what to serve for the Major's lunch.

"Never tell me a man knows how to bring up a child," she scolded as she stirred her soup, "never tell me that! He's done as well as he

could but he's made a fine mess of it--the poor child! Thinking Miss Octavia would be here--not knowing so much as a new-born kitten--that's as much sense as she has--as a little new-born kitten!"

And she hurried back with a delectable luncheon on a tray.

Outside the sun had hid itself and the fickle spring clouds were dripping over the desolate garden. But at the fireside, curled up in the winged chair with her bandaged foot propped comfortably on a footstool, Felicia sat through the long afternoon and chattered and laughed and clapped her little hands.

Oh, those foolish clothes that had belonged to Louisa! With their silly--whaleboned waists and their grotesque basques and impossible pleatings! Felicia couldn't get one of those bodies half around her healthy young waist. But she liked the bonnets and the shawls. They were adorable. The shawls were so soft, so quaintly shaped, the bonnets were fairly ravishing. Felicia tried them on, peering into a carved tortoise shell hand mirror, and giggled whimsically at the little flowered ones with lacy ties and the stuffy winter ones with velvet bows.

"Miss Louisa was very handsome," Margot informed her, "My aunt says she was the handsomest girl she ever saw--but very high-minded, very uppish!"

"I know about her," Felice answered easily, "Mademoiselle D'Ormy belonged to her. Louisa went to Paris, you know, and Mademoiselle lived there. Mademoiselle used to tell me she bought clothes and clothes and clothes! Are these those clothes?"

Margot nodded.

"Josepha's clothes came from Paris too--" she spread a great brocaded velvet coat before her, "Josepha wasn't pretty at all like the rest of them, she looked like her father, they said, and he was a homely old man--Josepha had a temper--I never saw her--I wasn't even born when she went away, but my aunt served her and she said Mistress Josepha had an air--a way with her--if things didn't suit her--" she lowered her voice impressively--"Ah--what she wouldn't do, that Josepha! Once my aunt took her an omelette--a beautiful omelette cooked with chopped fine carrots and peas and parsley and a big tall glass of milk for her breakfast, but Josepha, she had desired broiled chicken that morning, so she walked straight to the window here where I'm standing and threw the omelette out--She would always throw things--that one--her shoes--or anything--when she was angry--"

Felicia blushed.

"Margot," she confided, "this morning when I was angry I was like that--I wanted to throw things, only I hadn't anything just then to throw--but when I was little I did--my bath sponge, you know, and once a key--" she grew thoughtful, "the key to the storeroom where

Mademoiselle hid things--Margot, you won't hide these things, will you?" she hugged a wee muff jealously to her breast, "You won't, will you?"

Margot chuckled and shrugged her shoulders. The room was filled with the finery she had dragged from the tall wardrobe. On the chairs, over the bed, hanging from the pegs of the cupboard, of every conceivable color and shape, those forgotten clothes glimmered and shone.

"These are the oldest of all--" Margot was kneeling and tugging at a carved cedar chest that was under the bed, "These are the things that belonged to the first one of you, the things that belonged to Prudence Langhorne." She dragged the chest triumphantly to the girl's side. "On top,--" the odor of the cedar was wafted out into the room like the odor of the pine plains through which Felice had been driving yesterday, "here, these are things she had when she came to live in this house that was built for her--plain enough, eh?" She spread the gray stuffs and brown linsey wooleys out scornfully. Their voluminous skirts and long tight sleeves and queer flat yellowed collars were stupid enough in the midst of all the splendor about them. "But look, now look, what she wore after she came--"

Felicia looked. And not even all the frills and fabrics that she had already exclaimed over could compare with the loveliness of these frocks of Mistress Prudence. They were so dainty, so fragile! With their delicate yellowed laces! They were so soft and faded with age! Each little frock was packed by itself in a yellowed linen case, each had shoes and stockings and sometimes a gay little head dress folded away with it. Short-waisted, scant skirted--

"Oh! Oh!" cried Felice, "these are the ones I love best of all! These are the ones I'll wear! Oh Margot! That darling rosy one!" She bobbed out of the chair excitably, "Look at the little silver shoes for it! Oh Margot, dress me in it at once! Oh, Margot! How pretty I'll be for dinner every day--"

You should have seen her when she limped down the stairs for supper! Margot had brought her one of the Major's canes and tied some faded cherry ribbons on its gold handle. Piqueur was just lighting the candles when the two descended. Grandfather sat by the fire, his head drooping. It had been a hard day, this day he had spent with old memories. He had grieved over Octavia, he had yearned for Louisa, he had pondered mightily concerning Josepha who had been so angry with him when he had married her daughter. But he'd thought not at all of little Madame Folly in whose house he sat and brooded, not until he looked up and saw her great-great-granddaughter standing in the doorway, dressed in a cherry-colored gown, all gay with tarnished silver ribbons and yellowed lace. Because she didn't know any other way to dress her hair, she had tucked it in its usual knot at the nape of her lovely neck, but on top the neat parting was perched a narrow gold cirlet with a tiny cherry-colored plume and she held her head audaciously high as she swept him a mighty curtsy.

"Louisa's things aren't pretty at all," she babbled breathlessly, "and Joseph's I can't wear--but oh, Grandy, aren't Prudence's just sweet!"

"They look like Imprudence's," he bantered as he rose.

She brought forth other treasures from under her curved arm.

"And look! Little chess men and a little chess board. Get a table! I'll checkmate you before even dinner is ready! Margot has to go brown the chickens--hurry Margot, I'm hungry--"

She had come into her own. She was like a young queen come to her throne. From that very moment she ruled them all,--Grandy, Margot, Piqueur and Bele as though they were her slaves.

She adored every inch of her domain, she could scarcely wait for the ankle to heal so that she could rove about the overgrown paths in the woods and tumbled walks and weed-covered lawns. She could not get up early enough in the morning to do all her eager young heart longed to do. Rebuilding the garden was a sacred trust; hadn't Maman told her to do it? All day long, her serious face shaded by the old garden hat, her slender hands encased in the gauntleted gloves, she prowled about the terraces or rummaged in the tool house, usually with the beloved THEORY AND PRACTISE OF GARDENING under her arm. Sometimes she spread it open on a dilapidated bench so that she could read its solemn dissertations. The very title page appalled one with the gravity of the task. In flourishing type it boasted of its august contents--

Wherein is fully handled
all that relates to the fine gardens
commonly called pleasure gardens
as Parterres, Groves, Bowling Greens.

Containing
Divers plans and general dispositions.
Methods of planting, and raising in little time,
all the plants requisite in a garden.

Done from the French original in Paris
anno domini 1709

Daytime was not long enough for its perusal. Night after night, she sat hunched up in the Poquelin bed and pored over her beloved book. Sometimes after she read she would run and peer out from her casement window in the moonlight and scowl over the wilderness that lay below her, the wilderness that had once been a garden. The cleared space that stretched for two or three hundred yards before the house was divided into three flat terraces whose crumbling banks had lost their once careful outlines; and at the bottom of the lowest terrace a tottering lattice, sagging with old vines, made a background for the fountain in whose rubbish-filled depths a chubby cupid struggled patiently with an impossible marble duck.

"If I could only see how it went--" she would fret, "I can't see which

one of them it is."

For in the back of the Garden book were many folded charts and maps, so big that they stretched out enormously over the counterpane of the bed. Sometimes Felicia thought that Mistress Prudence' garden must have been built after "The Sixteenth Practise"--that was a brave plan "with three terraces and a fountain at the base," but sometimes she thought it must be after the "single star cut into cabinets."

At first she contented herself with gardening in the Bowling Green with Piqueur feebly turning over the weedy sod and Bele tramping to and fro with barrows of manure. Her Bowling Green was in the very center of the second terrace. She had discovered that directly she began.

"In France," she read, "a bowling green differs from what you call a bowling green in England. We mean no other by this word than certain hollow sinking and slopes of turf which are practised in the middle of a parterre. A Bowling Green is the most agreeable compartment of a garden, when rightly placed most pleasant to the eye beside the pleasure it affords us of lying on its sloping banks in the shade during hottest weather."

Only it wasn't so easy to read as it looks now we're writing it over. For "The Theory and Practise of Gardening" made you rub your eyes and groan, it was such a puzzling sort of book. To begin with its type was bewildering with its s's all turned like f's and its italics so thin you could scarcely decipher them. Besides that, the author, who remained discreetly anonymous, but none the less unwarrantably conceited, had a maddening way of spreading over a whole page the way not to do things--he didn't state at the start that it was the wrong way he was relating, he just meandered on, letting the reader suppose that was the rightest way possible as he wrote at length pertaining to:

"How to grow Box Trees from seed.

"The box tree is a green shrub of greatest use and one of the most necessary in the garden. There are two sorts, the dwarf box which we French call Buis A' Artous much used for planting the embroidery of Parterres. It naturally does not grow very much which makes it called dwarf box. The other kind is the Box Tree of the woods, which advances much higher and has bigger leaves which make it fit to form Pallisades and green Tufts for Garnishing. It comes up in the shade but is a long time gaining any considerable height. It is put to a great many petty uses, as making balls--as the climate of France is very different from that of the Indies in the degree heat _it is better to raise from slips and layers than to try to sow seed which is a great time coming up_."

The book quite frankly disclosed the terrors as well as the joys of the game. It was most disconcerting to read of

"The Distempers and Insects that Attack....The great Enemies are

Rabbets, Garden Mice, Moles, Caterpillars, Maybugs, Ants, Snails, Turks, Cantharides and an abundance of weeds, the names of which are unknown to us--"

She shouted with youthful laughter as she read it, the echoes of her merriment sounding through the empty halls. She doubled her little fist and shook it toward the candle, flickering low in its socket.

"That's what has hidden the garden," she murmured, "that's why I can't see it--" she wrinkled her nose in disgust. "--Abundance-of-weeds-- Piqueur and Bele will settle you!"

All through the verdant spring, all through the quick hot summer the girl puzzled over the unanswered riddle--the scheme of the garden. Piqueur and Bele and Margot toiled valiantly pulling up the myriad abundance-of-weeds, but in vain. It was not until the resplendent autumn had passed that she had any inkling of the real pattern. There came a glorious moonlit night, a chilly night when she snuggled under the blankets and yawned over the chapter that told her "how to mulch plants for winter." The wind blew so chill that at midnight she pattered across the old carpet to make the casement fast. The whole cleared space below her glistened with the fairy glamour of the first frost. Under the magic silvery whiteness the lost "parterres and cabinets and lozenges" with their paths and borders stood out as clearly in the moonlight as the day when Madame Prudence's workmen had charted them there. She laughed aloud as she ran back and turned to the map labelled "The twentieth and left part of the garden which is the most superb and which is The Bifected Oval."

"Oh, Oh!" she murmured as she leaned across the stone sill, unmindful of the cold, to blow a tiny kiss to the fountain cupid, "How stupid I was not to see! You just live in half the oval and the kitchen garden and the stables are the other half--"

She could scarcely wait for morning to impart her wonderful news to Grandy and the others.

"Some say it can be done within five years, but ye author believes from experiences both at Versailles and in ye south of England that a decade or more is necessary to establish any garden--"

Which warning from the fat brown leather book made it easier for Felice, you see, because she never hoped to accomplish the garden in a little time. Besides, Piqueur was, as Octavia had foretold "too old." But it was Margot--oh, heaven-sent Margot, and the adoring, clumsy Bele who toiled like four men, and so cabinet by cabinet, parterre by parterre, terrace by terrace, the superb old garden began to grow lovely once more.

Think of the victory of the summer when the hedges were at last properly trimmed! Think of the joy of the flatly rolled turf, the spring that they found a massive iron roller in an unused shed at the back of the carriage house! Think of the wonder of that day when the

little fountain laughed again, its pipe unchoked and its overflow trickling neatly away under the hidden terra-cotta drains!

The busy days lost themselves in weeks, the weeks dripped endlessly from season to season. By the time the second spring had come it was as though Felicia had lived in the House in the Woods forever.

The only links with the old life were the two or three visits of Certain Legal Matters; and as Felice hated him as much as ever she hid herself all she could during his short stays.

It was during his second visit that Felicia had her first real encounter with the doughty lawyer. It was in March that he came, and Felicia and Margot were deep in their spring plans. They needed a great many things that they didn't have for the garden. It was practical Margot who suggested casually,

"Why couldn't you ask Mr. Burrel? He could send them to the junction and I could go with the oxen--I have always asked him for vegetable seeds when I sent the spring list of supplies--write in a paper, Cherie, all that we need--put down the roses and the trees and the lily bulbs and all--tell him that he must send them."

She was rather cunning about it, was Felice. She waited until the lawyer was strolling impatiently in the gallery waiting for the cart to drive around from the stable. She approached him boldly, holding out her list.

"These are some things we need for our garden," she said. "You will please have them sent at once."

He stared at the imperious young creature. It was the first time she had ever voluntarily spoken with him. He took the list. He was very ill at ease.

"I am not certain," he began as he stared amazed at the lengthy order, "that I can arrange for--er--"

Inwardly quaking Felice answered him. Her low voice sounded astonishingly calm to her.

"But we must have them," she announced. She played her trump card valiantly, "You can give it back to me if you can't get them, I have another person--who can attend to--Certain Legal Matters for me--" Her voice trailed faintly, she was really rather frightened.

"May I ask whom?" the lawyer demanded in amazement.

"I know where he is," she asserted childishly. "He is in Temple Bar, Brooklyn, and he would get them for me quickly, I'm sure. You see, in April we shall need these things for the planting. He told me--" she added this with delicious positiveness, "to remember to let him know if you did not manage things properly."

The cart had clattered around now, Piqueur was waiting politely. The lawyer frankly gaped at her, his eyes narrowed. He looked very pale in the afternoon light. His thick hand reached out for the list.

"I--I will see that you get what you wish, Miss Felicia--" he capitulated. "You do not need to ask any one else about it--I'm glad to do you the favor--"

And all the way across the Pine Plains to the station he questioned Piqueur as to whether the Major or Felice had had any visitors. But Piqueur, who had always hated the lawyer, cunningly evaded the cross-examination. And in less than a week after Burrel's departure Margot drove the ox-cart across the plains and brought it back fairly laden with florists' crates and boxes.

Life was not all easy. Keeping the Major happy grew more and more difficult. If Felicia found the House in the Woods joyous, he did not. He brooded restlessly save for the hours they spent together over the chess board or at dinner; sometimes he slowly paced the long gallery or the hallways, but more often he sat gloomily, his hand on his cane, his chin resting on his hand and looked sadly across the terrace where Felice directed her workers. He, like Piqueur, was growing "too old." He was really seventy-four that summer. Margot knew when his birthday came and tried to make a little feast but he ignored it. He tried to pretend a polite interest in the reconstruction of the garden but his heart was not in it. He liked better to sit indoors in his carved chair. Even on the warmest days when evening came he wanted a fire kindled on the chilly marble hearth.

Felicia labored patiently at "making him happy." She had long since made him a partner in her own game that she called pretending. "Pretending" just as in the old days when she had played with Maman. Of course, she had to whistle to pretend and he still affected a scorn of the whistling he had once forbidden. The "pretending" usually took place directly after dinner. She would kiss the top of his forehead audaciously and dance before him with a deep curtsy.

"Let's pretend, Grandy! Let's pretend I'm not Felice! Let's pretend I'm a blanchisseuse--that's a washerlady. This is a thing that Piqueur's mother learned in France when she was young--whenever Margot and I spread our linen on the grass to bleach we whistle this--"

Or sometimes she would demurely assure him that she was, "--a girl who's pulling roses to sell the man who makes perfume--" She would snatch up her needlework basket and swing it at her hip and pull the roses down from the mantelpiece vases and all the while she would whistle, with her dear little chin perkily lifted and her sparkling eyes watching to see if the Major was listening.

The song he liked best of all was the song of the hunt. I think he liked the audacity with which she appropriated his peaked hat and perched it jauntily on her own head and caught away his cane to use

for a riding crop. "This song," she would explain joyously, "is for autumn, when all the men and women are waiting on their restless horses for the master of the hunt to blow his horn--" Her cupped hands at her lips made a beautiful horn and her whistle rang valiantly in the great ceilinged room but the hunting song usually lost itself in a whirr of laughter and frills as the huntress dropped breathless on the footstool at the Major's side and put her sleek head against his knee.

"Grandy," she whispered once, "You stub-stub-stubborn man! Why don't you learn to pretend! Why don't you make believe they're all here?" she waved her hand toward the portraits around them! "I pretend they're proud, proud, proud I'm here! It must have been vairee stupid for them before I came!"

The Major was not her only audience. She frequently "pretended" for Margot and Piqueur and Bele, prancing gaily-about them in their snug kitchen on the long winter evenings when they huddled by their fire. For them she whistled all the droll bits of Marthy's songs that she remembered. Piqueur only listened solemnly, with his smothered briar pipe held politely in his hand; but Margot, buxom, and red cheeked with her iron gray hair tucked under her flaring cap would sit and gape and laugh and quite forget her knitting whenever she could hear,

"He who would woo a widow must not dally He must make hay while the sun doth shine He must not say 'Widow, be mine--be mine!--'"

Felicia's absurd whine for the timorous lover always made Bele snort from his corner,

"But boldly cry 'Widow, thou MUST--'"

Ah, the deep contralto of that boyish voice of hers roundly mouthing the pompous swain's wooing!

She could always make Margot cry when she "pretended" _The Wreck of the Polly Ann_--with her gray eyes wide with excitement as she described the rolling waves from the top of the rigging! I don't suppose she ever knew all of the words of any of these songs or ballads, she never did any of them quite the same any time, but she caught at the plot and she babbled a scrap or two of the chorus and she always knew every lilting turn of the tunes.

There was one "pretend" she could only do when she was alone. She did not try it often. Sometimes on the spring nights when the tender breezes let the half-awakened wistaria flutter outside her window, she would blow out all her candles and lean far across the sill and stare at her unfinished garden.

And when the house was still, oh, heart-breakingly still, she would kneel beside the bed and whisper,

"Let's pretend! Let's pretend we're back in your room, Maman! Let's pretend it's THAT NIGHT! Let's pretend they've just brought me in from

the garden! And that you're laughing a little because you've heard him say,

"Second cap I've lost here! Lost one when I was a little shaver! There was a girl--why, girl--!"

"Oh Maman! Maman! If you'd only been there! You wouldn't have brought me away!"

She kept the choir boy's black velvet cap in the lowest drawer of the wardrobe. Once Margot saw it when she was tidying things.

"I don't remember this--" she murmured curiously.

And Felicia had snatched it away jealously and cuddled it under her chin.

"Because that's mine!" she had retorted passionately, "It's mine! Mine! And it didn't belong evaire to any other woman only me!"

And the years slipped away like Time in Maitre Guedron's song and every year the garden grew a little lovelier and every year Felicia grew a little more sedate and every year Piqueur and the Major grew "too old." Until Piqueur no longer left his fireside and as for the Major--well, there came a day when the Major fell prostrate by the staircase and lay for a long time breathing very hard. That was a terrifying time until Bele brought a doctor from the village. He was a good little doctor, round faced and pink cheeked, quite the youngest thing, save Bele, that Felicia had seen in many years. And he pulled the Major back to something like life--a something that played chess very slowly and sometimes called Felicia Octavia and sometimes querulously murmured,

"Louisa, I forbid you to go to Paris--it's a bad business--"

She "pretended" nothing in these days, simply went gravely about the myriad tasks that awaited her, directing the stupid Bele, helping the white haired Margot, sitting proudly at the head of the table smiling across at a black eyed old gentleman who muttered and fumbled peevishly at his food or quite forgot to eat at all until she coaxed him. She always smiled at dinner; one should smile at dinner even though one feels very, very sad. And after dinner one must make an attempt to give a querulous old man his game of chess. And let his cold lips caress one's hand when Bele comes to put him to bed.

But after that, especially if it was spring, she would wander restlessly in her garden or pace back and forth in her high ceilinged bed chamber. And sometimes she would kneel beside her window and murmur a little prayer--she didn't know it was a prayer, it was just a scrap of something she remembered--

"I can't get out--I can't get out!" cried the starling," which isn't in any prayer book of course, save the prayer book of a woman's

imprisoned heart.

She was in the kitchen garden one morning just beside the gatehouse showing Bele for the thousandth time how to trench the peas without burying them, when a crumpled old man in a rough cap with a basket under his arm, limped through the gate.

"I want to see Major Trenton--" he said firmly.

Felicia turned. No one ever came to see the Major any more. Not even Certain Legal Matters since the time of the Major's fall. Felicia had signed many papers at his last visit some three years before and since then no one had bothered the Major.

"You'll have to see me," answered Felicia, coolly, "Bele, not--so--deep! You're smothering them--what is your business?"

The man took off his cap, he put down his basket and knelt to open it and out popped the littlest, drollest fluff of a spaniel that ever frisked.

"Oh, oh!" cried Felicia softly and dropped to her knees. "Oh, oh, it's a little Babiche! Oh Zeb! Zeb! To think I didn't see who you were--"

And they walked across the paved door-yard with the tears in their eyes and Felicia took him in to Margot and brought him soup and fed the wee doggie and fluttered about like a wild young thing instead of a sedate person of twenty-seven.

"I want to ask you a thousand million things! I want to ask Marthy a thousand million things--"

Zeb closed his eyes and shook his head.

Felicia patted his shoulder.

"Has she gone away, like Maman?" she asked softly. "I know how hard it is when folks go away, Zeb."

"But that's not the matter o' my comin'--" Zeb pushed his bowl away and stood respectfully, "That matter o' my comin' was as I must see the Major. On your going away, Miss Felicia, he promised me rent free for my lifetime and he gave me all the breedin' stock they was and left me the business for what I could make, so's to speak. Which isn't what it were, with new-fangled big dogs getting in style now. And with Marthy gone and all. But now with Mr. Burrel skipped out like he did, things is awful--just awful--and It seemed like I'd got to tell the Major--"

Margot pulled out a chair for Felicia.

"Sit down, Cherie," she murmured, "Margot will get it out--have you seen Mr. Burrel?" she questioned eagerly, "We've no sign of him this

long time--"

"He's skipped out--" repeated Zeb dully, "Things is awful--Come last Thursday they pasted 'Auction, April 10 for Unpaid Taxes' over everything. So's when I was packing my things I come on some writing Miss Octavia left Marthy. As to how to get here, and I come."

He was weary and spent with his journey; he was stupider than ever, poor old Zeb. Not even the round faced doctor, whom Margot and Felicia called for advice, could learn anything more from his disconnected story, save that there were "heathen, dirty filthy heathen" living in the old house.

Felicia cuddled the new Babiche thoughtfully.

"Do you think," she asked, "that the Major would miss me, Doctor, if I went away a little while to find out about these things?"

The doctor shook his head.

"He wouldn't," he answered, "But, Miss Day, you couldn't go!"

She smiled.

"Couldn't I just!" she breathed. She was quite calm about the details. Her perfect poise awed both Margot and the doctor into thinking her quite capable. "Zeb could stay here with Margot, the doctor could take me to the station, Zeb says he didn't come on a boat, just a train. And you know, Margot, when I get to Brooklyn, I'll go right to Temple Bar. There was a man, as I told you, another lawyer. When I was young he told me to go to him if anything happened. Maman had him come. He will know what to do."

Nothing they could say would dissuade her. The touch of imperiousness with which she silenced their objections made the blundering well-meaning doctor want to shake her. He waited impatiently while Margot made Felicia ready for the hasty journey. He saw nothing absurd about the slender figure that came down the stairway toward him wrapped in the very same traveling coat in which she had first journeyed to the House in the Woods. She was wearing one of Louisa's ugliest bonnets with the strings tied primly under her chin and she was fearfully pale.

The Major was sitting by his fire, dozing gently. He did not notice her at all. He roused himself for the doctor's perfunctorily cheerful farewell. It was then that he noted Felicia's coat and bonnet.

"What are you pretending?" he asked.

"I'm pretending I'm going on a journey," she answered cheerfully. "Don't you think I look like going on a journey, Grandy?"

"I think you look very charming, my dear," he murmured automatically,

his thin hand on the top of his cane. He shivered slightly. "But I forbid you to go to Paris--bad business--it's a bad business, Louisa!"

At the gateway, just as the doctor was clucking briskly to his horse, Felicia put out her hand and stopped him. Zeb and Margot and Bele stood respectfully beside the gatehouse, respectfully but very troubled.

"It's silly," faltered Felicia, "but I think--I--can't go alone--Zeb, you bring me my new Babiche, I can carry her under my arm."

Zeb handed the dog up proudly, patting her professionally. He scratched his head perplexedly as he stepped back from the wheel.

"Hey, wait!" he addressed the doctor as he started a second time. He fumbled in an inner pocket of his rough coat. "I was forgetting, Miss Felicia, a matter of a letter for you I found in Marthy's things--she sent it off at you this long time ago but it came back at her--"

He handed it up, thin, much creased and much bestamped and postmarked.

Miss F. Day
New York.
Or return to

M. Z. Smather
2 Montrose Lane, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Pretend you were the doctor if you like, the tired country doctor, mildly sorry for the little old maid granddaughter of your apoplectic patient--that queer patient who lives in that stone mansion some of those French refugees built over there across the Pine Plains. That's an easy enough thing to pretend, but a tiresome enough thing, too, for then you'll have to make believe you're urging your tired horse over those heavy roads to the railway station so you can get the old maid there in time for her train. She's quiet enough, in her seedy bonnet and shabby coat, a nice sensible body usually, only very self-willed. You know perfectly well she's going off on a wild goose chase and that she shouldn't be taking that fool puppy with her.

But oh, I hope you're good at pretending! For then you can pretend you're Felicia Day! Felicia Day sitting in a lumbering local train, quite unmindful of the atrocious rocking roadbed or the blurred spring forests that whirl past your smoke-glazed window; quite oblivious of all the terrors and discomforts of journeys past or journeys still to come!

For then you can pretend that you've just slowly pulled away the envelope that was so useless because of poor old Marthy's undecipherable handwriting and that you've kissed the inner wrapping that reads "Please send this to Miss Trenton (if that's her name). At once." And then--oh then, you can pretend you are reading the first letter you ever had in all this world and that it says,

Dear Felice:

You see I've found out your first name even if I'm not sure of the rest. Anyhow I know Major Trenton is your grandfather. He wouldn't let me see you this morning when I went to your house and this afternoon you'd gone away. The old woman says you've gone to a house in the woods. Please, please tell me you'll let me come to see you. Please tell me where it is. She doesn't seem to know exactly. The doctor says your foot will be all right but, oh, I can't forgive myself that I let you fall. I wish I had never, never let go of you at all--

Oh, girl, please write in a hurry where you are. I want to tell you so many things. I want to ask you a lot of things. You can send a letter to my house, it's 18 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn. I know you know my name because you called it when you were falling. It was so wonderful to have you know my name--

Oh, Felice, please write me very soon. I can't wait until I get your letter.

Your DUDLEY HAMILT.

CHAPTER III

LOST DREAMS

Perhaps you remember the fat boy who teased little Felice through the gate of the rectory yard. He didn't grow up like the rest of the choir boys, he merely expanded until he was a droll larger edition of his small tubby self; perhaps you've heard him singing at St. Patrick's and smiled at the bland and childlike face from which his beautiful big round baritone pours forth--he surely can sing! And eat! It's really rather fun to go to the Brevoort with him and watch his pleasingly plump wife remonstrate while he orders luncheon.

"Oh Tomothy Tom!" she groaned one showery April day, "those are all starchy, sweet, fatty things! Don't order another food! Or I'll want to eat them too, I shouldn't have another ounce, I shouldn't!"

"Not if you're going to take that jump over the fence in the second act," said Graemer who was lunching with them. He was her manager, Edwina Ely was a much better known person than her fat husband. And a good bit older, too, if you must know it, though of course she did not look so with her almost too blonde hair coiffed elaborately under the wicked wings of her impertinent toque and her pleasure-loving chin nestled in her white furs.

"I hate for us to eat here, the food's so good," she murmured with the

same plaintive note that makes the audience weep at the end of the third act of "The Juggler."

"But I had a very special reason for wanting to come here," Graemer explained. He had to be a bit wary of the starchy things too, though he still had a figure in spite of his weight. He was complacently vain of his prematurely gray hair, his fresh youthful skin and his dark eyes. He reminded one somehow of a husky widow, he was so feminine in spite of his size. He looked leisurely enough for a busy man. You wondered how he had time to manage so many player folk, write so many plays and yet dawdle over his luncheon as he did. He leaned forward to ask Edwina's husband something. The fat man laughed uneasily.

"Well, he does usually lunch here," he admitted, "and I did use to know him rather well, but I'm not exactly the person to introduce you if you want anything from him--he's not overly fond of me--"

"I understood from Edwina that you were boyhood friends." The fat man smiled and deliberately and delicately chucked his wife under her rosy little chin.

"Tattle-tale!" he taunted her.

"You were!" she persisted, "you know you were!"

"If you ever were," said Graemer earnestly, "Permit me to suggest that you renew your youth. What I want him for is partly on Edwina's account. "The Juggler" isn't going as well as it ought to--I haven't anything new in sight for her and I'd like to keep this going until I have. What we need is a press agent like Dudley Hamilt."

"He's not a press agent--" gasped the fat man.

"He's the prince of press agents," answered Graemer easily, "he gets more publicity, favorable publicity, for anything he touches than any one I've ever watched work. Look what he did for the coal interests--and look at that work of his in last fall's campaign--"

"But that was politics--" protested the fat man. "He wouldn't call that being a press agent and I doubt if you could interest him in anything theatrical."

"I can if I can get at him. Some one's bound to if I don't. It isn't only for 'The Juggler' that I want him, it's for all my things--what I'm going to offer him is something big--about the biggest end of the game--but I don't want to seem to go to him so I thought that if there was some casual way--if you should ask him to lunch with us--"

"He probably wouldn't--of course he might--" the baritone ruminated, "Our fuss was a long time ago." He settled himself comfortably, he dearly loved to gossip. "He's a queer chap, Dud is. Always was. We used to sing in the same boy choir when we were kids. Little church over in Brooklyn. He was an angel terror, regulation boy soprano. Into

everything. Nearly drove the old choir master to drink. Was always being expelled. Our families both belonged to the church so Brownly always took us back after a row blew over. And carried us along while our voices were changing. When I first began doing baritone Dudley was singing all the tenor solos, had a peach of a voice, but he never did anything with it afterwards."

"After what?" asked Edwina irritably.

Her husband chuckled.

"Wait, I'm telling you. It's a long story and a funny one even if the joke is on me. You see Dud had a sweetheart on the other side of the rectory wall. He was everlastingly edging toward it, tossing things around to attract her attention and showing off generally. Funny little girl. I didn't think she looked like much when we used to see her first but gee, she certainly did come along when she got older! Grew into a young peach! Dud just hung around silently worshipping, pretending all the time he didn't know there was anybody picking posies in the garden. I didn't know that she'd so much as noticed him until one night in the spring when we were rehearsing for a special oratorio. Some night!" The fat man sighed reminiscently. "All to the Romeo and Juliet! Choir forming on the outside, old Brownly having a tempermental fit as usual and Dud and I stationed over by the wall ready to split our epiglottises; on our marks, set all ready to go when Dud tosses up his cap, just as he used to when he was a little shaver and Bing! Cap lands on top of the wall. So up clammers Dud--" the raconteur smiled, "and I hope I may never see anything so pretty pulled off as what happened next! That girl's head over the top of the gate! Big dreamy eyes shining in the moonlight, hair parted, big comb tucked in, lace dewdaddles around her shoulders! And Dud had been languishing about her since he was twelve! First and only love! In about one minute three seconds he had disappeared over said gate. It was no place for a fat boy. Besides old Brownly was fairly roaring from the chancel door, so I trotted along like a good child and left Dud to his philandering. Brownly nearly had apoplexy getting along without his pet tenor. After rehearsal I made a try for Dud, chirruped under that blooming wall for about half an hour until an old gentleman came out and requested me--er--more than requested me to go away.

"Old Major Trenton. Ever hear of him? Civil War hero. The fellow who raised all that rumpus about chaps taking pensions if they'd wits enough to earn their salt. He wouldn't touch one. Seems he'd gone to war after having a row with his wife, she'd lit out for Paris just before war was declared. Died over there leaving an infant daughter that he had his own troubles getting away from some of her mother's French relations. I used to hear my grandmother tell about the Trenton case by the hour. There was some kind of a queer will, something about the mother's money going to female descendants and a lot of talk about a bunch of property the dying wife had mysteriously acquired in France. The old Major only had one arm left after the war was over but he fought a duel with a chap who insinuated that his wandering wife wasn't all she might have been. By the time he'd got things settled he

was the finest old grouch you'd meet in a lifetime. Had the recluse business down to a fine point. Summers he used to go off to the wilds of Canada or the Adirondacks or somewhere that his wife's will had specified their daughter must live and winters he used to lock the girl up in that mansion next to our church. Wouldn't touch a penny of his daughter's funds, actually paid rent to her, my grandmother said. Made his living raising dogs, lap-dogs, in an old stable back of the church. They were all the style. The fair customers used to hope always that they were going to see the fascinating recluse widower. But they never did. The only time he ever came to the surface that the public knew about was the morning after the daughter eloped with the rector's son. Grandmother says the Major smashed up a couple of reporters the _Hawk_ sent over to interview him but he did tell 'em what he thought on the woman question. Nobody had the nerve to go near him for quite a while. Not for a couple of years or so. And then somebody found the daughter starving in an attic. The rector's son had been a nice enough chap but he hadn't enough grit to earn his living and the girl, though she wasn't so young, couldn't touch her property without the Major's consent and as she was as stiff-necked as he, she hadn't made any effort at getting that consent. The rector's son had died of pneumonia and their baby was just recovering from it and the girl herself never did get over the strain. Somebody carried her home to die, which it seems she took some years doing. Dud's sweetheart the other side of the rectory wall was her daughter. The Major had lost a wife and a daughter and he evidently had made up his mind he wasn't going to let the last generation slip away. So you can just about guess how popular Dudley Hamilt was when he broke into the Major's back yard.

"The old soldier didn't take a chance. He abso-bally-lutely disappeared the next day. Took the girl with him, of course. Dud went around like a wild man. He was twenty-one that spring, tall as he is now and had about seven times as much pep as he has now, if you can imagine that much. Evangeline looking for Gabriel was a paper chase compared to Dudley trying to find his lady-love. He spent months at it. Got haggard and wan, had a couple of fights with Burrel, a lawyer who was the only person who knew where Major Trenton had gone. Funny thing, it was that same Burrel who absconded with the American Trust Company's stuff two or three years ago. Trenton must certainly have made it worth the lawyer's while not to tell--for that lawyer was as crooked as a corkscrew and yet Dud couldn't bribe him with everything he could muster--which was quite some, for in those days the Hamilt family had scads of money.

"I made a sort of break one night--" The fat man felt of his neck ruefully. "Tried to joke with Dud a little, it was a year or so afterward and I thought he'd gotten over things--but--er--he hadn't. He--" He paused and blushed. "That's he though, coming through the door," he ended. "Want me to try for him?"

It was the fair Edwina who dared however. She lifted her head charmingly and beckoned.

"Don't ball things up, Tommy," she murmured under her breath, "Leave

it to us--get out if you see he's still miffed with you--Please come over here, Mr. Hamilt," she called softly. "I want you to meet Mr. Graemer."

He looked as blonde as she, almost, ruddy, lithe, but somehow old. He did not smile at her greeting, he merely nodded. She gestured again, so imperiously that he obeyed, but with scant courtesy, and he did not look at all overjoyed at meeting the illustrious Mr. Graemer. He sat down however, ordered his luncheon and listened gravely enough to Edwina's chatter.

"Have you seen me in 'The Juggler'? Aren't you willing to say I can act now? He never would--" she turned to Graemer. "He always said I couldn't--but, don't you think I do in 'The Juggler'?" she entreated Hamilt.

"It's an actress-proof part, isn't it?" he bantered, watching her lazily.

"Brute!" she pouted.

"Perhaps he is complimenting me," teased Graemer.

"Not at all," promptly answered the rude Mr. Hamilt. "You've all but ruined the play with your everlasting managing. It's a peach up to the last act. Until you chuck that maudlin bunch of slush and scenery at us. Where did you get that play, anyhow?" he asked insolently.

"Why, he wrote it last summer," protested Edwina.

"Yes?" his uplifted eyebrows were insulting as he glanced quizzically at Graemer. "Then he was about twenty-five years younger last summer than he is now. The first two acts of that play--Gad, it got me up till then, but the rest of it--" he broke a bit off a crusty roll and buttered it carefully, "I can readily believe, Mr. Graemer," he added deliberately, "that you did write the rest of the play."

"You have to give the public what it wants," suggested Graemer blandly.

"No, you don't," said Dudley Hamilt. "You have to make the public want what it's going to get--or what it needs."

"Which is exactly what I wanted to see you about," drawled the manager significantly.

Hamilt shrugged.

"If I ever did get into the theatrical game," he answered rather more good-humoredly than he had yet spoken, "I wouldn't insult the public by a perpetual bluff that they were getting something new. I wouldn't keep handing out things that assumed the public all had salacious minds or else no minds at all. I don't mean that I'd go in for uplift

stuff--that isn't what the theater is for--it's to amuse--to thrill--
to wake up our emotions--it's to _play_--But as you chaps who control
the thing have it going now it's so damnably mechanical there's no sense
of play left in it. Why don't you find something that admits the
audience has an imagination?"

"As for instance?" Graemer put in adroitly.

"I don't know--" Hamilt sighed, "I haven't the least idea what. Only
it ought to be something that everybody is unconsciously hankering
for--something that we miss all the while--something we lack in this
machine-age. Something that will come across the footlights by itself
instead of having to have the spotlight show it to us, something that
would make us feel the way we did when we were kids--I guess it's
romance--and perhaps the spirit of it is gone--"

Graemer smiled. He nodded to Edwina. Then he drew a long breath and
put his case bluntly.

"I came in here rather deliberately, Mr. Hamilt, because I've been
wanting to have a talk with you for a long time. It isn't only about
'The Juggler' that I wanted to talk with you but about all of my
productions. There are so many of them and I am so busy with them that
there are a lot of angles of the game that I do not have time to
touch. The thing I need is what you have aptly described--some one who
will make the public want what it's going to get. Some one who will
make it think it's going to get what it wants. The kind of thing you
did last fall in politics--making the whole thing seem something any
regular fellow must find out about and something he'd have a lot of
fun finding out. It's struck me all the while you were pulling your
strings that that sort of work about the stage would wake up the
theater-goer the same way you waked up the voter."

"It might," agreed Mr. Hamilt cautiously. "There might be ways--if you
had something to back your statements that the game was worth while--I
mean to the theater-goer--"

"Well, wouldn't you be willing to think it over and have another talk
with me? I don't mean immediately and I do mean on a big scale. I'm
sure you understand that--"

Hamilt motioned for the waiter, coolly insisted on paying his own
check and rose.

"What you suggest is rather interesting," was all the answer he
vouchsafed, "I might."

But after he'd gone Graemer looked after him and laughed.

"Middle name is Cynic--but he's pretty young yet."

"And the best looking thing," sighed Edwina pulling on her gloves,
bored with her long silence.

Graemer was thoughtful.

"He's given me an idea," he announced suddenly. "Or perhaps it was Tom's gossip about him. How'd you like to do an ingenue part like that missing lady affair--start with your head over a garden wall--call it 'The Heart of a Boy,' say--fill it up with this stuff Hamilt calls youth--"

Tommie absorbed his last pastry.

"I've just remembered the girl's name," he announced, wiping a crumb from his moist lips. "It was Felicia something or other--sort of sad, wasn't it?"

"Maybe it would have been sadder if she'd married him," suggested Edwina ironically. "He is a grouch, you can't get around that."

And the grouch, striding briskly up the avenue, was trying to be fair.

"Poor old Tommie!" he thought ruefully, "I don't know why I should go on hating him because he will blab--it's the nature o' the beast--that stupid little much-divorced animal that married him--" he glared at two innocent young shoppers who were passing, "Gad, women are such sophisticated cows nowadays--" Spring always made him wretched, spring always made him fretful, spring always sent him off for the woods somewhere, any woods so long as it was woods. He pondered over whether he could get away Friday or would have to wait till Saturday morning, and eventually decided on Saturday, consulting a memorandum book scowlingly as he did so, jotting down appointments. He noted that he would have to be in his office at five o'clock on Friday. Somebody or other was going to telephone him about something. Which made him reflect irritably that of all the mechanical devices of a mechanical age the thing he hated most of all was a telephone! He could scarcely endure the stupid way everybody shrieked "Hello!" through it. He wished morosely that he could take a week-end trip without any luggage whatever because he always had a row about his luggage. He wished there was some system whereby one needn't always lose half one's luggage.

Felicia could have told him! Infrequent traveler that she was she had been properly educated on that point. However much she may have yawned, at the tender age of ten, over a certain dissertation on the etiquette of travel, given one summer afternoon by Mademoiselle D'Ormy, Felicia aged twenty-seven, embarked upon her first journey alone, found herself musing with mighty comfort upon the charming definiteness of those never-to-be-forgotten axioms. For Mademoiselle had made the small Felicia recite them over and over until she was letter perfect.

"On a journey the traveler should enumerate all the traveling equipment in fives to avoid the confusion caused by losing one's belongings. Count upon the fingers what one has possessed upon

starting."

All unconscious of the amused glances of her fellow passengers, Felicia Day, in her absurd bonnet and antiquated traveling coat sat primly in the Pullman section that the doctor's thoughtfulness had provided for her and counted her "five" just before her train reached New York. She smiled as she counted, a whimsical smile--

Item one. A letter! A beautiful letter, reposing next her heart under the stiff bodice of a frock that had once belonged to Josepha, mother-in-law of Major Trenton.

Item two. One fluffy, sleepy Blenheim spaniel hidden in the capacious sleeve of a coat that had been Octavia's.

Item three. A long and narrow knitted reticule, once carried by Louisa, wife of Major Trenton, now containing bills and coins placed there by Margot, said reticule held firmly, as Margot had directed, with the center twisted firmly around Felicia's left wrist.

Item four. One russet leather traveling bag once used by Major Trenton, now containing modest rolls of ancient lingerie, Octavia's massive silver brushes and combs, a faded India dressing-gown belonging to whom even Margot couldn't remember, on top of which was tucked a flat wicker basket containing small cakes and sandwiches wrapped neatly in a napkin and weighted over all these contents, where Felicia herself had placed it when Margot wasn't looking--THE THEORY AND PRACTISE OF GARDENING!

"Perhaps the wistaria will have to be pruned--perhaps the ivy around the fountain will need trimming--maybe the narcissi will need thinning out when they're through blossoming--I'm stupid about narcissi. I've been living so long where there weren't any--" Her thoughts had raced longingly toward the back yard of her childhood while Margot had been packing the bag.

Item five. "Myself," decided Felicia nodding, "I must be careful not to lose myself."

Which, droll as it seemed when she enumerated, proved to be the most difficult item to remember.

"_Likewise on a journey especially of a business nature, one should keep clearly in mind the exact order of destination, choosing the most urgent first._"

Destination first. "Temple Bar" where one may find the Portia Person who long ago promised to help should one ever be "in Trouble."

Destination second. The address at the bottom of a grimy handbill that announced "To be sold at auction for unpaid taxes--By the order of J. K. Harlow, Justice of the--"

Destination _really_! Eighteen Columbia Heights!

"First," Felicia at least began her thinking clearly, "I shall go to see the Judge and I shall say 'Don't sell Grandy's house because Certain Legal Matters hasn't attended to things. Just wait. I know another lawyer, he's in Temple Bar. He will attend to everything.' Oh no! First I'll go find the Portia Person and while he is attending to everything I will send a letter to Dudley Hamilt's house--then I will go to Grandy's house and wait for Dudley Hamilt to come--oh! oh! Babiche--I can't arrange things clearly in mind, I can't no matter how I try! Only I must--"

So over and over to the roar of the train she tried to drill herself.

"First the Portia Person--then the Judge--"

It was nine o'clock in the morning when, tired and bewildered, she emerged from the subway at Borough Hall, Brooklyn. The little hand, that "had never spread itself over a doorknob or a fire-iron or any clumsy thing" struggled valiantly with the russet bag; the new Babiche, cramped and shaken from her day and night of travel, poked her snubby nose from under the traveling coat and sniffed and squeakingly yawned. Louisa's bonnet had worked itself askew, the sharp wind from the river was flapping the heavy clothing about her slender ankles and displaying the outlandish old "Congress gaiter" shoes. A distressed and ridiculous figure, she stood and shuddered at the roar of the elevated above her and the jangle of the surface cars that clattered past her and trembled at the disconcerting honk of the motors that barely escaped crushing her.

Officer Brennan, pompously regulating the congested traffic watched the grotesque person on the curbstone and chuckled.

"For the love of hivin," he thought, "Thim movie actors will dress like annything for the money--" and glanced about automatically to see the camera man. But something in the terror of the little woman's glance flashed over the crowded crossing to his warm Irish heart, "Hullo, she's no acterine!" He ploughed through the river of travel and caught at her arm and felt her slight weight sag against him. "Annybody as turned her loose--" he continued his soliloquy after he'd jollied a newsboy into escorting her across to the Temple Bar Building, "Ought to be sent up--" He vented his disgust at the "annybody" on a daring chauffeur and watched until the newsboy came panting back to his stand to nod a triumphant grinning affirmative "'Nd her head up in the air like a queen--" he held his own head regally to signal the cross-town traffic, "Queer lot!" and forgot her.

It was noon when she came back to him, looking older and queerer and whiter faced than ever. Temple Bar is a large office building and Felicia Day had tramped courageously from floor to floor, from office to office, persistently seeking the Portia Person. She had been laughed at, had been almost insulted, had been treated with deference and treated with indifference; she had talked with scores and scores

of lawyers, looking searchingly into their faces, asking her question firmly and sweetly. She had asked it of busy lawyers, lazy lawyers, suave lawyers, thin lawyers, fat lawyers, rude lawyers, young lawyers, old lawyers; she had talked to dozens of clerks and stenographers, appealed to elevator men, janitors, scrub women, any one who would listen--she wanted to find the Portia Person, he had curly hair and he was quite tall and he had had a client whose name was Octavia, who was pretty and ill and who had given him some papers sixteen years ago. He had talked with Mademoiselle D'Ormy, in a house in Montrose Place. Of this business that she had for him the little woman was extraordinarily canny, it was no one's affair save hers and the Portia Person's.

The patient girl at the news stand in the main hallway looked up and down a list of tenants, checking them off with an over-manicured finger as she tried to suggest. She had taken charge of Felicia's bag, had offered to keep Babiche. Her good humor shone in a dreary morning. Felicia began to have faith in her.

"If I was you," said the girl, "I'd go get myself a bite to eat. It's noon, everybody's going out--don't you see?"

Felicia saw, she saw also that the patient newsstand girl was tired.

"Do you go to get yourself 'a bite'?" she asked curiously.

"Not till two o'clock," sighed the girl.

"I wish," decided Felicia whimsically, "that Margot had cooked _de_licious foods for us--broiled chicken and baked potatoes and a caramel custard and that we could go and sit by the Bowling Green and have Bele bring our lunch out on the little folding table--for you have been most kind to me--"

The girl stared after her in amazement.

"Well, I'll be darned!" she announced frankly to the elevator starter, "that woman is the limit! She's certainly got me guessing! One minute she seems as intelligent as anybody--only she can't remember the name of the man she's looking for--but gee, I forget names myself--and the next minute she's asking me to lunch on Bowling Green, as pleasant as you please! Can you beat it? And I can't for the life of me make out whether she's young or old--her voice's dandy and young. Honest, I like to hear her talk, she talks so comical--but don't she look like the last rose of summer, now don't she?"

The elevator starter agreed that she did and whistled "She May Have Seen Better Days" till the news-stand girl giggled and told him he was "Too comical" but they both of them commented about her when she did not return.

"She may be a nut," admitted the girl, "But she's kinda got me going. Gee I'd like to find the lawyer for her just to find out was she

Dorothy Arnold come back--or somebody like that."

It was Officer Brennan who had dissuaded her from her attempt to find the Portia Person. He had spied her, standing undecided outside the office building and hailed her as he was about to go off his beat.

"Did you find what you were looking for?"

His sureness of manner and his uniform impressed her.

"I couldn't find the man I wanted," she confided, "so I think I'll just have to see the Judge Person, myself, wouldn't you?"

He cogitated. Did she know what judge she wanted to see?

She unfolded the grimy hand bill, the "To be sold for unpaid taxes" that Zeb had brought to her. He read it slowly till he came to the "Order of Justice Harlow" at the bottom.

"That's an easy one," he cheered her, "I'll take you over there right now and put you next to a fellow who works there. He'll slip you through to his Honor himself and you can tell him your troubles."

But in spite of being "slipped through" there was a deal of waiting, sometimes in anterooms, sometimes in corridors, a deal of answering the questions of not overly intelligent clerks, and late afternoon found her sitting primly cuddling her restless doggie, waiting for some one to bring the tax records. She was a little tired, a little hungrier, a little less sure of herself than when the friendly news girl had advised her to "get a bite." She was keeping her courage high by thinking over and over to herself,

"After I see the Judge then I'll go to Dudley Hamilt."

It had not occurred to her that this busy place was a court room. It had no stately panelled walls like those that had been painted in the background of the portrait of Grandy's father. Nor did she understand when she was at last ushered into the Justice's presence that he was the man she had been waiting to see.

He did not wear a white curly wig and he did not wear a black satin gown the way Grandy's father had. Nor were there any scrolls of vellum with fat beribboned seals in this Judge's hands. Instead, alert slender fingers riffled their way rapidly through a mass of papers that a clerk put before him. Felicia watched the fingers until the close cropped head was lifted and keen gray eyes glanced straight through hers.

The abrupt phrase with which he had intended to dismiss her died. He stared at her curiously. He noted the traveling bag at her feet, the absurd old coat and bonnet, the dark circles under her beseeching eyes--

"She looked," as he explained afterward, "like a daguerreotype--old and youthful all at once, faded yet shining--most extraordinary little person--"

"You are the Felicia Day mentioned here?" he asked gravely tapping the papers.

Felicia tried to smile. She managed it so far as her eyes were concerned but her lips were too tired. She nodded.

"And have you any other lawyer than Mr. Burrel--the lawyer who has disappeared?"

She nodded again. She spoke to him for the first time, her low contralto, her clear enunciation, her perfect poise of manner, startled him even more than the childlike simplicity--almost absurdity--of her words.

"There's the Portia Person in Temple Bar."

"A woman lawyer?" he was very patient with her.

"No, he's a man. I only thought he was a woman when I was little. I can't quite think of his name but he is in Temple Bar and he came to see Maman and he told me if there was trouble to come to him--I've looked and looked, but I can't find him today."

"I see--" the Justice looked out of the window thoughtfully, "but in the meantime, while you're finding him, don't you think you'd better have some other lawyer? Is there some other one you know about?"

"Maman only had that one."

It was going to be harder than he thought to make her understand. But somehow or other he did it, talking slowly and very gently as though he were talking to a child.

"I'm sorrier than I can tell that you are having this trouble. This house in Montrose Place, Miss Day, has been your own property since you were eighteen years of age. It was formerly the property of your mother--" he consulted the papers, "Octavia Trenton Day. This Mr. Burrel who had charge of your property has paid neither the taxes on it, nor the interest on some mortgages that he arranged on it, for about seven years back. Can you understand that? And the house has been rented in the meantime to a great many families, it is technically a tenement house. The present trouble is not only about these unpaid taxes and the unpaid interest, but you have violated the Tenement House laws. You have not installed proper fire escapes or plumbing, you have not answered any of the notices that have been sent you. This court had to fix an arbitrary fine--which you have not paid."

"I nevaire do pay things," answered Felicia, greatly bewildered, "you

see Mademoiselle D'Ormy did not teach me much about money and Margot only knows a little about money. Grandy paid for things until he fell and now Margot pays for them. But you see Margot gets our money from Mr. Burrel, he has all of our money so I just think--" she ended with a businesslike decision, "you will have to get all that money for the taxes and other things that I owe from the money that he has."

"But that is what I have been trying to explain. This Mr. Burrel has been missing for over three years. This Margot you speak of must have had some other way of getting funds for you."

"Margot hasn't vairee much," Felicia told him, "I can't ask her for anything more. I think Mr. Judge, you'll just have to take my house."

He answered this seemingly absurd suggestion with deliberation.

"These papers show," he explained, "that Mr. Burrel offered your equity in the house to the holder of the mortgage some six months or so before Burrel himself disappeared. But the value of the property in Montrose Place has depreciated to such an extent and the unpaid taxes have piled up so alarmingly that the mortgager refused to agree to that. The only way I can see just now to help you at all is to arrange for a stay of thirty days in this matter of the proceedings against you for the violation of the Tenement House Law together with a thirty day Injunction preventing the sale of the house for unpaid taxes. That will give you thirty days to arrange to pay that fine--which I have made as light as possible but which amounts to fifty dollars." "And the rest of it?" asked Felicia coolly.

He consulted the papers.

"Is eighteen thousand eight hundred and forty-two dollars and seventy-eight cents."

She pulled open the strings of Louisa's beaded purse, she let the money and bills therein slide into a heap on the desk between them. She frowned at it.

"That's all there is now," she remarked, almost cheerfully, "except some that Margot had to keep for buying sugar and flour and things in the village--" She was so calm that he knew she was utterly unaware of the enormity of the amount. "If I am going to have thirty days more," she concluded, "I'm quite sure I can get the rest for you, I'll find the Portia Person, I know, evaire so many lawyers weren't in Temple Bar today. He might be there tomorrow, you know." She nodded confidently. "But that's all I can give you now. You've been vairee good to try to make me understand. I'm rather stupid about it because Mademoiselle did not teach me those things. And Maman arranged for the Portia Person to attend to it." She rose, she cuddled her dog under her arm and stooped for her bag.

He gestured for her to put the bag down, he scooped her small pile of bills and silver into his hand and reached for her reticule and tucked

the money in slowly.

"My dear Miss Day," he stammered, "if you do not find this--er-- lawyer, you mention, a lawyer will be assigned by the court to attend to things, and you would have to make your payments through him. In the meantime--" he put the purse in her hand. "I am more sorry than I can tell you that I have had to fix this fine--it is purely arbitrary --I am very sorry--"

"Of course you would be," said Felicia slowly, her clear eyes looking at him without malice and without scorn. "You must be sorry a great deal of the time, aren't you? You couldn't be really happy making so many people unhappy as I've watched go to talk with you today--they looked vairee unhappy."

The gentle unfairness of her rebuke was most disconcerting.

"Perhaps I make some of them happy," he protested.

She shook her head.

"I didn't see a happy one," she answered simply.

An odd feeling that he wanted her to think well of him worried him. Why he should have cared what this bedraggled, bankrupt little creature thought he did not fathom, perhaps it was just that she looked so helpless and so old that his heart smote him. Awkward as a boy he stared out through the bedrizzled windowpane into the spring rain.

"I hope you won't think I'm impertinent," he suggested suddenly, "but I believe you said you arrived from out of town this morning and came directly here. Have you some friend to whom you are going?"

From beneath Louisa's ridiculous old bonnet her hair scraggled untidily, her pallor accentuated the dark circles under her drooping eyelids. Yet when she looked up at him, the glory in those tired eyes surprised him.

"I'm going,"--oh, how she wanted to say "to Dudley Hamilt"! It took all her reserve to finish her sentence calmly! "To eighteen Columbia Heights."

"That's not far," he felt an inexpressible relief that she had somewhere to go, "I'm not quite ready to go home myself, but my car is waiting for me. Suppose we have one of these boys take your bag down for you and that you let my chauffeur drive you to Columbia Heights while he is waiting for me--I should be very glad if you would--"

She did not answer him until he opened the door for her. When she looked up at him he was fairly startled by her wide ingenuous smile.

"I was just pretending," she said clearly, "that I had my ox-cart so

that I wouldn't have to walk to find Columbia Heights--I was just thinking how delightful it would be if I did for I'm afraid--as afraid as Margot is of a bat--of all of the things in the street--you are indeed kind--" ah, the stilted phrases with which Mademoiselle had instructed her so many years ago!--"to suggest a drive for me--"

He went back to his papers positively chuckling.

"She's refreshingly different," he thought. "Refreshingly different." But he sighed as he handed the papers to the clerk. The whole case seemed a hopeless tangle. And now that she was gone Felicia herself seemed absolutely unreal. He rubbed his eyes and plunged into the next thing.

But Felicia, resting comfortably on the wide seat of the judge's car shut her tired eyes and let her head sink against the cushions. Her heart was racing faster than this swiftly moving motor, she felt as though she could not breathe.

They came to a slow halt before a pile of bricks and mortar. Above them loomed a huge unfinished apartment house, from which were tramping forth the home-going laborers. The smell of the wet lime as they tracked across the rather narrow street was over-powering. The chauffeur opened the door and spoke to her respectfully.

"There must be some mistake in your address, Madam, this is eighteen Columbia Heights." She was overwhelmed, she could think nothing whatever to say to him. He came to the rescue himself with a quiet, "Perhaps if you have the name of the person you wanted to see--"

"It's Dudley Hamilt."

There was a drug store on the opposite corner. He disappeared within its door and it was several minutes before he came back. This time he had a definite word.

"The druggist says that the Hamilt house stood where this apartment is being built, Madam. He says he understands that the elder Mr. Hamilt is dead but that the younger one has an office somewhere in Manhattan. Perhaps you could speak with him on the telephone--"

Speak with him! Her face glowed with sudden color.

"How nice of you!" she rose obediently to follow him, putting Babiche carefully on the cushioned seat. "Will you tell the druggist that I'd like to?"

The man helped her respectfully through the doorway, he was thinking as had his employer and as Officer Brennan had, that this odd little woman shouldn't have to go around alone, and yet, it was puzzling, she didn't seem to mind doing it. He obligingly found the telephone number, turned and asked her if she would like him to call Mr. Hamilt's office for her. The telephone was screwed to a small table

near the door. Felicia waited, her heart throbbing. Beside her at the marble counter two giggling young things ordered soda water from a white-coated clerk. They were garbed in the triggest and gayest of spring clothing, they were as impeccably immaculate as the smiling ladies on the perfume bottles in the window. Back of the telephone was a long mirror that reflected their pretty smartness and Felicia's impossible dowdiness. But Felicia did not see anything at all save the round black hole through which she was to speak to Dudley Hamilt. She was awed by it as she had been surprised by everything in this amazing day. She watched closely the way the man held the receiver; not for worlds would she have admitted her ignorance. She took the receiver, she sat down quietly, she drew a long breath. The chauffeur was already disappearing through the door, the drug clerk was joking with his giggling young patrons. Suddenly her rapturous ear caught Dudley Hamilt's resonant voice speaking,

"Who is it?" he demanded impatiently.

Her low sweet laughter purred over the wires to him.

"Can't you remember?" she asked quietly. "I am Felice.--Yes, I _am_ Felice. I have been trying to find your house, Dudley Hamilt, but it's gone, they are building a vairee big house there. I didn't have your letter, that letter that you sent me. Not till Zeb brought it to me day before yesterday. That was why I didn't write to you where I was."

"Where are you now?" the excitement in his voice frightened her. "Tell me, where are you?"

The giggling back of her grew so insistent that it broke in upon even the solitude of her wonderous moment. She raised her eyes to the mirror before her. She caught a swift glimpse of laughing faces, the impishness of their mischievous eyes made her shiver. She instinctively glanced into the looking glass to see where their gaze rested. And looked straight at--herself!

At Louisa's ugly bonnet, at the damp and shapeless shoulders of the gray coat, at her own pallor, at the deep shadows under her tired eyes, into her own eyes, and saw the whole drab mirrored ghost of the woman who had been the young Felicia. And through the telephone rang Dudley Hamilt's eager voice, as eager as it had been that night when he clambered over the gate.

"Tell me quickly where you are--I must see you--oh, your voice sounds as though I'd not lost you at all--" he laughed nervously like an embarrassed boy, "I want to see you--" he repeated inadequately.

She thought quickly, she could think of only one thing and that was that Dudley Hamilt must NOT see her.

"Let's pretend," she interrupted him, her low contralto voice trembling, "Let's pretend that I'm somewhere you can't see me--I only wanted--to tell you that I had your letter. I wanted you to know how

happy it made me to have it. Dudley Hamilt--"

The receiver dropped from her hand; somewhere back of her the giggling grew fainter and farther away. She shook her head weakly when the drug clerk hurried with a glass of water. She was swaying, dimly conscious of the awe in the face of the girl who was hastening toward her.

"Oh, she looks awfully ill--" she heard a dismayed voice.

"I'm not ill--" her proud chin lifted. She was pulling herself together again, she even managed to stand by holding one hand on the edge of the table.

The whirling blackness of the moment had passed. Even while the clerk was hastily calling back the judge's chauffeur, the drooping little figure had straightened itself.

"I think the lady was kinda faint," mumbled the clerk, mechanically replacing the dangling receiver. "She's O.K. now--ain't you?"

"Did you find where you wanted to go?" the man's respectful query helped her.

"If it's not too far," she answered with dignity, "I think I'd like to go to my own house--it's in a street called Montrose Place."

Inside the car her head drooped, she felt the new Babiche licking her lifeless hand, she felt the whir of the motor. It vibrated through every jangling nerve of her weary body. The whole impossible journey was like a nightmare.

"That wasn't I, I saw in there--" her thoughts blurred, "it's just a dreadful dream--that wasn't Felice I saw--oh, Dudley Hamilt--I was so pretty that night! And now I'm just old--like Grandy--like Piqueur--" After a million years--or was it after one little minute?--the car stopped easily. Like the dream that Felicia had hoped the whole dreadful day had been. She opened her eyes as though she might have been waking up in the bed that Poquelin, the father of Moliere, had carved.

"This," said the judge's chauffeur dubiously, "is Montrose Place."

She got out slowly, tucking Babiche mechanically under her arm. The man lifted out her bag and touched his cap,--she did not even see him go.

The huge willows still arched above Montrose Place, but they were shabby and dying. And the mossy bricked sidewalk was gone but on its muddy concrete successor, scores and scores of noisy, dirty, alien children squabbled and cried. Some of them were pushing against this strange woman who had descended from the motor, some of them fingered her coat, one bolder than the rest sat down upon her bag. It seemed to her as though more children than she had known there were in the whole

world were crowding against her. Wherever she looked there were children. They hung from the once lovely old windows, they slid down the once beautiful balustrade, they tumbled out of every doorway. And wherever there were not children there were signs. Blatant, dingy signs. The first one she glimpsed was propped before the basement gate through which the housemaids had been wont to enter. It was shaped like a tombstone and with amateur lettering announced:

"TONY HE SELLA COAL WOOD ICE"

And from the rusty iron balcony hung a ragged pair of trousers into which had been inserted a board, the legs flapped dispiritedly in the gusty wind from the river. Painted in scraggling white paint across the seat of the trousers was written

"A. Cohen. Pressing 25 and 50 cents."

It was twilight. The tailor had lighted a single flickering gas jet beside the basement window. In the old days the front basement had been the housemaids' sitting room with a channel-coal fire glowing in the grate and a tidy white cloth on the table and neat rows of geraniums in the windows--a cheery sort of place. Not at all like this stuffy, overcrowded, ill ventilated place with the two silent shirt-sleeved men humped over steaming ironing boards and with a dozen more clattering away at noisy sewing machines.

A grizzled man scowled at her through thick glasses.

"Vell," he rasped, "Vat do you vant, madam?"

"I want to stay here."

"You vant to rent a room? I calls mine missus--" he called stridently, "I think she gotta room for three dollars, I don' know--"

From the doorway of the once shining and immaculate kitchen a frowzy head protruded, "Four we should get," whined a nasal voice "it is only that it is on the top floor that we can make it so cheap--"

"This," announced Felicia to the slatternly woman "--is my house. How dare you let it get so dirty!"

Her rising anger swept into her heart like a reviving fire. She thought of Zeb, mouthing his scorn of the "dirty filthy heathen," she thought of Mademoiselle D'Ormy scolding a housemaid who left so much as a speck of dust on the hall balustrades, she did not see the grinning woman gesturing to her husband, touching her forehead to indicate Felicia's lack of wits.

"That ain't my business," the woman shrugged when she saw Felicia looking at her. "We pays out rent by a receiver since the Mister Burrel goes away--I gotta get mine renta in advance. I gotta nice room if you vant to stay."

"But it's my house, of course I'll stay."

"It's a nice room, three dollars a week--you want to see it?"

The color blazed in Felicia's cheeks.

"I should like you to take me to it at once," she announced with dignity. "You'll carry my bag, please."

The tailor's wife grudgingly obeyed her, preceding her new lodger with ill concealed temper, her lumpy person almost blocking the ample stairway.

Up they passed from the basement to the once stately hallway. Not even the encrusted dirt could hide the beauty of the old tessellated marble floors and arched doorways but where the oval topped doors had once swung hospitably wide their gloomy panels now hid the drawing-rooms, and where the long mirror had once made the hallway bright with reflected light a dingy ill-painted wall made the passage so gloomy that one could scarcely see above the first landing. Silently Felicia's weary feet carried her along behind her untidy conductor. Unconsciously she tiptoed as she passed the closed door of her mother's room, tiptoed as gently as though that frail sufferer were still lying listlessly on the "sleighback" bed. Quietly around the bend of the upper hall she followed, past the upstairs sitting room and up the second flight toward the sleeping chambers, her heart beating from the unwonted climb, her breath coming in quick gasps and her damp hair clinging to her aching forehead.

"Maybe," she exulted secretly, "it will be the nursery that I'll have --maybe I left something--" she smiled as she caught herself thinking it on the stairway--"perhaps there will be a little fire in the Peggoty grate and I can shut the door and sit down and think clearly."

But it wasn't the nursery. As they passed its closed door she could hear the wrangle of many voices, a baby's fretful cry and the hurrying whirl of other sewing machines. The frowsy woman opened the door at the head of the stairs. The-three-dollar-a-week-room was the hall bedroom. The small room where Mademoiselle D'Ormy's bed had been wont to stand in the old days--with the door left ajar so that Felicia would not be frightened when she awoke in the night.

With the door to the adjoining room closed it looked twice as narrow as she remembered it. And it was not a nice clean room. It held an old iron bed and a pine table and a cheap wicker rocking chair. Yet Felicia could almost have kissed the dingy walls for they were covered with exactly the same droll paper that had always decorated them--the paper on which the oft repeated group of fat faced shepherdesses danced about their innumerable May poles and alternating with these perpetual merry makers were the methodical flocks of lambs. Spang over the middle of the space back of the bed was the discolored spot where she had thrown the large and dripping bath sponge.

She felt suddenly very small and very, very helpless--she was utterly spent. But there was something in her wide gray eyes--a dignity and a command--that completely dominated the shrewish wife of the hump-shouldered tailor, something that made the slatternly creature back out of the room, for Felicia Day, with her hand on the battered iron railing of the bed, had said clearly, "Woman, go at once."

And when the door was shut she sat down in one chair and put Babiche carefully on the bed. She untied Louisa's bonnet and dropped it to the floor; she loosed the cumbersome traveling coat. Far out on the river the ferry boats and tugs were signaling; across the water the glamour of a million lights shone toward her. It was quite dark now; she stumbled to the window and looked down into the back yard. The dusk had mercifully blurred out for her the heaps of refuse and ashes that were dumped upon the spot where the narcissus border had been. The great iron pots on the top of the garden wall loomed out of the shadows. She looked straight down on the gate to the rectory yard.

She sunk in a crumpled heap and rested her weary head on the window sill, then groped for the wee doggie as she heard the faint click of its tiny paws coming toward her over the bare floor.

"Oh, Babiche!" she whispered, "Babiche, how happy--we should be--to be home!"

CHAPTER IV

THE UNFINISHED SONG

You can't imagine anything more amusing than the satisfaction with which Felicia Day awoke. The early sun was streaming in her eyes. She rubbed them drowsily and sat up in the middle of the narrow humpy bed. At the foot of the bed Babiche awoke too, yawning and stretching beautifully, reflexing her droll puppy body and wagging her wee feathery tail.

On the floor the russet bag gaped open where Felicia had dumped it the night before; her clothes lay in a limp heap beside the window. But the clear spring air, deliciously salty smelling to the woman who had been living inland so long, made her breathe deeply.

"Ah! Babiche!" she murmured, smiling at the smudgy spot on the wall, "What a naughty child I used to be!" She had a naive pride in this evidence of her early wickedness. But a moment later she was frowning, her eyes fixed on the grimy woodwork.

"What unspeakably lazy servants I must have! I shall send them away at

once! Just as soon as that woman has brought my breakfast I shall say to her,

"You are an abom-in-able housekeeper, pack your bags and go!"

She had heard Mademoiselle D'Ormy send a servant away once. It gave a splendid sense of superiority to think that she was going to do it herself this time. She pulled her travel-stiff body over the edge of the bed, and grimacing as she swung her pavement-sore feet to the floor, she wrapped the lovely old dressing-gown about her and opened the door into the hall. She could not think of any other way in which to summon a servant whose name she did not know and so she whistled clearly as she sometimes did when she wanted to call Bele from the farther end of the orchard.

The house seemed filled with sounds, mutterings, babblings, little cries, the heavy whirr of the sewing machines, the splintering clatter of Tony, who was chopping his wares by the basement door--it seemed impregnated with odors, smudgy, burning, unsavory, smoky smells. She whistled again.

An unkempt head, a man's head, was thrust from the nursery door, in the quick glance with which she looked at him and beyond him she seemed to see a score of persons. There were not really so many of them, merely a slovenly woman who was pedaling the sewing machine with a baby tumbling at her feet, an eight-year-old who sat on the window ledge pulling bastings while a half-grown girl cooked something on a stove that had been propped in front of the fireplace.

Zeb's phrase--"filthy dirty heathen" trembled on Felicia's lips, her eyes burned hotly. She grew furiously angry. Her breast was heaving, her bare foot tapped impatiently on the chilly floor, but the man slammed the door before she could speak.

She stepped resolutely into the hall, she whistled again, this time imperiously.

No one answered.

She crossed to the bathroom beside the nursery. She was grimly determined now, she would bathe herself and dress and go down to the kitchen and speak at once to the servant. The bathroom door was slightly open but the skylight was so dusty that she could scarcely see. She put down her hand to turn the faucet and drew back in dismay. Her tub was already filled--with coal!

And behind her a voice ejaculated,

"You no taka mine fires! Get out!"

Felicia did "get out," speeding so recklessly back to Mademoiselle's old room that she was breathless as she shut the door behind her and leaned against it laughing weakly.

"Oh! Oh! I know it is all a dream! It's too ridiculous to be true!"

She found enough water in a pitcher on the table to bathe her face. She sat on the edge of the bed thinking hard as she brushed her hair.

"It is not a dream"--she shuddered, "The back yard is real--even with all the rubbish there, the back yard is real! The gate is there--the first thing I shall make them clean will be the back yard--after all, it won't be so difficult as my garden in the woods. I shall not have to wait to find the pattern, I know exactly how it all belongs. And I know that about this whole house. I shall"--she grew more determined, "make it all as it was before. First I shall put all these filthy dirty heathen out--it will be exactly like making the garden--only I shall have people pulled out instead of weeds--they are all like weeds, these filthy dirty people--I am not afraid of weeds."

But all the same, when she was dressed and had begun the perilous journey downward, she found herself very much afraid of the "weeds" that she encountered on her way to the tailor's missus.

Nor did she issue victoriously as she had planned from her attempt to send the tailor's missus away.

The tailor's missus stood her ground stoutly, she even forced Felicia to give her three dollars for room rent from Louisa's purse; the woman's awe of the night before had departed, she moaned strange things about her children's starving, she reiterated her absolute lack of belief that Felicia owned the house, she laughed toothlessly over such a thing being possible.

"You tell that to Mister Grady," she scoffed, "Mr. Grady, he is goin' to buy this house, comes the auction next Tuesday--"

Mr. Grady, Felicia discovered, was the rent collector; this fact at last was something to seize upon. If he was the rent collector and it was her house, certainly she could go and collect from him. She learned that he lived across the street, a grimy finger indicated where and she set forth valiantly.

Breakfastless, almost moneyless, her chin in the air, she marched across the street and faced the redoubtable Mr. Grady. He wasn't a bad sort at all, though it was quite evident that he, like the tailor's missus, hadn't the slightest idea that she really owned her house. He rubbed his stubby, sandy chin and hitched his shirt sleeve garter higher,

"I hain't collecting for myself," he assured her, "I only collects for the receiver for the estate--you can see 'im if you like--he's up in th' Temple Bar buildin'." He was so good as to jot down the number of the room for her. She thanked him and departed, leaving him staring after her, scratching his chin more violently than ever.

By noon she stood quietly outside Judge Harlow's door. She presented herself without parley. There was a calm determination about her that reminded him somehow of a fanatic with a great cause. And yet there was a mirthful twinkle in her eyes.

"It's been droll," she began, "I have been trying all day to make persons understand that it's my house. I can't make anybody believe me, not the tailor's missus, nor the rent collector nor the 'receiver for the estate,'" her drawing imitation of the redoubtable Mr. Grady made the Justice smile.

"Oh, you've talked with that scamp, have you?" he flung the door open and pulled out a chair for her.

"I've talked with a great many--scamps"--she caught at new words as delightedly as though they had been new flowers, and he laughed again. She was too absurd, this grotesquely garbed old maid! "I haven't found the Portia Person--" a note of gravity crept into her voice again, "but I'm going to do without him--I have a plan"--she leaned forward excitedly, "I thought it out--it's as good as the pattern of the garden--the reason you have to make me pay fifty dollars for--violating that Tenement Law is because there are too many persons in my house, isn't that it?"

He nodded.

"Then," she decided triumphantly, "it's quite simple. We must just put them out!"

"Miss Daniel come to judgment!" he congratulated her.

They talked quite seriously then. The matter of identification was not really droll, for there was literally no one to vouch for Felicia Day. He found it difficult to explain to her that while he did not in the least doubt her assertion that she was Felicia Day she would have to prove, legally, that she was.

If the "receiver for the estate" could find any of the papers that Felicia had signed for Mr. Burrel of course her signature would help, (he called a stenographer and wrote for a letter from the country doctor,) he explained regretfully that until she could prove that she was the person she claimed to be she could not actually take possession of the house.

"Then you can't 'actually' make me pay anything--those fines or taxes, until you prove that I'm the person who owes them--" She came back at him so quickly that she took his breath away.

"Again Miss Daniel comes to judgment!" he teased her. She put him in an extraordinary good humor with her alertness. Her persistence and her indomitable courage were such futile weapons against the armor of the law that they seemed pathetic, but her droll faith in herself and her absurd comments about the persons with whom she had been talking

made him want to laugh as one laughs at a precocious child.

She left as abruptly as she had come, tucking Babiche under her arm in a deliciously matter-of-fact way.

"Good morning, Miss Day," he called after her.

She paused, she blushed furiously, she had forgotten Mademoiselle's manners. But she made up for it. She dropped him the most amusing curtsy with an upward glance like that of the one-eyed scrub woman who had been cleaning the corridor.

"Good marnin', yer Honor!" she groaned exactly like that rheumatic soul. He laughed silently, his head thrown back on his shoulders. How could he know that she couldn't help "pretending" that she was everybody she listened to!

"And she looks like a little old tramp," he recounted at luncheon to a friend, "Most extraordinary person, one minute she puts a lump in your throat--you're so sorry for her you could curse, and the next--Lordy! the next minute you wonder at her impertinence--it's not exactly impertinence either,--it's absolute frankness."

"No manners, eh?" suggested his friend.

"No manners at all. A manner," said the Justice neatly.

Back in the little hall room she sat dizzily on the edge of the bed and divided the last of Margot's dry sandwiches with Babiche. They were both ravenously hungry. Felicia turned the few coins out of Louisa's old purse and contemplated them. Wherever she had turned in these two busy days she had had to pay, she was perpetually asked for money.

And quite surely she must have some more. She couldn't ask Margot, and the "receiver for the estate" would give her none. She stared at the smug faced shepherdesses.

"Where," she thought, "Do persons get money?"

The shepherdesses smiled back stupidly.

Babiche answered her really. Having all there was to eat the wee dog settled herself uncomfortably on the thin pillow.

"If I knew where the Wheezy was I'd have her make you a cushion--oh! oh! Babiche! How stupid I've been! The Wheezy got money, Mademoiselle used to give it to her from Maman's purse, two dollars every day--for sewing--why, Babiche, I can sew beautifully--much better than the Wheezy!"

It was a delightful moment, a self-reliant, decisive moment. Her eyes sparkled, she caught up the ugly bonnet, she could hardly hurry fast

enough to find The Woman's Exchange and Employment Agency. She even remembered the sign in the window.

"Applications for work received Tuesdays and Fridays." She was so glad that it was Friday that she could have whistled. So down the stairs they went again, the little dog and mistress, and straight around the corner, past the old church, there they stopped for Felicia to read what she hadn't stopped to read before,

"THIS PROPERTY FOR SALE OR TO LET
SUITABLE FOR GARAGE
OR MOVING PICTURES
APPLY YOUR OWN BROKER"

She stumbled around uncollected garbage, she waited impatiently for impudent children to move out of her way, she thrilled with rage at the sordid world about her.

"That pattern of it all is gone--I can't see how it was unless I close my eyes," she thought.

But when she came to the faded sign "WOMAN'S EXCHANGE AND EMPLOYMENT AGENCY" she smiled. For that at least was exactly as it had been save that it looked tinier and dingier than it had in the old days. She opened the iron-grilled door, her eager heart anticipating the tinkling jangle of the spring bell at the rear, and when the shadowy curtains parted and a grizzled head, surmounted by gold-rimmed spectacles tucked above a worried forehead appeared, Felicia could have cried out with delight.

For there was the Disagreeable Walnut, limping more painfully than she had used to limp, blinking more uncertainly than she had used to blink. Her rasping voice came thinner and more peevish than it had twenty years ago but she called out just the same,

"Well, what's your business?"

Felicia listened dreamily; she seemed to be absorbing the whole shop, the dusty shelves lined with useless "fancy" work, into whose fashioning no fancy at all had crept; the cracked show counters filled with pasty china daubed with violets and cross-eyed cupids,--propped up rakishly in the very front of the dustiest, most battered case of all the fat string dolly leaned despondently and smiled her red floss smile.

"Oh, how you've lasted!" breathed Felicia.

"What?" shrilled the Disagreeable Walnut, blushing under her shriveled skin.

"I mean--the little person made of string--" murmured Felicia abashed.

"I saw her here--when we came for The Wheezy--Mademoiselle D'Ormy and I."

The Disagreeable Walnut snorted.

"Oh, that Mademoiselle D'Ormy," she squinted through her adjusted glasses, her shaking, purple-veined hands fumbling with the silk that was wound around the bows to protect her thin old temples, "She hain't been here this long while, have you seen her?"

"Do you know me?" demanded Felicia stepping very close.

"Don't know as I do--yet it seems like I did too--you hain't been here in a long while, have ye?"

"Don't you remember--I lived in that same house where Mademoiselle D'Ormy stayed--she brought me in here when I was a little girl--when we came to get the Wheezy to sew--"

The Disagreeable Walnut shook her head.

"I never knew anybody named Wheezy."

"The Wheezy was fat--" Felicia puffed out her chest, tilted her chin downward and hunched up her shoulders like the Wheezy. She cleared her throat and panted and let her breath come sighingly through her pursed lips, "She couldn't see why under the shining canopy the Major had her make c-cushions for the dogs--"

The shop keeper nodded her recognition of The Wheezy.

"Oh, you mean Sophia Pease--dear! dear!" she wiped her eye glasses tremblingly, "She's been out to the Baptist Home for the Aged this long whiles. Her eyes went back on her--a nice sewer, as nice a sewer as we ever had--dear, dear! I don't know when anybody asked me about Sophia Pease--she made them dolls you was just mentioning--" she motioned toward the disconsolate string toy--"dear, dear! she made them even after she couldn't see for regular sewing--"

"Now can't you remember me?" reiterated Felicia pleadingly.

The Disagreeable Walnut shook her head.

"Can't say as I do--"

"But I am Felice--the little girl who came with Mademoiselle D'Ormy to get Miss Pease--can't you see that I am?"

The old woman's tittering laugh of denial made Felicia want to shake her.

"That child--why you hain't she--she wouldn't be the matter of half your age--you must be thirty-five or forty, hain't ye? She grew up and run away like the rest of her women folks--" she giggled sardonically, "Was a young limb, she was, I used to hear her whistling at them choir

boys next door--a young limb--all the girls in that family was man-chasers--the mother run off with the rector's son--younger'n she was-- by a good two years I should say, she must ha' been thirty if she was a minute--but pretty--prettier n' her mother--ever see the mother, Miss Trenton--Miss Montrose that was?"

"Did you?" breathed Felicia. "Oh, did you see Grandy's Louisa?"

"Did I ever see her?" the Disagreeable Walnut leaned her sharp elbows on the show case. "I see her when she was a bride--I'd just took charge here then--she was a high-stepper! The Major hadn't a penny when she married him but she had all the Montrose money and she got him--some say as she told him if he'd marry her she'd live on what he earned--but I guess he couldn't have earned the matter of her shoe strings--not the way she dressed--she was stylish and tasty in her dress--and then she eloped--with that lawyer fellow--some says she didn't elope with him, but she went off for some French property her mother had left her--but I dunno--she was an awful high-stepper. All I know is that after she was dead and the Major brought Miss Octavia home--"

"Did you see Maman? Did you?" Felicia could hardly breath, "Did you see Octavia--wasn't she sweet? Wasn't she darling--didn't you love her, love, love her?"

"Too high-stepping!" sniffed the old woman, "Whole lot of 'em was too high-stepping for me--never liked any of 'em--"

"She didn't step at all--" Felicia's anger was rising, "She just stayed in her bed and stayed in her bed--how dare you say you--oh! oh!" Color burned in her pale cheeks, "I won't have you say such things--"

"Well, I hain't quarreling with you about them folks," said the Disagreeable Walnut sententiously, "They're all dead and buried anyhow. And pore Sophia Pease might jes' as well be--mewed up in that Baptist home where her friends, if she's got any, can't see her excepting on Sundays--my stars! I wouldn't go to live in that Home, no sir, I wouldn't--nor I wouldn't want to live at the--"

"Can you tell me," Felicia broke in upon this flood of opinions, "Where I could go to see Miss Pease?"

"I'm telling you--the Baptist Home--"

"I do think she'd know me," Felicia murmured thoughtfully. "I do think she would." She moved toward the door, intent upon trying to see Miss Pease.

But the Disagreeable Walnut, for all that she was old, was quite capable of handling her job. She called petulantly after her retreating caller.

"What was you coming in for--anything you wanted to buy?"

Felicia turned.

"How stupid I am to forget. I came because it was Friday, you know, I wanted to have some work, please. For two dollars a day and lunch."

The shop keeper pulled a dusty ledger toward her.

"Are you registered or new?"

"I--I think I'm new, I'm not registered."

The ledger was pushed around toward her, the shop keeper reached fretfully for the spattered ink bottle.

"By the day or home work?"

"By the day," said Felicia decisively.

"Then sign here," a trembling finger indicated the line.

It was a new page. No one had signed it yet. At the top was printed,

NAME ADDRESS JOB APPLIED FOR DATE Mrs. or Miss.

And Felicia wrote, guiding the rusty pen carefully. Last of all, she wrote just after the printed Miss, in firm letters, "By The Day," and pushed back the book.

The Disagreeable Walnut pursed her lips, she couldn't really see anything through the blur of her glasses.

The bell jangled, a brisk old person, much like the Disagreeable Walnut, save that she looked agreeable, entered breathlessly.

"Sorry I was late," she dumped various bundles on the counter, "How'd you make out, Susan?" She eyed Felicia as she began pulling at her gloves. "Did my sister find what you wanted?"

"She wants work," quavered Susan, considerably less reliant than she'd been a moment before. "I dunno where the work book is. I declare I can't keep track of where you put things, Sarah--is there anybody could use her? She wants sewing."

The brisk person swung the book around glancing at it capably as she removed her hat.

"Oh, you've signed it in the wrong place. You should have put your name there--not the way you were going to work"--her finger rested on the place Felicia had written. "What is your name? Your name isn't Miss By-the-Day is it?" she asked good-humoredly.

"Why, I think it is," Felicia smiled back, "I think it will have to be--it's Day," she added shyly.

"Miss or Mrs.?"

"Miss."

"And what kind of work, please?"

"Like the Wheezy--sewing--for two dollars a day and lunch"--she repeated it like a lesson.

"There's a day a week at 440 Linton Avenue--Mrs. Alden's, perhaps you could go there. Have you references?"

"I don't even know what they are," Miss By-the-Day replied.

The brisk person laughed.

"Well you must have an address, where do you live?"

"In my own house," her chin lifted proudly, "Montrose Place."

"But if you have a house," the interrogator's voice was kindly if her words were severe, "we can't possibly give you work. You see, our work is for persons who have no other means of support, no other ways of making their living."

Felicia's lips quivered.

"I haven't, that's why I came. You see it's all taxes and assessments and fines and--it's so fearfully dirty and I haven't any money"--she held out Louisa's reticule a bit ruefully. "You can see I haven't."

"I see"--the brisk person stepped back to the telephone. She was thoughtful as she waited for her connection. She talked quietly, murmuring things about some one who looked thoroughly responsible. Presently she wrote down an address that she handed to Felicia. "You must be there at eight o'clock in the morning, can you do that, Miss By-the-Day?"

"There's something else I'd like you to write--it's the place where Miss Pease lives--"

"You can't go to see her except Sundays," Miss Sarah cautioned her.

"They're strict."

After Felicia had gone the brisk woman straightened things about a bit, humming under her breath.

"Su-san"--she called through the doorway, "haven't we seen that woman somewheres? She looks awful familiar." Miss Susan grunted.

"She tried to make out she knew me, but I dunno--she can't never sew to suit Mis' Freddie Alden and you know she can't--nobody can please young Miss' Alden--old Miss' Alden was bad enough but young Miss' Alden is worse--"

Of her adventures "by-the-day" only Felicia could have "found the pattern." And as in the case of the garden of old, even she was a long time discovering any design in the confusing blur of their outlines. Perhaps it was because each day was like a bit of glass in a child's kaleidoscope, an episode in itself, ugly, irregular and meaningless, until Felicia's rage against life tumbled each piece into position and let them all reflect in quaint order against the clear sweet mirrors of her faith and hope and charity.

Who but Felicia could have shaken beauty from that first unlovely "by-the-day"? Seamstress after seamstress had come and gone in that impossibly selfish household, the meek ones enduring it until they could endure no more, the proud ones hurrying angrily away; competent or incompetent, not one of them had ever been able to please her exacting employer, yet Felicia, mercifully unaware of the heart aches she would endure within, walked staunchly through the iron gates, with "440 Linton Avenue" boldly wrought in filagree upon their stern panels.

The house was set close to the street but wide side yards separated it from its newer neighbors. It was pretentiously ugly with its mansard roof, intricate porches, balconies and bay windows that had evidently been added after the original architectural atrocity had been committed. At her first glance as the pert and frilly maid opened the door it seemed as though the whole house were filled with innumerable elaborate draperies and fat-framed paintings and much stuffed furniture. While she waited for the maid to announce her, her quick ears caught the nervous undertone of the house--the whining voices of children above stairs, the quick clatter of dishes in the far off pantry and a politely peevish voice that was raised as its owner struggled with an imperfect telephone connection.

"--just at my wits' end--both maids have the day out,--the children are off my hands for the day--they're going to be in the pageant--but it is awkward for all that. Uncle Peter's nurse insists that she has to go out and it doesn't leave any one to stay with him. Fred is so unreasonable about our leaving Uncle Peter alone. Of course if the Exchange did send the sewing person to do the mending I could go--only you never can tell whether people like that are honest or not--they often aren't--" The "sewing person" in the overstuffed chair looked straight ahead of her. She shut her lips together and tried desperately not to listen.

"--that's all I can promise--if the sewing person comes and can sit in the hall--I think it would be perfectly horrid if you had to play a three table--if I can't get there in time for luncheon I'll hurry around by half past two--that is if I possibly can."

Her irritable voice was still raised to telephone pitch as she hurried toward her new seamstress. It wasn't until she had ushered Felicia into the draughty angle of the upper hall where she was to sew that Mrs. Alden discovered Babiche.

She objected.

Felicia cuddled her tiny dog.

"Why, she's a precious," she protested sweetly. "She'll just stay right beside me if you can find her a cushion--"

She felt very small and meek as she sat taking her wee neat stitches. All about her the unpleasant confusion of the house surged on. The half-grown children departed tempestuously for the pageant, their mother bustled out leaving a trail of half explicit instructions behind her. The last Felicia heard of her voice was a fretful instruction to the cook.

"--and you'll have to take something or other up to the sewing woman-- some of that cold lamb will do--"

Felice wrinkled her nose commiseratingly at Babiche's questioning eyes. Babiche the elder had hated cold lamb. From the door to her left she could hear soothing murmurs of a voice reading. A carefully modulated voice that evidently cared nothing at all about what it was reading. An irascible masculine "Well, well, never mind that!" frequently interrupted the reader. At noon the voice stopped and a patient nurse appeared in the doorway.

"I'm going down for Mr. Alden's tray," she announced primly, "if he should speak will you call me?" Felicia nodded. She stitched steadily. She was putting new rows of lace on a torn petticoat, and so intent was she in joining the pattern of the lace that she forgot to watch Babiche. That inquisitive one was exploring, sniffing cautiously as she approached the invalid's bed but a second later she was trotting hastily back to her mistress.

"I positively won't have stray animals about the house," a quavering voice protested.

This petulance continued long after the nurse had returned with his tray. Felicia could hear the faint rumble of his disapproval even when the door was closed. She glanced up in dismay as the bulk of the cook blocked her light. It was not an appetizing luncheon that that individual banged down upon the lap-board that was propped across the receding arms of the morris-chair to serve as a table. There were some microscopic scraps of the cold lamb, a cup of cocoa on which the surface had long since grown thick and oily, a rather limp looking lettuce leaf with a stuffed tomato palpably left from some former meal. Felicia sipped the cocoa, she dipped bits of the dry bread in it and fed Babiche. She herself ate the lamb and struggled through the salad. She was really very, very hungry. She did not dare let herself

think that the food was unpalatable. After it was all eaten she spread her napkin carefully over the empty plates and went on with her ruffle. There was a console table outside the invalid's door. Presently the nurse appeared and put his tray upon it. She set the door carefully ajar.

"I'm going out for my two hours, I think he won't want anything. I think he will just doze, he usually sleeps while I'm gone. But he didn't like his lunch, so I'll leave it here. If he should call, do you mind taking it in?"

After that the house was still. Felicia finished the petticoat, folded it neatly and began making exquisite darns in a white silk stocking. Babiche lifted her small head and sniffed in the direction of the invalid's lunch tray. Felicia eyed the tray. You would have known to have looked at that tray and its careful appointment that some one had given it to the invalid for Christmas. The china on it matched so decorously. It was an alluring looking lunch--crisp curled hearts of celery, a glowing bit of currant jelly in a glass compote, half of a delectably browned chicken surrounded by cress, and set in a silver frame was a custard cup filled with the creamiest looking custard that inspired hands had ever snatched from the oven at the psychological moment. It was quarter of one when the sedate nurse left the tray on the desk. At quarter past one Felicia fastened a glove button and sighed. Babiche's eyes were pleading. At quarter of two Felicia finished a Jacob's ladder in a long purple stocking. Babiche was sitting up and begging with her paws crossed. Felicia made her sit down by tapping her head with the thimble. At ten minutes past two Felicia had mended two pairs of short white cotton socks.

At twenty-five minutes of three a throaty voice whispered up the stairway,

"Nurse 'phoned she can't get back until after four and would I mind giving Mr. Alden his orange juice when he wakes up. It's in this glass I'm lifting to you--" A moist red hand was thrust through the open space at the bend of the stair casing. "You give it to him if he is asking before I'm back. I'm stepping across the way to my cousin's for a while--"

At twenty minutes of three Felicia had finished all of the socks save the black ones. The silk for mending them was on the edge of the console table beside the tray. She crossed the space bravely.

She had her hand on the spool of silk, when Babiche stood on her absurd head, a trick she'd not performed before Felice. Her mistress cuddled her.

"You can't have it, you precious little beggar," she whispered. "It isn't for doggies." At ten minutes of three, another pair of men's black socks had been added to the basket of completed work. Babiche gave two hungry yelps that sounded painfully loud in that silent house. Felicia struck her again with the thimble and began resolutely

putting a new dress braid on a bedraggled serge skirt. At three o'clock a gentle snore emanated from the sick room. At quarter past three Felicia smothered Babiche's most frenzied bark. At seventeen minutes past three Felicia Day, seamstress, became a thief.

"One simply cannot," as Mrs. Alden remarked "trust the sort of persons one gets from the Exchange, you never can tell what they might take--"

"They" might take just a bit of chicken skin to feed to a tiny hungry dog. And "they" might lift a bit of chicken wing to hungry human lips and after that "they" might deliberately and delicately eat the rest of it and give the bone to the doggie. And "they" might crunch the bits of celery and eat the last delicious spoonful of the custard--
"They" might even do that!

Especially when you remember that except for the dry bits of lamb and the sad tomato Felicia Day and Babiche, her dog, had had no other food save that from Margot's lunch box since they had left that bountiful House in the Woods.

At half past three, suddenly aware of the enormity of her crime, Felicia put her face into her hands and shook with laughter.

"Oh, Babiche! Babiche! Aren't we delight-fully wicked!"

Babiche pranced joyously, tossing her bone in the air and worrying it. With a sudden rush the wee dog dashed straight into the sick room, scurried about under the bed and back to her mistress. The snoring stopped abruptly. A waking snort was followed by heavy breathing. And then the quavering voice called,

"Miss Grant--if you'll bring that confounded tray in I'll try to eat a bite--"

Felicia's eyes surveyed the empty tray, her lips moved but she could not speak.

"Miss Grant--I said I'd--"

She stood before him, her eyes dropped demurely to hide her mirth. She had had the presence of mind to bring his orange juice, but when she looked up she felt suddenly very sorry. For he was not a beautiful old man like Grandy. He was wrinkled and yellow and gaunt and cross looking. He was not sad at being old, he was bitter.

Her heart went out to him, her mirth died as suddenly as a frightened child's.

"Are you really vairee hungry?" she asked solicitously.

Her low voice was not professionally low like the nurse's, it was just sweetly, normally low--to that irritable old man who lived in a family of shrill voices it sounded like an angel's. Her smoothly coiffed head

and antiquated gown spoke eloquently to him of a past when women dressed as he thought women should dress.

He turned on his pillow and looked at her.

"Lord no! I'm not hungry! I'm never hungry--but what in the Jumping Jehosophat are you doing here?"

"I'm mending. By-the-day, you know. Your nurse went walking. And your cook went to see her cousin. So if you really were hungry--isn't it lucky you aren't?--I don't know what we would do." She advanced to the bedside. He made her want to shudder, he was so ugly in his long green dressing gown. With his bald head and piercing eyebrows he made her think of a gigantic worm. When he spoke his head waggled just as a worm's head waggles when it tops a rose bush.

"There was chicken--" he remembered petulantly, "I like that cold--"

"It was vairee good--" Felicia assured him. Just to hear Felicia say "Vairee" mouthing it as Mademoiselle D'Ormy had done, was refreshingly different. "Babiche had the skin and the bones and I had the rest. We stole it, you know--"

Her confession was deliciously funny, her eyes danced laughter though her tone was demurely proper. She was really thinking of Maman lying so lovely in her bed and she was thinking how Maman had talked about amusing people when they were worried and she was thinking that this dreadful old man was the most worried looking person she had ever seen.

His grizzled hand jammed another pillow feebly behind his shoulders. He glared at her.

"Well, well, Miss--Whadda-you-call-it," he was growing more peevish. "You'll have to find something for me--"

Her smooth hand stretched toward him as quickly as a prestidigitator's, with the glass of orange juice. He was too surprised to do anything save drink it, gulping it throatily and handing back the glass with a grunt.

"And of course," added Felicia with perfect good humor, "I shall have to pay a forfeit--I always did when I took anything from Maman's tray. If I was caught."

Her childishness of manner did not seem at all incongruous to him. She was comfortably ageless so far as he was concerned, a drab figure with a pleasant voice who treated him as though he were a human being instead of a sick ogre. In some mysterious way her attitude suggested something that no one had suggested to him for years--the thing called play!

"Forfeits for Maman," she continued, "meant I had to play chess--you

don't play chess do you?"

He sat bolt upright. His beady eyes gleamed with excitement.

"Miss Whadda-you-call-it," he retorted, "you go right over there by my desk--open the bottom drawer--there's chessmen and a board. I've been looking for four years for somebody who had sense enough to play chess."

Babiche trotted at her heels, sniffing at all the new odors about her. Felicia moved easily, she got the chess men, went and brought back her lap-board and sat patiently at the bedside.

Four o'clock, half past four o'clock, five o'clock--there was no sound save the shove of the chess men. The room grew dark--the old man impatiently indicated the light. The little dog curled contently on the foot of the bed, Felicia's sleek head bent over the board. He was no easy opponent. At quarter past five nurse fluttered heavily in, looked at the bedside and gasped.

"Why Mr. Alden--"

He waved her away.

At half past five, the mistress of the household puffed up the stairway. She paused by the deserted chair in the hallway.

"Where's the seamstress?" she demanded.

The nurse showed her.

Felicia's hand was poised over a knight, she looked up gravely and smiled.

Mrs. Alden's hat with its waving plumes was overpowering enough, but her voice, strident and angry, seemed to fill the whole room.

"Well, really," she began, "I think that's the most impudent thing that I have ever had any one do in my house! What do you think I hired you for?"

For a full minute it did not occur to Felicia that the woman was addressing her. And when she knew, she rose slowly, even carefully, so as not to upset the chess-men.

"For two dollars a day--and lunch--" she answered clearly. She hadn't the remotest idea of being impertinent. She was merely literal. The only thing that saved her from Mrs. Alden's mounting wrath was the old man's voice chuckling from his pillows.

"And--" he looked triumphantly at his angry niece-in-law's snapping eyes, "she had to steal the lunch, by the Jumping Jehosophat, she had to steal her lunch! Why don't you feed people, Clara--why don't you?"

"She had a good lunch, I'm sure I instructed the cook to give her a lunch--"

With the annoying cunning of the old he contradicted her. He dearly loved a row with the mistress of the household.

"Cold lamb--" he cackled, "I heard you say cold lamb--"

"Very well, Uncle Peter," said Mrs. Alden tapping her pointed patent leather toe impatiently, "we won't argue. I'll pay the woman and she can go."

Uncle Peter's head dropped pitifully, his bravado ceased abruptly, he became a whining child.

"Don't go, Miss Whadda-you-call-it--I want to finish the game. She can pay you but don't go. It's my house, isn't it?" he fretfully interrogated the nurse, "I guess it's my house yet even if I am half dead. I'm not all dead yet, not by a long shot--"

The nurse stooped over him professionally but he waved her away.

"Sit down, can't you?" he demanded of Felicia, "it's your move."

Felicia sat down, two spots of color burning in her pale cheeks. She extended her hand over the knight again, bowing imperiously to the angry woman. Five minutes, ten minutes, twenty minutes--outside the echoes of the indignant woman's strident voice came across the hallway. She was venting her ill humor on the children noisily returning from their pageant, on the cook, whose frowzy head appeared at the stair landing for dinner orders, on the patient nurse who pattered about on errands.

"--what we're coming to--the trouble is I can't say my soul's my own--sewing women! Playing chess instead of sewing! The last one couldn't sew and this one won't--" She reprimanded a grocer over the telephone, she sent a child snivelling to her bedroom. But the invalid, his eyes intent on the chess board, paid no heed. He moved cautiously, craftily, he had set his heart on winning. And he was too shrewd for Felicia to dare to pretend to let him win.

The minutes seemed like ages but at length, just as the angry voice was subsiding, the old man straightened victoriously on his pillows.

"Check!" he called buoyantly, "Check!"

Felicia arose.

"You play adroitly," she encouraged him. "And I'm really ra-ther glad I stole your luncheon for here comes your supper. I know you'll be hungry for your supper--"

She was outside the door, as quiet as a shadow, fastening Louisa's old bonnet under her chin, buttoning the old coat about her; even before Mrs. Alden was at her side she had Babiche under her arm.

"Here's your money," said the woman stiffly.

Felicia shook her head.

"You might as well take it, even if you didn't work full time. Of course, I won't want you to come again."

"No?" Felicia asked with a curious upward inflection.

In the exasperated silence the invalid's voice quavered out to them.

"Miss Whadda-you-call-it!--Call that woman back here, Miss Grant!" She stepped to his door. "I wish you'd come around sometimes," he asked her pleadingly, "I do admire a good game of chess--and it's my house, I tell you, this is my house, even Clara can't say this isn't my house!"

"I'll come sometimes," she promised, "indeed I will--" she stepped back to her abashed employer. "--you aren't making him happy," she murmured passionately, "sick people and old people ought to be happy--" and walked straight down the stairs and out through the ornate gates leaving a discomfited woman behind her.

There were exactly six cents left in the bottom of Louisa's reticule, --it was when Felicia was passing a bake shop and saw a child buying currant buns that she knew what to do with them. She went in and bought buns. She walked slowly up her own stairs, pausing outside Maman's door to push the bag of buns back into the niche by the stairway. And stood a moment getting her breath and then reached out her hand.

"Let's pretend--" she murmured under the turmoil of noises--the house was perturbed at suppertime,--"Let's pretend you put them there, Maman--"

Safe in Mademoiselle's room she addressed Babiche firmly.

"That woman, that Mrs. Alden is just a WEED! A weed like the tailor's missus and the rest. Some one ought to pull her right out of Uncle Peter's house! She is worse than a weed! She ought to have to be a by-the-day! And sit in a windy hall and sew and sew. And then some one ought to bring her a tray, with messy napkins and just two pieces of dry lamb and a sad tomato--and all the while that she was eating it somebody ought to put Uncle Peter's tray on the table beside her! With chicken and custard and celery and all! Yes, that's what some one should do, Babiche!"

Babiche begged gracefully for her part of the buns. They had a delightful time together.

"But I do wish," she murmured, after they'd settled themselves on the narrow bed for the night, "I could remember whether Mademoiselle ever let the Wheezy have such a dreadful luncheon--I shall ask her tomorrow--"

She did ask her, for she did find the Wheezy, just as she found anything she set out to find, by sheer dint of persistence.

It was late afternoon when she found her. The visiting hours were almost over. The Wheezy never had visitors, she was sitting listlessly looking at nothing at all when the attendant ushered Felicia through the corridor. She was just the same old Wheezy, but more crotchety, smaller and thinner, wheezing still and she turned her dim eyes toward the doorway and called,

"If you want to speak to Mrs. Sperry why under the shining canopy don't you come in? She'll be back in a second."

For several minutes she stubbornly would not recognize Felicia. She grudgingly admitted that she did remember Mademoiselle D'Ormy and that she did recall there had been a little girl, but she was as incredulous as the Disagreeable Walnut had been that this frumpy, drab looking person was that sprightly child. Felicia strove mightily to reassure her.

"Can't you remember when you used to sew for us at Montrose Place, how I called you the Wheezy and it made you cross?"

Miss Pease admitted that the child had called her that.

"And can't you remember anything else I did? I mean that the little girl did? For if you could I would do it and then you'd know--"

"She used to whistle--" the admission came slowly after deep thought, "She used to whistle real good, when the old man wasn't about."

Felicia sat down on the edge of the Wheezy's bed. Her eyes were shining. Mrs. Sperry had come back and was sitting by the Wheezy's window. It seemed that they shared the room. She was staring animatedly at her room-mate's visitor. From the opened door into the corridor Felicia could glimpse other old ladies, peeping in curiously, hovering about like gray moths at twilight.

She smiled at them wistfully, as she was wont to smile at Grandy, with her heart in her eyes.

"We're going to pretend something," she called to them softly, "Would you like to pretend? We're going to pretend I'm a little girl in a back yard who has been hearing Marthy sing--Marthy sings a song called Billy Boy about a boy who had been courting. She used to say, in the song, 'Where have you been, Billy Boy, Billy Boy--Where have you been, charming Billy?' I can't sing but you shall hear me whistle it--"

The little gray moths of women crept closer, some of them fluttered into the Wheezy's room. The twilight grew deeper and deeper, and on the edge of the Wheezy's bed sat little Miss By-the-day and whistled the songs that Marthy used to sing. "Churry Ripe--Churry Ripe--" and "Ever of thee I am fondly dreaming--"

She whistled until some one came down the corridor to light the lights. The Wheezy's bony hand was on hers, the Wheezy's tears were falling.

"Why under the shining canopy I didn't know who you was--" she muttered apologetically, "My soul, I guess it's because I can't half see!"

"No, it's because--" Felicia sighed, "I'm not really that little girl any more. Only the Happy Part of her is here--" she put her hand on her breast. "I'm really old--like Grandy--like Piqueur. I can see vairee well. I saw myself--" she paused, "in a mirror, you know, I was that surprised--" she managed to laugh a little. "But Wheezy dear, there's a man who has to know that I am Felicia Day. Will you tell him that you know I am?"

The Wheezy promised eagerly. And then Felicia whistled a while longer, because one little gray moth, more daring than the rest wanted to hear,

"I remember, I remember in the years long passed away,
A little maid and I would meet beside the stream to play--"

Her quavering voice recited the verses, while Felicia whistled, oh, so softly!

They fluttered after her as she walked down the corridor, the Matron walked beside her and the Wheezy's arm was through hers. Of course she was coming again, she promised them she would, they accepted her promises with eager queries like children.

"I'll come another visiting day--" she patted the Wheezy's shoulders, "I like to! You all are _so_ good at pretending!"

"Do you know," she told Judge Harlow in the morning, "I did find some one who knows who I am?" Her face was glowing with achievement,

"Even if you get so old that you don't look at all as you used to there's some part of you that people can't forget. Some Happy Part of you! You really ought to try it! Perhaps there is some old lady up there who used to know you when you were little! If you'd go there some visiting day and whistle for her she'd know you, just as quick! You try it!"

She went away thrilling with anticipation. He had a young lawyer there, who had a great many papers. The young lawyer explained to her

that the Justice had asked him to keep track of things for her. And they were arranging it so that in another week, she would possess her house, mortgages, taxes, fines and all, and the thirty days "to straighten things" but she would actually possess it and the tailor and the tailor's missus and all their dreadful tenants would have to go out, bag and baggage.

She trotted into The Woman's Exchange at noon, positively buoyant.

"You'll have to find me another by-the-day," she announced to Miss Sarah.

"How'd you make out Saturday?"

"I--made--_out_--" Felicia laughed back at her. "She was a WEED, that woman. The old man played chess with me but she didn't like us to do it. I couldn't take the two dollars--"

"I'm afraid you aren't businesslike," Miss Sarah chided, "you said you needed the money."

"I do," Felicia assured her, "that's why I'm back for another by-the-day."

Miss Sarah found another job for her, indeed she jotted down several possible places in a small notebook whose florid cover extolled the virtues of Dinkle's Cough Syrup.

"This would be a good book for anybody so unbusinesslike as you," she confided as she presented her client with it. "In the back here are pages to write what you earn and what you spend and to keep track of the days you are going out."

It fitted nicely into the reticule. Felicia felt competent with it there. She used to take it out at night and write in it. It had double entry pages labelled grandly "INCOME" "EXPENDITURES." With the first pages Felicia wrote a letter to Margot, a masterly letter in which she bade her servant tell Zeb that the filthy dirty heathen were going to be sent away, a letter in which she warned Margot that unless Grandy were too unhappy she would not go back to the House in the Woods until the house in the city was clean once more. She explained that certain legal matters had to be attended to. The round stroke of her pen seemed to proclaim her complete confidence that they could be attended to satisfactorily. But the postscript begged Margot to tell Bele to stay all he could with Grandy, "If Grandy looks at the chess board tell Bele to put the men on it and shove a man every time Grandy pushes one--you must all keep Grandy happy." And the last postscript of all said, "The narcissi are lovely, I have them in my room!"

Which was quite truthful. She did have narcissi in her room! Their fragrance almost overpowered her. She lay in the darkness and pretended that they were in the garden and that she was lying on them. She had been most businesslike about them. If you could have audited

her accounts in Dinkle's Cough Syrup you would have seen on the page where she first began her reckoning,

"INCOME	EXPENDITURES
Two dollars	Bone--five cents
	Apples, cakes and sandwiches
	forty five cents
	Narcissi One dollar."

It is delightful to relate that no one ever in all this world purchased more narcissi for one dollar than Felicia bought at the florist's stand that wonderful evening when she made her first expenditure from money she had actually earned. She looked so tired and wan in her frumpy old clothes that the florist's clerk, who was a sentimental young thing, assumed she must be purchasing them for some one's grave. Even though he might be foredoomed to lose his job, he recklessly tied up the whole bundle that her hand had indicated.

"Honest, she made me feel like I oughta be giving things away instead of selling 'em," he apologized to his astounded boss, who had met the new customer on her way out, "Honest, she got me hipped!"

In spite of the "heathen," in spite of taxes and fines--in spite of the fatigue that still remained from those days of travel and hunger, in spite of the strangeness of sitting all day stitching, in spite of even the fierce longing, whenever she passed a telephone, to speak with Dudley Hamilt, Felicia found herself--happy, happy with the same haunting happiness with which she had long ago untangled the puzzle of the lost garden, happy with the aching happiness that longs to attain and trembles lest it cannot.

"Babiche," she chattered, "When I was young, like the girls in Piqueur's song I found my fun in spring forests; but now--" she was looking out across the river at the gleaming towers of Manhattan, glimpsing the jewel-like line of trolleys crawling slowly over the lighted bridges, watching the busy shipping that scurried over the harbor in the violet and bronze evening, "Now I find it in spring cities--"

She consulted the garden book much, peering bravely down into the appalling rubbish heaps of her beloved back yard.

"All of the ivy isn't gone and there's wistaria and we can make new ivies from slips, next spring it must be just as it used to be. Perhaps we can find the old benches, I know exactly where to build the paths. We will have to get some pebbles to make the paths. We must plant plenty of narcissi again, Babiche. Because some day, there might be some other girl who lived in this house and who walked in the garden and when Her Night came we would want it to be just as lovely as it was That Night--"

She had no definite girl in mind, she had not really, although she thought she had found the "pattern" of what the house was to be, she only longed to get the "filthy dirty heathen" out and make things

orderly as they once had been. I doubt if she had yet visualized anybody as living in that house, save Maman and Grandy and herself. Yet even before the heathen were out she had brought home a girl--the Sculptor Girl, the first of those starry-eyed young humans who were to call the house their own.

It happened this way. She set forth on a cloudy, threatening over-warm morning, Babiche under her arm, toward a new address, a morning so palpably "growing" that she longed to be planting. She had promised herself eagerly that the very day when the heathen were gone she would plant some ivies. She was pretending vehemently that the heathen were gone and that she didn't have to be a "by-the-day" yet before night she was exclaiming passionately, "I am proud, proud, proud I was a by-the-day--"

The new place was not a hard one. A fat, seemingly good natured employer awaited her, a boarding house mistress who had curtains to be mended and napkins to be hemmed, who was dubious about taking the applicant when she discovered she could not use a sewing machine but who decided on second reflection (aided by the fact that she had just discovered that her sewing machine was not in repair) to allow Felicia her day's work.

The vestibule doors were embellished with gilt lettering that proclaimed the place to be

"Seeley's"

Mrs. Seeley did not object to Babiche. Indeed she kissed the top of her nose so resoundingly that Babiche was terrified and Felicia stared with amazement. It had never occurred to her that any one ever kissed a dog. If Felicia had been left comfortably to her own devices at her previous "places" she quickly discovered that the Seeley household made rather an event of the seamstress' coming. There was no necessity for stealing a lunch. Indeed, when lunchtime arrived she was ushered into the basement dining-room and invited to eat with the rest of the family and as many of the "select boarders" as appeared. It was not a good luncheon. But to Felicia it was an extraordinarily gay function. For at the table was Mr. Perry, immaculately groomed in a discreet uniform. Mrs. Seeley introduced them with a matter-of-fact statement of their occupations.

"Miss Day, meet Mrs. J. Furthrington's chauffeur--Miss Day is sewing for me--" she poured their teas impartially. It appeared that Mrs. J. Furthrington's chauffeur did not often grace the boarding house for his meals. He usually, as he expressed it "ate wherever the run was." He talked with whimsical despondency of his job which, it appeared, was new.

"Good gracious," chaffed Mrs. Seeley, "I thought you'd felt grand from associating with swells and changing your rooms--"

"Well I feel swell," he admitted dubiously, "but in a way the job gets

my goat. Munition millionaires, that's what I'm working for, can you beat it? Last year in a Canarsie bungalow and this year a-riding in a Rolls Royce! Everybody to his taste--mine wouldn't be for nobody else driving my car no matter how much spondulex come my way. It will be me for the little old low down 'steen cylinder racer when I get my pile--" he slid his long body under the table and grasped his plate as a steering wheel, "'Poor, get out of muh way!' my horn will yell--"

His fellow boarders laughed uproariously, his landlady wiped tears from her eyes.

"Hain't he comical?" she appealed to her sewing woman.

Felicia viewed the redoubtable Mr. Perry with amused eyes.

"He's vairee good at pretending--" her shy approbation came. He winked at her.

"Any time you want a joy-ride, call on me!"

Which fresh sally seemed to explode uncontrollable mirth about the basement dining-room. Flapping his wonderful gauntlets together he called a farewell from the doorway.

"Only get a different bunnet--" he waved Louisa's from the peg on the hall rack, Felicia didn't mind in the least, she was mouthing this new phrase "Joy-ride," it sounded delightful. All the same she rescued her bonnet and carried it upstairs with her. "I love that boy like a plate of fudge," confided Mrs. Seeley as she and Felicia were ascending to the ornate bedroom where the sewing was waiting. "He's the life of the place. Everybody likes him. I don't know what there is about him, he hain't so handsome but he certainly is poplar. Yet Dulcie won't stand for him--Dulcie thinks he's fresh."

It appeared that Dulcie was not pleased with anything or anybody. Especially when she was having one of her "spells." Mrs. Seeley rocked violently as she recounted to her new seamstress her trials with Dulcie.

"She's a caution. In a way I do owe her a livin'. She's my husband's niece I know, that is by his first wife y'understand. She wasn't even exactly his niece. But on account of his havin' to use Dulcie's money in his plumbin' business we agreed to give her her livin'. Al kept her in a nart school, a swell art school when we was first married. That was a mistake. I said to him many a time to mark-my-words, it would be a mistake. Of course when he died I didn't feel it was up to me to keep her in a nart school. So I took her right into the family, same's I'd take you or anybody. But it's no use. All she does is mope. Even Mr. Perry can't cheer her up, though he tries.

"Says he to her only last night, 'Cheer up, I'll take you a nice ride down to the morgue.' I thought everybody'd die laughing to hear him but she just got up and stalked out of the dining-room like somebody

had insulted her. And I can't get a peep out of her today. Just this noon I says to her, pleasant enough, because I was short of help, wouldn't she come down and wait on table, but would she?" demanded Mrs. Seeley bitterly, "She would not. She said she was no scullery maid and slammed the door in my face and went back to her wet mud--"

"Oh, is she building a garden?" asked Felice eagerly.

"Nothing so useful as a garden," snorted Mrs. Seeley, "it's clay she's fussin' with, thinkin' she's going to be able to make statues some day. Statues! What kind of a job is that nowadays! Artist jobs is impractical. Dulcie is awful impractical. I offered to send her to business college, she could make a good living, but no, she's gotta make statues! With the parks all full of 'em now and that kind of thing going out of style for parlors! I put both my Rogers groups upstairs in the attic when I bought the phonograph--there's no style to a statue any more. And she wants to learn to make 'em!"

"But I should think," breathed the seamstress her eyes glowing as she lifted them from her work, "that you'd be proud to have her want to try to make something."

What Mrs. Seeley thought expressed itself in the bang of the door as she left to answer a strident summons below stairs. But after she had gone Felice became aware of continued sobbing in the next room, a sobbing as penetrating, for all it was not so loud, as that of the noisy Italian baby at home.

For a long time the weeping was sustained and dreary. It never ceased save when Mrs. Seeley came back to give Felicia instructions about her work, but usually after her footfalls had clattered down the stairway the crying would begin again, very softly. Frequently Felicia could hear the pad, pad, pad of stockinged feet. She knew that whenever the crying stopped the grieving one walked to and fro restlessly. After a longer interval of silence than usual Felicia became aware that Babiche was sniffing excitably. The nervous sniff that had always characterized the wee doggies on days when the carbolic water was ready for the rinsing.

Felicia wrinkled her own nose tentatively. Presently she got up and opened the door to the next room. It was empty. But adjoining it was an untidy bathroom with a dark wainscoting and a grimy enameled tub and standing over near the uncurtained window was a boyish figure, wrapped in a man's overcoat, with a bottle in her hand. She had wept so long, poor girl, that Felicia couldn't tell very much about how she really looked, except that it seemed to her she had never seen any one so unhappy.

Felicia stood there, an absurdly dowdy figure, Babiche clasped in her arm, and smiled timorously.

"Where is your dog?" she asked sweetly.

"What dog?" demanded a sulky voice.

"The dog you were going to wash--" Felicia's voice was casual. "With the 'scarbolic.'"

"I wasn't--trying to wash any dog--" the girl breathed dully.

Felicia moved quickly, she took the bottle from the girl's hand. "Then I wish you'd lend me your--'scarbolic,'" she entreated sweetly, "Babiche really needs a bath."

The youthful sufferer stared from her tear-stained eyes, stared with all her might at the shabby, frumpy, middle-aged looking little person who had taken the bottle from her hand.

"I can't stand it--" she sobbed bitterly, "I've got to quit--you don't know how I feel--I feel as if--"

"When you feel that way," interrupted Felicia quietly, "you mustn't have a 'scarbolic' bottle, that's a thing that will make you go dead--"

"It's my own business if I do--I'd rather be dead than the way I am--" she stretched out her arms passionately, "I haven't room to breathe! I did have that top floor front you know, it was a peach of a place to work. But she rented it to a chauffeur and put me in this hole--oh, oh, when all I asked was room for my model stand and room for my clay --when all I wanted was room for Pandora--you can't know how I feel--"

"But I do know how you feel!" slender hands cupped the girl's face. Felicia's eyes looked through into the girl's soul. "You feel like 'I can't get out, I can't get out, sang the starling! Once I did. Perhaps every one of us comes to a time when she feels all shut in--I went out into my garden when I felt that way. It is a big garden but it felt smaller than this room. I cried in it all night long, walking up and down and up and down--quite sure I didn't want to live any more. But when it was getting to be morning I saw a rosebush by the wall. In a jar. I'd forgotten to take care of it and Bele--he is good, you know, but stupid--had been tending it. Poor Rosebush!

"It was much too big for its jar. Its roots were all cramped and its top all cut back so it couldn't bloom--you mustn't prune some roses too much, you know--I've just been thinking, that you're rather like my rosebush. You're Dulcie, aren't you? I think I know exactly what you need. If you'd just come along with me--I've a big room--I mean I will have as soon as I get the abundance-of-weeds-for-which-we-have-no-name out--I'd just love you to come with me. You'd be proud, proud, proud if you did--"

"Listen, that's Mrs. Seeley coming back up the stairs. She's bringing me my two dollars. You put on your shoes and when she's down the stairs I'll whistle--so--vairee softly. And then you will come out and down we'll go. It will really be a great favor if you will--it's a big house, my house and I'm ra-_ther_ lonely--"

It wasn't until they were outside in the shadowy, rain-sweet street that Dulcie realized she had been coaxed that far. She drew back. "I've no hat," she whimpered, "It's no use--I don't want to go--"

"You would," the seamstress insisted, "if you only knew what fun it's going to be. And we'll stop in the Exchange and buy you a cap. It's a darling cap. I've wanted it evaire since I saw it, it's velvet, rather like a choir boy's, only it has a tassel." Her arm was through Dulcie's, they were really walking along. "And we shall buy our supper there too. Miss Susan has fat jars of baked beans and little round corn muffins and I think she has quince jelly--"

She actually managed to get her hysterical guest as far as the shop without further parley. The girl took the cap and the parcels that Felicia handed her, turning her head away when she fancied Miss Susan was eyeing her sharply. They walked around the corner and into the gateway of that unspeakably dirty house. The girl drew back in dismay.

"Oh, it's altogether too dreadful--" she exclaimed. "It's worse than Aunt Seeley's--I can't go in--"

But she did go in and up the stairs too, protesting weakly all the way. She was plainly exhausted from her emotions, and clung to Felicia's arm. And when they were safe in Mademoiselle's room she looked about her wildly. "It's an awful place--" she moaned.

"It's going to be lovely," promised Felicia stoutly, "It used to be lovely. Look here," she drew the girl to the window and pointed out across the gleaming river, "that's what you'll see every night from your windows. You won't be in this little room, you'll be in the big room next, the room that used to be my nursery."

She wheedled the tired girl into eating a bit. She coaxed her to lie on the bed and watch the stars. She did not talk any more, just listened to sobbing breaths that the girl drew--listened as she sat in the wicker chair with Babiche cuddled in her arms. And presently the girl slept. And Felicia sighed and slept too.

Morning was droll and difficult. An enormous bumping and thumping awakened the sleepers. Cramped and dazed from her uncomfortable night in the chair Felicia jumped up startled; drowsy and bewildered in her unaccustomed bed, Dulcie sat up and stared at her.

"Whatever is it?" Dulcie stammered.

Felicia clapped her hands.

"It's the weeds--this is going to be a wonderful, wonderful day, Dulcie, you're going to be so glad--just think! The tailor and the tailor's missus and all of them are going--"

They were not only going, they had already started. All day long the

old house groaned under their leave-taking. All day long Felicia chattered to Dulcie of her plans of how they should find where the old furniture had gone and bring it back; of how they should make the whole house lovely.

Dulcie was shy and silent most of the time, her eyes were still red, she was still numb from her nerve-racking day before, still shamed by the fact that this queer little creature had given her her bed and slept in a chair beside her. Late afternoon found the two of them standing in the empty room that had been the nursery. They had been laughing a little over the absurdity of their situation; the tailor's missus had removed the bed and chair from Mademoiselle's room, and they were furnitureless. But Dulcie was waking up mentally after her day of stupor. "Impractical" as her aunt had proclaimed her, she proved the contrary very quickly.

"Steamer chairs," she decided instantly, "I left two steamer chairs and some rugs over on Ella Slocum's back porch--I'll bet we could get a grocery boy to bring them over for us--"

"Only what good will it do?" she tramped about the great room restlessly, "It's no use, Miss Day, you might better have let me quit --you've got troubles enough without bothering with me--"

"Isn't there room enough?" asked Felicia shyly. "Isn't it big enough?"

"It's big enough for the model stand--" she admitted moodily. "It's a good light. I could paint these silly papered walls--" Felicia sighed. Dear old shepherds and shepherdesses! It was not the gathering twilight alone that let them mist away as she looked.

"Are they so silly?" she asked. "I didn't know." But the girl did not answer her.

"It's no use," that moody creature was muttering despondently. "There's space enough but it's no use. I don't seem to want to do it any more--I used to sit and dream about how I'd do it and how it would make other people dream just to look--it wasn't going to be any ordinary Pandora--it was to be a symbol--a symbol of what goes on in your heart when you're young--before you know about life--oh, I can't chitter-chatter about it--but I used to think I could make it--"

"Of course you can make it," Felicia insisted. "Not just now--" she led the girl to the window, "right now, the first thing you'll have to do is to help me in the garden. Doesn't it look ugly down there? It used to be lovely. Probably as soon as it's lovely again you will walk around in it and dream about your Pandora. I used to dream a lot of things in that garden. Some day, while I'm off sewing on my stupid sewing, you'll come dashing upstairs--and begin! Think what fun it will be when I get home that night! I'll call out, 'Where's my sculptor girl?' And you'll call out--'Here, I've begun!'" Felicia waved her hand into the gloom behind them as though Pandora were already mysteriously there. Perhaps she was!

At any rate that was the moment that Felicia won!

The Sculptor Girl laughed, a nervous little laugh, and dashed off to arrange for the steamer chairs. Presently she came back with them and found Felicia had kindled a fire in the Peggoty grate. It was delightfully cosy with two candles burning recklessly on the mantel-shelf and Felicia and Dulcie sitting by the embers of the little fire. They'd had a supper of sandwiches and milk. Babiche was curled at their feet and they were planning excitably what they'd do with the house, when from the depths of the empty hall the old bell shrilled. They'd bolted the doors an hour before when the last of the tailor's tribe had departed. It was the Sculptor Girl who mustered courage to go down.

"It's all right," she called up to Felicia, "it's Miss Sarah from the Exchange. There's a Mr. Alden with her--will you come down?"

He was a very apologetic Mr. Alden.

"I know it's after eight," he said, "but I've had a time finding you. It's Uncle Peter. He's--well, Miss Grant and the doctor think he's pretty bad tonight. He's a notion he wants to play chess with you, he's been asking all day. I couldn't find you till now. Would you come along for an hour or two to pacify him?"

The Sculptor Girl decided for her.

"Babiche and I will wait up for you," she said. "We'll wait--"

It was as comfortable a motor as the Judge's. Little Miss Day let herself rest in its cushions. She felt rather lonely without Babiche, but she was glad she had had her to leave with the Sculptor Girl.

"Maybe the dear old duffer will be asleep when we get there and I can send you right back," Mr. Alden suggested hopefully. "He was so darned good to me when I was a kid that I can't let him miss anything I can get for him--Lord knows that's not much--I thought I could get you right away but I didn't have any name and I couldn't find out where you came from--my wife didn't have your address--"

They entered quietly and were up the stairway quickly. Outside the door he paused, "Just as soon as he is asleep," he whispered, "you come out and let me know--I'll be in the library downstairs with some chaps and I'll phone for the car to come around for you--you're awfully good to come--" he was a bit awkward.

"Uncle Peter" looked no more miserable than, he had the week before when she had met him, save that his eyes burned deeper. His voice was more petulant, he wasted no time in preliminaries, merely ejaculated a grateful,

"Ah! Why didn't you come earlier?"

The nurse sat by her light, reading; the chess board lay on the small table; Uncle Peter was propped in his cushions and the game began.

From below stairs Felicia could hear faint echoes of conversations. She had heard the mistress of the house departing in the same motor that had brought them, but a steady rumble of men's voices and a faint aroma of cigars floated up the stairway. You can't think what exultation it gave her, just having a sense of nearness to sturdy masculinity after a lifetime of invalids and old folks! She liked the spirit of argument that dimly arose, the eager confab--"It's not feasible"--"It couldn't be pulled off"--"Quixotic plan"--"take a mint of money--"

The sheltered sick room was like all her life, but below stairs there were--men! She moved her pawns quietly, watching Uncle Peter's adroit game. She watched too, something else, the light in Uncle Peter's eyes. They sparkled.

The room was impossibly hot yet the old man shivered, just as Grandy shivered, and drew his dressing gown closer. Felicia was very tired from her exciting day. She grew paler and paler; the circles under her eyes grew deeper; her forehead was moist; her hand trembled a bit. But presently she heard.

"Check!" She roused herself, she had been playing badly, he had caught her! But he laughed, a feeble, senile laugh, and leaned back, altogether pleased with himself.

"A drink," he panted and closed his eyes. "Come again, Miss Whadda-you-call-it--"

The nurse's eyes reproached her as she tiptoed out.

A pert maid arose, from the hall chair,

"Mr. Alden said for me to 'phone the garage, that the car would be here for you directly--will you sit down--"

There was a bench on the stair landing below them beside an open window. Felicia gestured toward it, and the maid nodded.

She could hear the voices more clearly now, she could even see two of the speakers through an arched doorway. They were sprawled easily in big chairs, a blue haze of smoke floating over them. One of them was laughing,

"That's all right--we agree with you--we'll go in your wild scheme if you can find some other fools too--only, I say Dud, before you beat it just sing a couple things, will you? You might be gone six months instead of three and that's too long between songs. I know you aren't singing and you haven't any voice and all that, but just a couple to show there's no hard feeling--those things you used to--the one that

the darkey boy wrote--that Dunbar chap--'The Sum'--and that other one--"

Others added to the appeal. Some one objected. Felicia caught a brief glimpse of a tall figure, over-coat on arm, the doorway, and a hand pulling him back. But on he came, protesting vibrantly that he never sang any more. He looked up toward the figure on the stairs,

"I believe I'll run up to say Howdy and Good-by to your Uncle Peter--"

One step, two steps he had ascended before she could actually see him. Then with her heart in her eyes she looked to him--he was so tall, so broad shouldered, so superb in his ruddy blondeness!

"Oh, Dudly Hamilt!" her lips moved. But she leaned back against the shadow of the curtains as he drew nearer.

He was so close she could touch him, he was so close that at last he saw her--that is he saw a little drab person whose figure was lost in a caped coat.

"Beg pardon," he murmured--and passed her--

She buried her face in her hands. She was too weak to move. She was still sitting with her face thus hidden when he came down the stairway a moment later, calling back to the invalid,

"You'll be as good as ever when it's summer--"

The others were waiting for him at the foot of the stairway.

"Un-cle Pe-ter-" called Freddie Alden, "ask Dud to sing 'Who Knows' for you." Uncle Peter did.

And so with her pulse racing madly, with her throat so dry it seemed as though she could not breathe, Felicia Day sat and listened, listened with her trembling hand over her mouth to keep her lips from crying out. Listened to the first firm chords as Dudley Hamilt's long fingers moved over the keys, listened as he began to sing. He wasn't using very much voice, just enough to let the melody ring upward to Uncle Peter, round and smooth and inexpressibly caressing. He wasn't singing as though it mattered especially what he sang, indeed at first the phrasing was careless. But presently his voice soared more freely, it grew vibrant with longing.

"Thou art the soul of a summer's day,
Thou art the breath of a rose;
But the summer is fled and the rose is dead;
Where are they gone, who knows, who knows?"

"Thou art the blood of my heart of hearts,
Thou art my soul's repose;
But my heart's grown numb and my soul is dumb--"

The song stopped abruptly.

"Sorry. Can't sing it.--'Night, Uncle Peter. 'Night everybody--" A door banged.

"Gad, he's a queer chap! If I had his voice I'd sing--" she caught the fatuous phrases of the man who had laughed but after that she was no longer sure of herself. She could only hear the muffled rise of her own sobbing.

The chauffeur asked a respectful question at the doorway.

"Why, yes," answered Freddie Alden, "the maid 'phoned--wait a minute--Hullo--" he called. But a second later he was racing upward,

"I say, Miss Grant--this little woman here--she's fainted--"

CHAPTER V

"CERTAIN LEGAL MATTERS"

Of Janet MacGregor and why she couldn't abide Mrs. Freddie Alden the Poetry Girl once said epics could have been written. Janet was gaunt and wiry, the relict of the late Jock MacGregor, who had cared for Uncle Peter Alden's horses for a lifetime and died leaving his savings and a bit of life insurance to Janet, together with an admonition to "keep an eye on Mr. Peter."

Janet did. She dropped into the Alden kitchen frequently of an evening to glean a melancholy satisfaction from the morbid details of Uncle Peter's lingering betwixt life and death. Whenever--which was frequent--there was an upheaval in the Alden's domestic arrangements, Janet filled in the gaps, spoke her mind freely to Mrs. Freddie, secure in the knowledge that Mrs. Freddie wouldn't talk back until a new cook arrived, and usually departed in a wholesome rage--which didn't at all deter her from accepting Mr. Freddie's sizable peace offering.

To see her "washing oop" after dinner on an evening when she was about to depart FOREVER--or anyhow until Mr. Freddie came for her again--was a tremendous sight. Especially on an evening when at the highest moment of her justifiable wrath Mr. Freddie would appear and nonchalantly suggest a "few eats for some chaps who'd dropped in" as casually as though Janet were not already on the verge of explosion. Of course she would prepare the lunch, stabbing the bread-saw viciously into the defenseless loaf and muttering dark things as she assembled something she called "old doves" on a big Sheffield platter. Janet couldn't cook at all but she could arrange things as beautifully as her ancestors did--and they had been a race of public park

gardeners! There wasn't anything she couldn't do with some parsley, a can of sardines and the cheese that was left from dinner. And then she would wait grimly for the platter. Not for anything, even though she were leaving FOREVER, would Janet let the remnants remain to stain that sacred platter. Besides if she waited she always had a fine chance to growl whimpering things about what an hour it was for a decent widow woman to be a-walkin' the roads and to agree, feebly, oh very feebly, that maybe Mr. Freddie was right, that it wouldn't hurt the chauffeur to drive her back to her tiny flat.

This particular evening Janet had been speaking her mind so freely that the new dining-room girl had fled absolutely dazed by Janet's dark threat that, Mr. Peter or no Mr. Peter, she, Janet MacGregor, would never let her shadow rest again on the Alden walls. She would tell Mr. Freddie that, she would let him understand that she didn't have to take Miss' Alden's lip, that she, at least, wasn't married to her, that she had some spirit left even if she was a widow woman. And that she wasn't dependent on the Aldens nor anybody else. That she was going to quit service of any kind--day of week or month. She had a grand chance to open a window-cleaning emporium. She could get the ladders and harnesses and chamois scrubs for almost nothing from the widow of a boss cleaner who had cleaned a twenty-second story window without the aid of one of his own reliable harnesses. She didn't care so much for her flat anyhow. She was going to find a basement, she was, with a long hall to keep the ladders in and a sunny front room for her to live in and put her sign in the window. But with the Aldens she was through--unless, of course, Mr. Freddie wanted to give her a window-cleaning contract.

She had been loitering near the pantry door shamelessly eavesdropping during Dudley Hamilt's song because she hoped that meant the gentlemen would be going and that she could air her grievances while Mr. Freddie smoked and chuckled at her grumbling. So that when Mr. Freddie called for Miss Grant, Janet was on the stairs a good three seconds before that professionally calm person appeared.

Janet sat on the landing window seat and cuddled Felicia in her thin arms, crooning over her like a setting hen.

"There, there--don't ye mind her--" she lifted glum eyes to Mr. Freddie as she soothed the sobbing woman, "It's this that Miss' Freddie's tantrums brings the help to! Many a time have I masel' felt like givin' way the way this poor soul is givin' way. It's on'y ma fierce pride that saves me--don't ye cry over Miss' Freddie's way o' speakin'--"

"It wasn't Mrs. Freddie, it wasn't anybody--" Felicia lifted her streaming eyes from Janet's spare bosom. She was deeply chagrined that the group hovering on the stairway could see her tears. "It was just that--I was tired--that Uncle Peter's room was rather hot--that I liked to hear the man sing--I'm vairee well--" Her drawling "vairee" sounded anything but well, it was almost a sob in itself. "Truly vairee well--"

She was still "very well" a few moments later when she and Janet settled themselves in the luxurious car. They were the oddest pair. Janet's bonnet and shawl were as battered as Felicia's garb; exhausted as she was Felicia found herself whimsically wondering how she'd tell herself from Janet when it was time to get out. Felicia's tears had dissolved in little smothered hysterical sniffs. She was laughing at Janet's scolding because the seamstress had refused to take what Mr. Freddie had tried to give her just as they were stepping into the car.

"It's worth any money to Mr. Freddie to have Mr. Peter snatch a bit of contentment from life--and Mr. Freddie is that prodigal with money that if you don't take it of him he'll hand it to the next one--"

"But I can't take money for playing--chess is only playing, its only for work we should take money."

Janet snorted. She talked volubly in her rich broad Scotch. Agitated as she was, Felicia's own lips were mouthing these strange new sounds, she was sure she could get the guttural A, she wasn't sure of the burry R. She couldn't heed at all what Janet was saying, indeed she couldn't listen intelligently, because her tired ears were still filled with the glorious harmonies of Dudley Hamilt's unfinished song. When she shut her eyes she could see his tall figure swinging up the stairs--she was trying to convince herself that she was really glad that he hadn't recognized her, when the car stopped before her darkened house. Janet got out first, haughtily dismissing the chauffeur with the assurance that she could walk the four blocks over to her own house and she'd not leave a clean car in such a dirty street as Montrose Place.

Dulcie was waiting on the old balcony. Babiche trotted ahead of her when she opened the door, in ecstasy at Felicia's home coming. Dulcie set her flaring candle carefully on the newel post and eyed Janet.

"It's Janet MacGregor with me, Dulcie. She's a widow woman. This is Dulcie Dierckx, Janet, you'll like Dulcie--" She had Babiche in her arms now, and was leaning wearily against the balustrade, "Janet was good to bring me home--I was a silly fool--I cried, Dulcie--"

Janet was peering curiously into the empty house.

"Is anybody livin' here?" she demanded. "I thought I saw them all movin' out--I heard the building was comin' down to make room for lofts."

Dulcie answered that it wasn't, holding the door open as a tactful hint that she'd better go. But Janet had no intention of leaving. She had a woman's curiosity about a vacant house, and she was frankly looking things over, craning her neck to glance down the murky hallway.

"Would you think the basement might be to let to a decent body? It's

no worth much, so old and all but I know a body as might conseeder it." Impractical as the "beastly step-aunt" had proclaimed her to be Dulcie grasped Janet's thin arm.

"How much would you pay?"

"Is it your hous'?"

"It's Miss Day's--" Dulcie nodded toward Felicia. "She's just been thinking she might rent part of it. Of course its altogether too large for her."

"If she's livin' here where's her furnishings?" demanded Janet cannily.

Felicia sat down on a stair. She motioned but the others remained standing, their lean figures casting grotesque shadows in the flickering light of the candle.

"This is the pattern of it," the little seamstress explained. "It's my house, Janet MacGregor, only it's dirty because while I was gone building my garden, some dirty filthy heathen came to live here. But now I'm home His Honor made them all go away. And as soon as I have earned enough money to pay the taxes and other things I shall make the house lovely again. The furniture is in a place called storage. I think I have to pay them something before I get my things, don't I, Dulcie?"

"What's the matter o' the storage bills?" demanded Janet her eyes gleaming.

Dulcie answered her, her sharp slangy syllables falling incisively after Felicia's low drawl.

"I don't know that it's any of your business but they amount to about two hundred dollars. I know what you're thinking, that with the furniture we could open a rooming house. I've been thinking that myself while Miss Day was gone. I've experience you know, my beastly step-aunt does make a good thing of it. So if you wanted to rent the basement and had some furniture of your own Miss Day might consider it."

Janet's thin arms rested akimbo. She nodded.

"If you've lodgings to let you've got to have some one to keep 'em tidy. There's a good bit o' money there for an able body. If the furnishings is what she ree-presents and you'd conseeder takin' me in on shares--I might conseeder--"

"Consider what?" gasped Dulcie.

"Conseeder advancing for the storage of the furnishings--with the furnishings as security o' course. And doin' some cleanin' toward the

matter o' what ma rent would be. Mind I'm no sayin' I would until I see the furnishings. I'm on'y conseederin'--I'll have the matter o' some ladders--" she peered again down the dark hallway, "and I'd want a neat ticket in the window--"

At midnight, by the embers of their dying fire, Felicia lay with Dulcie's rug about her, plaintively pretending from the feel of the chair, that she was the young Felice of those long years ago, journeying toward the beloved House in the Woods. It was an easy pretense for she could glimpse the dark waters of the bay and the silent ships drifting on the tide. A spring fog seeped through the open windows and she was quite as miserable as she had been on that memorable trip. Beside her in her own chair, Dulcie talked and talked, a thousand details that Felicia's tired wits could not follow. It did not seem at all a miracle to her that she had found Janet. She accepted her with the simplicity with which she accepted any one who came into her life.

"The garden is a little old pippin," Dulcie boasted. "We can make that all O. K. in a day or so, but the house did stump me! Janet MacGregor is an angel sent straight from heaven. If I ever get a commish' to sculpt an angel I shall use Janet MacGregor for my model, little Miss By-the-Day," she sighed drowsily, "your middle name must be Luck."

"My middle name is Trenton," answered Felicia literally. "Dulcie, I am going to tell you something. Something you must remember. When our little garden is lovely again, if any one--ever--kisses--you out there and you love him--don't let any one take you away from him. Because it might be too long afterward that you come back--you might be old like Grandy and Piqueur--so that he wouldn't know you when he saw you. He wouldn't know that you were the--Girl,--"

Something in the level flatness of her tones almost broke the Sculptor Girl's heart. She reached out her hand and caught Felicia's and gripped it hard. She did not say much but what she said Felicia found strangely comforting.

"Why--" her reply was the breathless reply of discovery, "I hadn't noticed till now--_how young your hands are!"_

They awoke to the dazzling wonder of the new day, a bit stiff from their unaccustomed couches but exuberant over the adventure. Almost before they had finished their simple breakfast the excited Janet MacGregor appeared.

It was Dulcie Dierckx, impractical Dulcie Dierckx, who took charge. She was a very different person from the hysterical girl that Felicia had brought home with her two days before.

"You'd better go to your by-the-day." Dulcie was almost saucy. "Babiche and I will stay and guard the fort. I'll show Janet all the dirt, I think there's enough to satisfy even her unholy craving--and then if she still wants to go into the deal I can go to the storage

place. I know I could arrange it because I did it once for Aunt Jen; it's a bore, it takes all kinds of time, you'd hate it and--" tears threatened, "unless I'm doing something for my keep I can't stay."

Little Miss Day agreed gratefully. She departed with tactful discretion before Janet and Dulcie began their argument. Which was some argument! But in the end they came to something like a feasible plan and when they did--! Ah! if you could have seen what those two accomplished that day! Each put the other on her mettle. They did wonderful team work. Janet agreed readily enough when she saw the massive furniture that she had ample security. Dulcie fairly browbeat the storage manager, and between the two of them they actually arranged for a small van load of furniture to be delivered at Montrose Place before dark. As for the rest of it, Dulcie had a wrist-watch, that for all we know is still reposing in the dusty pawnbroker's at which she cheerfully hocked it. She'd always wondered why she had it and I don't believe she ever remembered to go back for it. And Janet had a nephew, a cross-eyed nephew, who was an odd-job man. Can't you see Dulcie buying the bags of creamy kalsomine and the brushes and Janet packing up her pails and scrubbing things?

There never was such a polishing, such a mopping, such a scrubbing such a--whisper!--fumigating--since the old house had been built! They'd sense enough not to try too much. They confined their efforts to the nursery, Janet's basement room and Mademoiselle's old quarters. Dulcie knew she mustn't touch the shepherdesses there. Felice had told her about the battle royal with the sponge, but in the nursery--well, the crossy-eyed nephew couldn't work fast enough to suit Dulcie. She feverishly grabbed a brush herself and slashed about delightedly in kalsomine. Janet bossed the nephew and Dulcie, Dulcie bossed Janet and the nephew, the nephew nearly uncrossed his eyes from trying to follow all the instructions the two shouted at him.

At quarter after six when Miss By-the-Day climbed slowly up the stairs, reaching out delightedly for Babiche, who had been sleeping in the top-most niche of the stair, two tired and aching women flung open the door of the nursery. They were smiling. Neither of them could think of a thing to say, but a curious mingling of odors told their story for them. The freshness of the clean, scarcely-dried, kalsomine, the faint tinge of smoke from the bit of fire, the delicious soapy cleanliness and a wholesome whiff of barley broth floated out into the dusty hallway to the little person on the stairs. She looked through the doorway and saw clean walls, creamy yellow; windows that glistened, a glowing fire, a tiny table spread for two--Janet knew her place!--Grandy's fat sofa under the dormer windows, the stately hall table flat against the side wall, Maman's chaise-longue, the slender chaise-longue with its flowered chintz cushions, beside the fire--

When Felicia saw that she reached out her arms and sighed contentedly, rapturously--

"Oh! it's home--it's really home--"

Who shall say which of them won the greater triumph in those mad April days? Sometimes it seemed as though it must be the valiant Janet, who fought with soap and brushes and won Gargantuan victories over squalor and filth. Sometimes it seemed as though it were the belligerent Dulcie, who bravely tried to forget that she had ever wept over "wet mud" and wanted to die--die! Why, she couldn't live hard enough, the days seemed so short! She threw herself heart and soul into the fray; she grubbed in the bit of garden, she toiled upstairs and down with the clumsy paint brushes. Whenever she lacked for pence she strode forth to the art school where she had once been a pupil in the days before "Uncle Al" had put her money into the disastrous plumbing venture, and boldly demanded the right to pose at fifty cents an hour. With the bravado born of her new grip on life she brazenly descended on the "beastly Aunt Jen" and demanded and received her trunks and personal trinkets.

As for Felice, her victories were humbler--they were small, silent victories over Self. In the long hours while she sat sewing she fought out her little battle--the battle of hating uncongenial toil. It was not easy, for she had an honest hatred of it.

Not even the goal in sight could make her like being a "by-the-day." Moreover as she grew wiser in the matter of reckoning she realized the utter impossibility of actually earning, with her hands, the appalling sum that she owed. She could only work on blindly from day to day, hoping, hoping against hope that she would find the Portia Person. She never gave that up. Long hours after her day's work was over she kept following elusive trails that led nowhere. She would never admit defeat in that respect. She would find him and she was sure that he could solve the difficulties that beset her.

Slowly she was evolving a philosophy of life. It began with a bitter feeling that she had been cheated, that Grandy hadn't been fair to her, to let her grow up so ignorant of life, so ignorant of the ways to earn a living. But gradually she began to discover that neither Grandy nor Mademoiselle nor Maman herself could have taught her to live.

"It's my stub, stub, stubborn way--" she chided herself, "I won't let any one tell me--I think it's only when I work that I learn--Work! that's the thing to learn with--it's like the 'Binnage'--the second digging of the garden to make things grow--its not pleasant but after all--it must be done."

Next she found out that it wasn't enough to work--you must like to do it! Janet now, she liked to clean--and so she did it beautifully, did it superlatively, whereas when Dulcie or Felice tried, it was only half done. So Felice set herself to "like to" be a "by-the-day."

And that was the time she discovered that to like to do anything you must make it genuinely amusing.

"We should be immensely gay when we're working, shouldn't we, Dulcie?"

she asked one evening when they leaned far out of the windows to watch the ships in the harbor. "Think how gay the sailors are. I remember one who whistled while he cleaned the deck--he did it very quickly, much more quickly than the stupid boys who didn't whistle--I think when I sew I shall whistle,--not aloud--" she laughed, "it would wake folks' babies! But in my heart--"

She watched Janet vigorously sweeping the area-way.

"Look Dulcie, it's not the way that she does it that matters--you and I brush as hard--but it's because it's Janet brushing--the broom acts as though it were Janet instead of just a broom--isn't it delightful? I shall have to make my needle me--and you shall--"

They were silent. All had not been victory for poor Dulcie. There was the model stand and the tools and the "wet mud," but the part of Dulcie that had wanted to create seemed dead--it seemed to have died back there that day when she had tried to die in "Aunt Jen's" house. Morning after morning when Felice went away she would encourage her. She would assure her that when she came back at night she would hear Dulcie calling "It's begun." But alas, it never was--it was only by keeping madly, tempestuously busy at other things that Dulcie endured the nag of some of those April days. Sometimes she gave up entirely, flung herself prostrate on the sofa under the dormer windows and wept until she was no longer Dulcie, until she was merely a limp rag of a human who wouldn't even speak to Felice, who actually cursed when Janet tried to bring her soup.

But somehow or other the three of them squeezed and bumped along, a precarious existence really, which would have been utterly impossible if it hadn't been for Janet. She it was, who held the purse strings. She it was who cooked sad looking, unpalatable, but none the less nourishing, stews and broths. You should have seen Janet during one of those solemn conclaves with the young lawyer whom Justice Harlow had assigned to the case. He was a frankly gloomy lawyer. He was sure they were wasting time and money and energy in their attempt to make the house habitable--he didn't believe it was possible, he didn't think that even another thirty days extension of time could be procured and as for the debts on the property, they looked to his impoverished purse like the combined national debts of all the Americas. He was a very young lawyer. He was sorry, he said he was sorry, protesting that he was doing everything on earth he could do to help "The Case." He always called the house "The Case."

Janet called him back one night after the two younger women had left. She informed him bluntly that she didn't think he was anything much of a lawyer. He retorted hotly that he'd done everything any lawyer could do. Janet eyed him cannily.

"Where might ye be livin'? You're no married?"

He admitted his single blessedness; he named his address; he on further urging named his room rent. And Janet came back at him with a

practical ferocity that was magnificent.

"If you're so keen on helping my little lady why are ye no livin' here and paying her rent?"

He murmured things about neighborhoods and slums and not being able to afford to live in such a hole and appearances and other futile excuses. But in the end he followed her meekly up the stairway and was shown the glories of Grandy's old room. It was a huge cavern of a room, a whale of a room, with a curtained alcove holding a stately bed, with wide windows overlooking the bay and a low squatty chair beside the fireplace. While he was looking Dulcie tripped down the stairs and winked solemnly at Janet. And she too assailed him. He hadn't an argument left when the two of them were through with him. He felt like a henpecked Mormon husband; he was red with wrath at the Sculptor Girl's cool bossiness; he loathed the very idea of living in the same house with such a person. Especially when she told him bluntly, that he'd have to go to Felice and beg to be taken in. Felicia mustn't know that he'd been "influenced" she put it.

In the end he capitulated, clambering up to the nursery and tapping meekly on the door, stammering as he made his request.

But he'd his reward straight with--the reward of her wide, sincere smile.

"How stupid I was not to offer it to you! Of course you must have longed for it directly you saw it--oh, do you know I think you must have felt it was just the place for a lawyer! Shall I tell you something--" she was down the stairs, running like a girl to point out the wonders of the room. "You see Grandy's father was a Judge and he knew Louisa's uncle--It was Louisa's uncle who used to live in this house and both those men used to sit in this room and talk and talk and talk--Mademoiselle told me about it. You shall have Grandy's father's picture over the fireplace. We shall bring it up from the hall. It's a beautiful picture--you'll just admire him! And to think--we haven't unpacked the books, Grandy's father's books--" she smiled over her shoulder at Dulcie as she always smiled when she quoted that slangy young person, "That will be Some Law!"

All the same he was young enough so that he apologized profusely to his friends for having such a disreputable lodging,

"Yep, I know it's a rookery and a rotten neighborhood, but I have reasons--" he said it darkly as though he were plotting. He didn't yet know that a very powerful reason was Dulcie. He was so busy hating her, thinking up things to say back when she let her saucy, slangy phrases loose at him that he didn't know how easily he was learning to love the solemn heavy furniture that surrounded him, the bit of fire in the grate on chilly evenings, and Dulcie herself, poking her head in the door crying,

"How is the majesty of the law? Would it mind lifting a ladder for a

poor woiking goil?"

The day he knew that the house was home was the languorous spring day when he stopped to stare at a bowl of strawberries in the niche outside his door. Their purchase had driven Janet almost to drink. She plainly told Felice they'd all end in the poorhouse. But Felice hadn't minded, she had inscribed a card, on which in her spidery slanting scrawl was written,

"NOTICE TO LAWYERS AND SCULPTORS: HAVE SOME ON ME."

"By gad!" he breathed, grinning, "she's coming on!"

He didn't protest at Dulcie's demurely calling him "The Rumor," not even when she added, "Because as a lawyer, you're a false alarm."

He took his humble part in the gigantic house-cleaning. He opportunely called to mind a chance acquaintance in the Street Cleaning department, whereupon an ancient white wings was stationed in the block.

Of course the White Wings couldn't remove the dingy lace curtains and the grimy lodgings signs from the disconsolate six houses across the way; but he could and did do wonders to gutters and sidewalks. The hordes that had inhabited the great house had really made most of the noise, the "across the street" houses were fairly quiet.

Spring did a lot. She draped new ivy over the dilapidated church and rectory; she let the gray-green leaves of the wistaria flutter gaily over the cornices; she touched with magic the old denuded stumps of the trees of heaven and the back yard became a shaded retreat. Sometimes at twilight when Felice came home, it seemed to her that the long ago look of the street was creeping slowly back--perhaps, of course, it was just that she was growing used to it or else it was the tender light through the old willows that made the spirit of things strangely young again.

She always came home bubbling with adventure now. Dulcie would sit shamelessly smoking a cigarette filched from the lawyer and listen by the hour while little Miss By-the-Day imitated her employers and their maid servants and their man servants and the strangers within their gates. The two women would sit in the back yard on the old iron benches, which Janet had found in the depths of the coal bin. The lawyer would walk grandly about, and chuckle and chuckle while Felicia pretended she was a very fat customer who was always going to begin dieting after "Mrs. Poomsonby's bridge luncheon." And when Janet was gone for her bit of walk--the dear soul liked to gossip with her old neighbors four blocks over--Dulcie and the lawyer would laugh until tears blinded them at Felicia pretending she was Janet. Oh, but she was inimitable at that!

Janet arguing with the fish man, Janet experimenting with the telephone the lawyer had put in the hall, Janet simultaneously

polishing a window and singing.

"Ouch--" Felicia would pull imaginary rheumatism through an imaginary casement, "Oh weel--oh weel--to look at the du-urt! it's sickenin'! weel--"

You tak the high road
And I'll tak the low road
And I'll be in Scotland before ye,
Oh, I and my true luv shall never be--

oot of the way below there--summat is drapping--Th' De'il tak my bit of soapie!--

'On the bonnie, bonnie banks of Loch Lomond.'

The folk who lived in the rear alley used to lean, sill-warming fashion on their windows, the children shrilly whistling the chorus, the men forgetting their pipes, the women sniffing as women do when they hear old ballads, for of course once Felice had started "pretending" she didn't stop. A moment after she'd been Janet she'd be Marthy, dear, lean, grizzled old Marthy, dead these many years, singing,

"In the gloaming
Oh, my darling,
Think not bitterly of me--"

It never occurred to any of them, least of all Felice, how many, many hours she spent "pretending." Two evenings a week at chess with Uncle Peter--(thank heaven Dudley Hamilt came no more--!) Sunday afternoons with the Wheezy's gentle old fellow sufferers, almost all the other evenings in the garden. She was using ounce after ounce of her precious strength, pouring out her self to the whole world around her, making it laugh, making it weep, making it thrill, making it--work.

She stopped one morning to see Justice Harlow. He stared at her as though it were the first time he had ever seen her. She no longer wore eccentric garb. Dulcie had divided with her. She had a simple hat and a serge frock. She was shabby, to be sure, but it was no longer a ridiculous shabbiness. She was pale and wan, even paler than when she had first come to him but the timidity, the uncertainty, had gone. Her eyes were deeper. They shone like jewels; the softened outlines of her profile were thinner, clearer; her beautiful mouth had grown firm and a bit of gray showed in her hair. She was altogether adorable, like a wee wren after a stormy day. The stilted phrases were slipping away. She spoke more alertly. Bits of Dulcie's lingo were creeping into her speech. But she still answered with a literalness that took one's breath away.

"Now whadda ye know about that?" asked the Justice all unconscious that he was colloquial.

"I do not know anything about it," she said demurely, and added with

one of her casual references to the illustrious dead--she treated them all as though they were contemporary--"I think Heloise might know what to do. One of the things Abelard loved about her was that she always knew what to do--she was vairee good at administrating, like Janet, don't you think?"

All the while she was filling her house--with gentle paupers! Think you how Janet raged the day she brought home the most useless citizen of all--the Poetry Girl.

Felice had been sewing for two or three days for a dentist's wife, a rather amusing job for she was stationed in an upstairs window that let one look down two streets, and at the other window in the room the dentist's white haired mother sat and gossiped softly about all the persons who came.

It was the dentist's mother who saw the Poetry Girl first, a thin figure who walked uncertainly up and down the street, eyeing doctors' signs. It was a regular streetful of doctors.

"There's a poor thing that's lost her address," crooned Mrs. Miller, "she does look sick. It's a tooth, too, see how she holds her hand to her face, you can almost see the pain."

Felice saw, that is she thought she saw. Of course no one could really see such an ENORMOUS pain as the one that was sweeping the Poetry Girl along. It was too big to see.

It was something like this. Orange red, pale blue, E flat minor, acrobatic, Ariel-like in its changes. Sometimes it made her careen heavily toward the curb--that was the time it made her head seem big and her feet very far away. Sometimes she could walk but she wanted to scream, sometimes she felt like a volcano, a Vesuvius of shooting pains, sometimes it hammered at her ears and she couldn't hear at all. But one thing she remembered all the time, that she had exactly twenty-seven cents in her purse.

She was planning whether she'd better dash up to a door and act as though she had an appointment and give a false address for the bill to be sent or whether she'd better announce she hadn't any way to pay the dentist and would he take his pay in poetry, or whether she'd just shriek, "Stop it!"

In the end her body decided for her. It just flopped down outside the house where Felicia and Mrs. Miller were watching.

The Poetry Girl was normally very sweet tempered but she wasn't at all her usual self when she opened her eyes. She was in an operating chair and she looked accusingly at the man beside her.

"You shouldn't sprinkle me," she murmured reproachfully, "I'm wet enough as it is and I've no rubbers;--" the faint blue shadows under her eyes accused them all. Her thin hand tried to pat her rumpled

hair, "I do believe you've lost another hairpin for me--I'd only three--" she was petulant, "And if you do pull it I can't pay you--" she was defiant. "Not unless you need some poetry written.

"Or a play. I can write a play. But I can't sell knit underwear or I can't do general housework--I'm only--a toothache--Bobby Burns wrote me--maybe you've read me--"

Of course Felicia took her home with her,--that was foreordained from the moment she saw her,--but she had a beautiful row getting her! The Poetry Girl had a "stub, stub, stubborn way" too. She was suspicious, she was wary. She said she didn't care a damn where she went but she didn't want any one to take her there. The dentist agreed with her. He took Felicia aside and told her it was his private opinion that the girl was either drunk or on the verge of a nervous breakdown and he thought the best thing to do would be to notify a police matron. In short he was cool and practical. If there was anything Felicia Day couldn't endure it was a Van Dyke beard on a cool and practical man. She told the Sculptor Girl afterward that it took strength of mind not to pull his silly beard off.

She tucked her thimble in her pocket, folded her apron and asked,

"Will you promise not to let her go till I get my hat?"

"You can't manage her," said the dentist, "I tell you she's irresponsible."

"So am I," confided Felicia serenely, "but I'll come back to-morrow for the sewing. As soon as I get her in bed and Janet brings her some soup she'll be perfectly all right--"

But all the same it wasn't easy getting her home. It was a long walk. Felicia hadn't two carfares and she had forgotten to ask the dentist for money. To make bad matters worse a heavy down pour of rain overtook them a good half mile from the house. Its cool splatter seemed to bring the Poetry Girl to her senses. She laughed a bit.

"What an idiot!" she exclaimed, "you must think me--my name is Blythe Modder, and usually I'm sane. You see just before I went into that dentist's I did such a fool thing. I bought some patent liniment and put on my tooth and I didn't notice until afterward that it said 'external use only'--I was such an idiot--I think it went to my head--I'm very much better now."

"Well, come along and get some dry clothes and tea anyhow, then you'll be vairee all right."

She left her with Janet while she ran for the dry clothes. She left her on Janet's immaculate bed in Janet's atrocious dressing gown. Her clothes she unceremoniously turned over to Janet to dry, leaving that practical soul verbose with disgust.

Felicia herself was drenched and she loved it. She was loth to strip the damp clothes off; she felt like running miles and miles in the rain. She was dreamily happy, dreamily miserable; she felt like the day--all tears and smiles both. She dropped the outer garments to floor and pulled her shoes and stockings off. Babiche sat up and begged for a cracker. Felicia stooped, her damp hair clinging to her beautiful forehead, the long scant chemise that had been Octavia's falling loosely from her smooth shoulders.

"Poor Babiche," she crooned, "When your mistress does come in--" So intent was she on reaching for the cracker box that she lifted her voice a bit. Dulcie, outside the door ready to tap on it, swung it open just in time to glimpse the charming posture.

Felicia blushed like a sixteen year old. She reached for her dressing gown and pulled it toward her.

But Dulcie Dierckx, slamming the door behind her, leaned against the panels fairly devouring Felicia with her eyes.

"Oh! Oh!" she cried in absolute ecstasy; "Oh, Pandora! Pandora! don't move! How could I have been so stupid not to have seen you before! Oh, please drop the coat! Oh! Oh! you adorable--you beautiful person--you little old peach!"

Felicia laughed. Laughed her soft, breathless laugh and drew the gown closer.

"You--you're rather embarrassing--" she sighed, "Though of course," her eyes danced mischievously, "my knees and my ankles and my insteps are vairee nice indeed--I got them all from Louisa, Margot says--and my hands--" she stretched one out--"They're Grandmother Trenton's--and I think I have nice ears--but the rest of me--" she shrugged, "The rest of me won't do at all--my mouth is too big and--no, I wouldn't be at all your Pandora--it's dark here--that's why you thought you saw her--"

"I saw her," insisted the Sculptor Girl stubbornly. "And you'd be a brute not to help me--I--look here," she lied casually, "I didn't tell you but I've managed a bit of money--I'm not asking you to pose for nothing--I can pay you more than you earn at your sewing--"

"Oh, money," she stammered. "I didn't think about money--Sculptor Girl--how could you--"

"Taxes," ejaculated the Sculptor Girl bluntly. "Interest! You can't forget 'em or we'll all be back in the gutter you know--So that's settled--to-morrow morning at nine--I'll have a good fire--you won't mind awfully, will you, if I hang wet cheese cloth around you--?"

She was trying to keep the excitement out of her voice but her eyes were sparkling. She no longer saw Felicia, she only saw Pandora--the Pandora of her dreams!

But all the same, after she'd lighted her cigarette in her own room she drew a long breath and pottered about her few possessions until she found something pawnable.

In the shop she bargained coolly enough with the pawn-broker, pocketed the money she fought for and as she was leaving stopped to gaze casually at the motley array of things in the dusty case. She stared unbelievably at a quaint mahogany box, warily priced two or three other things and finally asked "how much for the damaged writing case?" Ten minutes later she fled with it under her arm. It didn't look like much. It was quite empty and it would make a nice box for Pandora to be opening. But over and over her heart was pounding,

"It's the same Bee on it that's on her brushes--it's the same Bee she has said was on the silver--it's--oh, if it only could be hers!"

She burst in upon the Poetry Girl (now warm and snug in some of Dulcie's own garments) and Felicia sitting by the nursery fire. They were having a friendly little party. Felicia introduced the two girls with the affable hope they'd be nice neighbors. "Blythe's coming to have the front room next as soon as Cross Eyes can pink-wash it--" Her eyes glimpsed the box, she fairly ran for it, "That's Maman's," she exclaimed, "How did you find it?" She hugged it delightedly; she opened it--"Even its emptiness smells nice," she sighed.

"Oughtn't there to be a secret pocket in it, m'loidy? With the missing will and the dagger he stabbed her with?"

"Nothing like that," laughed Miss Day with one of her delicious excursions into slang, "it was just for Maman's writing things--but I'm _that_ proud to have it--"

She was still holding the box when Janet brought up their dinner. After the Poetry Girl had left, she settled herself for her scolding. She knew that she was due for it. For naturally she had to confess that she'd asked Miss Modder to come live in the house.

"What's she paying?" demanded Janet.

"A good bargain, I made. It's like this--she writes, you know, so she doesn't get her money everyday as you and I do, Janet. She's more like--well, Dulcie when she's sculpting. So I made a bargain with her that she'd not pay her rent just now, that she'll pay later. She's to pay some girl's rent for as long as she stays herself rent free, do you see? As soon as she can she'll pay her own rent and she'll pay another rent too, that's vairee business like, don't you think, Dulcie?"

Dulcie solemnly assured Janet she "couldn't beat it." She offered to enter into a similar agreement. Janet couldn't get any sense out of either of them. She retired baffled and defeated.

"All the same," confessed Dulcie, "You've got to quit bringing home losers, Miss Day. You ought to pick one winner just to square yourself with Janet."

Felicia promised. And, *mirabile dictu*, kept her word the very next week.

Of all the persons that her mistress brought home Janet really approved of only that one. But that one, as she grudgingly admitted, made up for the whole "shiftless crew."

"She's Christian," she assured Felice solemnly, "A Christian." Which was the more delightful from the fact that her sect was one that Janet had hitherto scorned as "Irish Roman Catholic." But just to look at Molly O'Reilly was to know you'd love her. Fat, oh, ridiculously fat, in comparison with the rest of that skinny household--ruddy, glowingly ruddy, beside that pale-faced "crew." Just by the law of contrasts they adored her when they saw her--especially after they'd tasted her heavenly food.

Miss By-the-Day met her in the laundry of a great house where she'd put in a day mending curtains and table linen. Not a bad sort of job if one had a suitable spot to work in; but a laundry, a steamy, soapy, wet-woolens-smelling laundry is not a comfortable place to sew. By noon Felice wanted to indulge in one of Dulcie's weeps--she was so nervous--when there entered, bearing a tray, Molly O'Reilly, with her blue sleeves rolled over her dimpled elbows and her red hair lightly dusted with flour.

"Here's something to put inside you--" she called to the perspiring colored woman who was washing and the tiny white person who was laboriously darning thin net, "something to think on save work." She stole a keen glance at the seamstress. "Yours goes on this bit of table; Susy, put down the top of your toobs and get a stool."

Ah, that food! Even Margot couldn't cook like Molly O'Reilly. Why, Molly cooked as Janet scrubbed, as the Poetry Girl wrote, as the Sculptor Girl modeled--by inspiration! There wasn't anything on that tray she put before Felicia that hadn't been made from crumbs that fell from the rich man's feast. Yet so cunningly had she warmed it, so deftly had she flavored it, so daintily had she garnished it that it seemed food ambrosial. Felicia let her fork slide into delectable crust underneath which snuggled the tenderest chicken she'd ever tasted in her life. Bits of carrots and celery and potatoes drifted idly about a sea of creamy gravy--um--when you go to Montrose Place order "Old Fashioned Chicken Pie."

The artist who had created this delight sat easily against the laundry sill and grumbled.

"Coompany, coompany all hours. And niver a sound of them reaching the kitchen. Meals from marning till night and me niver seeing them ate. You'd think I'd be contint--the wages is so gr'rand, but honest, Susy,

I was happier doing general housework for brides at twenty per month-- at least I'd a bit of heart put in me, I heard something sayin' a voice on the house 'phone sayin',

"Dinner for eight at seven o'clock-- I'm going to quit. As soon as ever I can find a partner. I'm going to open one of these stylish tea rooms where's I can peep through the door and see me food bein' appreciated--"

Can't you almost hear Felicia talking with her, describing the kitchen and the back yard and the dumb-waiter that goes up to Grandy's room and stops at Maman's room and on up to the old nursery? Can't you see Felicia triumphantly bringing Molly home to look it over? And can't you almost hear the lovely Irish songs that Molly's mother taught her? And Felicia pretending that she is Molly's mother? If you can't, why I'm afraid you haven't really understood Felicia.

So the days grew longer and sweeter and the little after-dinner group in the garden grew bigger--think of the excitement of the day when the lawyer brought home the architect and his timid wife! They came to live in Maman's room, the room that Felice had intended to keep for herself. But you'll know presently why she gave it to them. You remember it was only one flight up. He was a young architect well able to climb but Mrs. Architect couldn't. And he was a very new architect. Felice said staunchly that she wouldn't think of having an old fat successful architect around, that he'd be bored with all the small jobs the house needed, but this obliging young one, now HE was quite willing to work hours over where new bathrooms might go--if they ever had any tub money, or where old lattices could be replaced--if they ever had any lattice money. You see the idea was that he could pay his room rent architecting, a "vairee practical" idea Felice assured Janet. But Janet sniffed.

Everybody brought somebody else. Janet didn't approve of any of them but she did love them all! That was the unanswerable argument about all these persons who flocked to the house in Montrose Place--they were so lovable! Such buoyant souls, who hadn't quite gotten a grip on life but were pathetically sure that once they did--!

They triumphantly felt that the fact they'd been starving mostly, helped to prove their genius. Though Felice could never see it that way. Long after the rest were in bed she used to walk passionately up and down Mademoiselle's tiny room.

"They're all starlings singing that they can't get out--it's not fair --not a bit right--they ought not to starve, they ought not to freeze. And folks who say so are stupid! You can't grow roses like weeds--just anywhere! And they're going to be the roses in the garden of world-- they ought to be in the sun, they ought to be watched so carefully-- why can't the stupid old world see it! But it doesn't. It just tramples and chokes and freezes them until it's a wonder they evaire do blossom at all. And di_irectly_ they do--the world's surprised--huh-- I should think it would be! It's not fair. It's all wrong. When I find

the Portia Person I shall do something, I shall buy the church next door and I shall make a school. It shall be a school where you learn to do one useful thing that will earn your bread and butter. And the rest of the time--you shall dream." Babiche was a patient listener. But even Babiche yawned at all the Utopian theories with which her mistress would reform the world.

Do you remember the chauffeur who promised Felice a "joy-ride"? Can't you see his fatuous grin one day as he listened to a drawling young-sounding voice over the telephone of Seeley's Boarding house, a voice that he couldn't remember at all, demurely saying,

"You said you'd give me a joy-ride sometime if I had a new bonnet--I have. I really look like anybody else now. I do need that joy-ride just now, could you come for me?"

But can't you see that chauffeur's rueful smile when he reached the address she gave him and saw a nurse bringing the palefaced Painter Boy out the hospital door? Felice ran ahead of them, breathless with achievement.

"He is doing vairee nicely. His leg is better. It's only his spirit that's rather drowned, so I thought if he had a joy-ride and we took him home--"

At least Janet found comfort from the fact that the Painter Boy was the last pauper to be added to the list--there weren't any rooms or beds for any more! But the house hummed with their activities, rang with their arguments and theories, echoed with their laughter--and sighed with their midnight tears. They were so young! So impatient! So eager to set the river of life afire!

Dinner time was a joy. They usually had dinner in the garden and dinner was always THE DISH! Even with Janet's fingers on the purse strings and Molly's capable hands in the mixing the slender funds would not stretch to more than--THE DISH. It might be a huge Irish stew, or something Molly called Dago Puddin' (there never was such spaghetti as her Dago Puddin') or a gigantic pie made of pigeons that had to cook all day to become edible. Sometimes Molly "slipped 'em somethin'" that she claimed was left from her catering business, but usually they ate only what their pooled funds could pay for and leaned back content to listen while Felice "pretended" or scolded or encouraged them; her leadership was utterly unconscious, her calm assumption that she was a very old lady hypnotized them into thinking she was. She made no rules or regulations. She frankly let them know that perhaps they could live there a day or perhaps a century; that the length of residence depended on the finding of the elusive, untraceable Portia Person. They all searched ardently for him. They all knew that when they "made good" they would have to find some fellow who hadn't and help him. Already Octavia's motto was lettered under her lovely portrait over the drawing-room fireplace in the charming simulation of medieval script that the Poetry Girl loved to make,

"She would like you to be happy here.
You can't be truly happy if you are
making anyone else unhappy."

The days swept by so fast, Felicia brave as she was, didn't dare count them! Twenty, twenty-one, twenty-two, twenty-three, oh, it seemed as though they surely must find the Portia Person now that they were all looking! Yet each one in his heart generously hoped it would be Felicia herself who found him.

In spite of her high resolves to learn to "like to be a by-the-day" she found some days impossible.

She grew to hate Thursdays. Sometimes it seemed as though she couldn't please anybody on Thursday. Thursday meant that she sewed in households that suffered from a feverish complaint known as Maid's-Day-Out. Thursdays always seemed to be associated with worse and more hurried luncheons than other days--Thursdays she had to open doors and answer telephones--she used to think sometimes she could have stood all the other days if it hadn't been for Thursdays.

One Thursday in particular stood out as a terrific day. To begin with it rained. A drizzling, penetrating, gloomy kind of a rain that brought her into the Woman's Exchange exceedingly moist, and seemed to have permanently warped whatever courtesy time had left in the soul of the Disagreeable Walnut.

"--to Eighteen Willow Court--" grumbled the cross old woman sliding a card with the address across the littered counter to Felice.

One comfort was, Willow Court was not far and the "Eighteen" was emblazoned in enormous gilt letters over an elaborate plate-glass entrance. It was Felice's first apartment house experience. She walked with humble awe through an enormous mirrored hallway lined with the largest, dustiest, artificial foliage that ever disgraced vegetation.

An intolerant colored boy, pompous in green-and-gilt livery eyed her insolently. She stated her errand.

"The help's entrance is on the side street," he informed her impudently. "You turn right around and go right out where you just came in and go around to the side where I tells you and go in there and you tell Joe I sent you. If he hain't too busy maybe he'll run you up on the freight elevator, but if he is you can walk. It's apartment 41, fourth floor, front."

Ah, you should have seen Octavia's daughter, tired and little and dripping and frumpy, lift her chin and look through and through that impudent Senegambian! He confessed afterward she looked so like somebody's high-toned ghost that it had sent the shivers down his spine. And just when he was ready to hear the wrath that her eyes threatened she turned abruptly and walked away so regally that he

found himself muttering,

"I didn't notice she was such a high-stepping lady--"

The service entrance and Joe and the freight elevator conquered, she found herself face to face with new insolence, this time from a frowsy maid who led her grudgingly into the living-room that stretched across the front of the apartment. From ornate curtains a plump and fretful woman emerged,

"You're fifteen minutes late--she said she'd send some one at eight o'clock--but come along, sew in the children's bedroom--"

Felice followed through the whole untidy apartment into the narrow cluttered room. It appeared that the children were not yet dressed nor had their beds been put in order and they sat, two weedy pallid-looking mites, in the midst of a tremendous heap of broken toys and fought desperately for the possession of an eyeless, hairless carcass of a doll. A sewing machine piled high with garments was in front of the one broad window that opened on the gloomy whiteness of the court. An overturned basket, from which oozed tangled spools and myriads of buttons, lay on the floor in front of the machine. A stiff-backed gilt chair stood beside it.

"I cut out some pinafores yesterday," continued the fretful voice, "I wish you would run up the seams of those on the machine--french-seam them, please--and if I get time I'll show you how I want the collars--"

Felicia stood, absurdly little beside her plump employer, and spoke the first words she'd been given opportunity to utter,

"Good morning, Madame," she said in her clear contralto, "I think you do not understand. The Exchange should have told you that I am a needle-woman--that I do only hand work--I do not understand sewing machines--"

"Not understand sewing machines!" shrilled the kimonoed one, "why anybody with any sense at all can run a sewing machine--"

Felicia smiled her wide ingenuous smile.

"I am not any one at all--but it so happens that I cannot use a sewing machine. Perhaps I can please you with my needle. Or, I can go home."
"You can't do anything of the kind. It's the maid's day out and I have to go to a matinee and I'd counted on you to watch the children--" she shook her head in exasperation. "Well, take off your hat, don't stand there gawping. I suppose I'll have to put up with it. Do you know enough to sew on buttons and mend stockings?"

Felicia looked at her curiously for a moment. She couldn't think of any flower or any vegetable that this strange creature was like, or any weed for that matter, and it's very hard to keep the garden of a

day in order when strange unexpected things spring up in it. She took off her hat and her dripping coat. She seated herself in the silly chair and began to make something like order out of the mess of crumpled things before her.

Somehow or other the dreadful day limped along. The children howled while they were dressed. Their mother by turns nagged or cajoled them from one crying spell into another. The frowsy maid pulled the covers untidily over the two little beds and half-heartedly picked up a few of the toys and dumped them in a closet. Felicia's delicate fingers guided her needle back and forth making exquisite darns and patches in small petticoats and dresses. One grudging word of approval did her plump and fretful employer allow her.

"You certainly can sew, but you needn't bother to take such small stitches--I wish you'd stop fussing with that and press my frock--"

An ironing board added itself to the other confusion. Propped up between the sewing machine and the uneven metal footboard of a child's crib Felicia eyed it with misgiving. She almost laughed aloud.

"Do you think you'd better risk it with me, Madame?" she asked. "I am not what-you-call-a-blanchisseuse--I have never held a flat-iron--" she was smiling because she was thinking of Grandy's inflexible order "never let her hand be spread on any heavy object."

She lived through My Lady Fretfulness's tirade at this appalling ignorance. She again patiently explained that she was sorry The Exchange had let Madame misunderstand.

"I am only a needlewoman for hand work," she reiterated. "I know only embroidery and mending and knitting and the beading of purses--as they should have informed you--"

The crisis was tided over by the frowsy maid being summoned to press the frock while Felice corralled various hooks and eyes, mended a rip in a stocking heel, helped to fasten the pressed frock around a stiffly corseted person, breathed a patient "yes" to numerous instructions about the children's lunch. She sighed with relief when two o'clock heard the door bang after a second grand exit when a caricatured edition of the mistress passed out in the form of "Sadie's Thursday out."

Not that things were exactly placid after those two disrupting influences had fled to their pleasures. The rain dripped more steadily, the pile of garments heaped upon the sewing machine never seemed to grow less. The children ate the lunches that Felicia found in the half tidied kitchen. The little woman herself carried a plate of not unappetising scraps into the ornate mahogany dining-room, rummaged for a knife and fork and sat down to eat, much to the disapproval of the scraggly nine-year-old who informed her with unconscious imitation of the mother's manner that "Mama doesn't allow her servants to eat in here--"

Followed a bumping, dragging, nerve-racking afternoon that made Felicia long to shriek like the raucous-voiced peddler who had disturbed her precious early morning sleep. By four o'clock things had become unendurable: She viewed her squabbling charges with scorn. They behaved no better nor no worse than "the-thousand-weeds-for-which-we-have-no-name--" yet a spirit of fairness roused itself in Felicia's unhappy thoughts.

"After all, they're not to blame, these two uncared-for savages!" She put down her needle and thimble, walked with a determination toward the wee contestants in a never ending fight and put her hand on the younger child's shoulder. The child jerked away. Felicia's hand went out more firmly this time.

"Let us go out of this room," she said coolly. "I do not think it is possible for any one of us to be happy here any longer--"

The children stared at her. This note of authority was something they did not question. There was something in this wide-eyed pale little seamstress' command that was unlike anything they had ever heard. They followed Felicia meekly enough. They walked quietly while she moved to the least covered and least ornate corner of the apartment--an alcove with a bookcase and a flat writing table.

"This," announced the older child, "won't do. It's Faddo's ONE CORNER and he will not let it be touched."

Felicia laughed. "Then there is but one thing for us to do," she announced leading her small sheep behind her. "We shall have to go back to that unhappy room and make ourselves ONE CORNER--" So back they went and watched her fling open the window. They obeyed her commands without murmuring for the next quarter of an hour. They helped her smooth their lumpy beds. They helped her stack the wrecked toys into an orderly heap. They helped her fold the heaps of mended and unmended garments. And when it was done she sat down on the floor on her knees as she had knelt so many times in her garden and smiled at them. She drew a long breath. You must remember that she had never known a child except that strange child: herself. She could only treat them as she had treated the lost flowers in her garden. Or perhaps, she thought, she could try treating them as she treated Babiche, but in another thoughtful second--(during which she nearly lost their strangely won attention)--she clapped her hands. Those scowls on their puckered little foreheads were like Grandfather's in the old days when he had been wrangling with Certain Legal Matters. She seemed to hear her mother's happy voice:

"It's not easy. But it's a game too. You see some one who is tired or cross or worried and you think 'This isn't pleasant.' Maybe you play a little on your lute, maybe you tell something droll that happened in the kennel or the garden--"

She drew another long breath, "Let's pretend--" she began in her low

contralto "let's pretend I have a little lute to make music for you."
She sunk back on a hassock and held her arms in position for playing a lute. The children settled in crossed legged heaps and regarded her solemnly.

"I haven't really a lute of course, so I shall have to whistle instead of playing the strings and I can't sing any words while I'm whistling so I shall have to tell you the story before I make the song--the first little song I'm going to do on my lute is about a bridge and how the pretty ladies liked to dance across it."

They pretended it with her rather timorously at first, but presently they were singing "sur le pont d'Avignon." A door swung open and a grizzled man in a dripping raincoat blocked the doorway. The children looked around at him.

"Go away, Papa," ordered the older one casually. "We are pretending." He laughed.

"And why, may I ask, shouldn't I be allowed to pretend with you?"

"Will you let him pretend with us?" the child asked Felicia gravely. And, Felicia looking at the tired face of the man in the doorway, nodded. He sat down on the edge of the larger bed and if Felicia was aware of him after that she didn't let him know it. Precious golden moments of happiness began to drip into the little room as incessantly as the silvery gray drops of the rain fell outside.

"This," confided Felicia "is a story about a girl who wanted to write a letter. She was a very pretty girl, a French girl. Do you understand French? I don't very well. I didn't learn it when I was little like you--so we'll tell it in English the way Margot--who is a nice fat, comfortable woman who lives in the little house in the woods right beside my big house in the woods--tells me. I'll whistle the gay tune about the girl who is going to write the letter until you can sing it with a tra-la-la-la so--and then while you make the music we'll pretend I'm the girl who wants Peirrot to open his door so she can write the letter by the moonlight because her candle had blown out. Her fire was quite low--she was cold," the children shivered sympathetically, "first we will do the tune--so."

Felicia's beautiful lips closed. Remember that you could hardly see her lips move when she whistled and remember how very beautiful her whistle was! Such a gay little tune, that old, old tune, *Au Clair de la Lune!* The wide-eyed children watched her, humming as she motioned. The tired man on the edge of the bed watched her, humming unconsciously as the little song sang itself into his eager ears. Higher and sweeter and faster the tripping tune came. Felice was clapping her slender hands to give them the time and now the two children and their father were singing it uproariously while Felice on her hassock gestured and spoke the words.

"--open your door, Peirrot--" Oh Margot! with your translation that

should not offend your atheistic master by telling his granddaughter what _Dieu_ really means! The tired man, who'd known the song when he was a boy, was already laughing at Margot's version. But when Felicia came to "_Pour l'amour de Dieu_" and merrily cried out "For the love of Mike" he caught up a pillow and hugged it as he howled his unholy glee. The four of them shouted together, shouted youthfully, buoyantly, savagely, not caring in the least at what they shouted.

"Oh! Oh!" exulted Felice, "how _de_-liciously happy we are--"

Under the noise of their merriment the outer door had opened and closed; the tread of overshoes pattered quietly along the hall--she stood in the doorway plump and puffing, her finery bundled clumsily under her coat. She wasn't very pretty. It didn't seem as if she'd ever been young, and it seemed as though she was the angriest woman in the world. And her voice thin, soprano, nasal, rose above the joyous shouting of the merry-makers.

"You didn't know how to run the sewing machine!" she mocked the little woman who was rising from the hassock, "you didn't know how to use the flat-iron! You were much too fine to do the work you came to do! But the minute my back is turned you sit there playing with my children--" the anger was rising higher and higher now, "and flirting with my husband--" The man arose.

"Bertha!" he exclaimed. But even above the strident shrill of the scolding and the abrupt command of the man's voice and the frightened wail of the littlest girl, rose the cry of Felicia's own anger. Did I say her employer was the angriest woman in the world? I was mistaken. The angriest woman in the world was Felicia Day.

Tiny in stature, absurdly dowdy she stood. She didn't raise her voice after that first cry but its deep contralto seemed to penetrate everywhere. All the petty insults that she had endured through all the dreadful Thursdays seemed as nothing compared to the unjust assault of this unfair person.

"You'd better not talk any more," Felicia's clear voice interrupted the angry tirade. "Because I'm not listening and I'm sure you don't know yourself what you're saying. All day long I've been wondering what I could pretend you were like. First I pretended you were a big coarse zinnia. I don't like zinnias at all but some people do--they are gay and bold. Part of the time I thought I'd pretend you were a weed--a rather pretty weed that chokes flowers out if you don't watch it--but you aren't even as much use as a weed--"

Her employer gave a little scream. She stepped closer to her husband and shook his arm a little. He was staring, as though hypnotized, at Felice.

"Stop her! Make her stop!" the woman screamed. "She's insulting me! Make her stop!"

He pulled himself together.

"Of course you must stop!" he spoke sternly as though he were speaking to a naughty child. "You must be out of your wits to talk that way! You'd--you'd better go--" he ended tamely.

"Much better," Felicia agreed. "But I'd much better go after I get through telling her what I'm going to pretend she is! She's exactly like the Black Blight--that horrid black thing that makes the green leaves droop and the gay little flowers shrivel up--there's only one thing to do to keep it from killing the whole garden--that's to burn it out with coals!"

"Stop that!" the man commanded sharply.

Felicia coolly folded her arms.

"I can't," she answered quietly, "not till I'm through. For I've started now. Besides--" her eager words tumbled more gently now, "all the morning through she told me about things I didn't know--things of which I was ignorant. She thought it vairee dreadful that I did not know how to work with a flat-iron--she thought it vairee stupid that I could not manage the sewing machine--and I was ashamed because I did not know vairee much--and I would be glad if she would tell me how to do these things I do not know. Now, I know something that she does not know--" she stepped very close to the amazed woman, "something I think--she will like to hear about--" a cooing sweetness crept into Felicia's tones, the naive earnestness, the gentle candor of her appeal, silenced both the man and the woman. "She will like to hear about the way to be a mother. I know exactly the way--it's like this--it isn't a bit like the way you do it--" her clear eyes looked straight into those of the awed person before her. "The way you do it is not at all pretty--not at all amusing--you shout and scold and fret and 'don't--don't don't'--all the time! That's not the way to be a mother!" Felicia's eyes grew tender, her hand touched the woman's hand and patted it reassuringly. "I'll tell you the vairee best way to be a mother--evairy morning you have some one make you vairee, vairee pretty with a little lace cap and a rosy pillow--you must stay in your bed and wait till your children come to see you and then you must smile at them and speak vairee softly--this way, saying 'Go out in the garden and be happy, my dears!' And when they come back to you at twilight, oh so vairee happy--" her voice wavered, she was no longer looking at them, she was looking far back across the years. She shivered a little.

"That's the time for you to say, 'Ah, Felicia, you look as though you'd been vairee happy today--in your garden--"

The man strode toward her eagerly. He put his hands on her heaving shoulders and dragged her toward the light.

"Who are you?" he demanded sharply, "tell me quickly, who are you?"

And Felicia looked at him, still dazed, still drifting happily on the flood of her beautiful memories.

"Why, of course I know you--" she whispered gently, "I've been looking everywhere to find you. You're my Portia Person--only the Portia part of you is all quite lost--"

CHAPTER VI

THE LAST PRETENDING

The Portia Person and the young lawyer bent over a long table littered with papers from the young lawyer's portfolio and the storeroom trunks. They were sitting in the young lawyer's room, the room that had been Grandy's and from the mantelpiece the portrait of Grandy's father looked down upon them. His faintly ironical smile seemed to mock their baffled efforts to disentangle the mystery. The tide wind blew in softly from the river; the lights in the quaint old gas fixtures flared waveringly, but the wide room was very still.

In Grandy's "forty winks" leather chair by the fireside sat Felicia, her hair smoothly parted, her tiny figure trig in one of the Sculptor Girl's much mended frocks. She sat primly upright as she always sat, but her sleek head bent itself charmingly--Felicia was knitting. She was weaving a shawl for the Wheezy, a gay red shawl. The warm glow of the wool cast a faint tinge of color upward over her pale cheeks; whenever the Portia Person or the young lawyer asked her a question, as they frequently did, she let her work rest in her lap and answered quietly, her great eyes lifted hopefully.

From the garden they could hear the faint rumble of men's voices, the Architect and the Inventor and the Cartoonist and the Painter Boy and the two new chaps, slender Syrians; (Felicia had found them a few days before starving in a cellar where they were experimenting with reproductions of antique pottery and had brought them and their potter's wheels and their kiln home to live in the glassed-in room. It was there in the autumn following that they perfected those wonderful bronze and turquoise glaze ceramics that delighted the whole art world)--from the nursery above came trailing the high sweet murmur of the Sculptor Girl and the Poetry Girl and the Architect's wife and the Milliner and the folk-dance teacher--in the kitchen Janet MacGregor and Molly O'Reilly wrangled half-heartedly over religious differences but each and every one of these inimitable persons cared not a whit about the thing he or she pretended to be discussing. Each of them wanted to scream,

"What's happening? Why don't you say what you've found out? Why don't you tell us something?"

Eight o'clock, nine o'clock, ten o'clock--Molly O'Reilly couldn't endure the suspense any longer. She cunningly stacked a tray with nut-bread sandwiches and a pitcher of milk and strode bravely up the stairs to Grandy's room.

"Miss Day, darlint," she called through the half opened door, "I've the matter of a nibble of food here--"

Felicia did not put down the knitting, she merely lifted her head.

"How sweet of you, Molly O'Reilly, come in--this is Mr. Ralph. Mr. Ralph, I know you'll like Molly O'Reilly--" Molly put down the tray, her hands were trembling so she couldn't trust them.

"It's dying we all are wid curiosity, Mr. Portia Ralph. You should have a heart--" her speech was bolder than her beseeching eyes, "what wid the men all rarin' about the bit of garden, calling, 'Molly, isn't she coming down?' and the girls, calling down the kitchen tube, 'Molly aren't they through talking?' I'm fair getting nervous myself--we feel like witches we're that flighty--"

"The poor children!" Felicia sighed heavily. "Are you sure we couldn't tell them anything?" she consulted the Portia Person anxiously. He was biting absent-mindedly into the sandwich Molly had almost shoved into his hand; he was eyeing the milk which that astute person was pouring out for him.

"Just a word, maybe," wheedled Molly.

He smiled, a wry smile.

"We're making some headway," he vouchsafed, "but of course we've only begun really--" Molly took to herself no comfort from his casual tone. She fixed an inquiring eye on the lawyer's despondent shoulders and went out without another word. But back in the kitchen she thumped her bread outrageously as she kneaded it,

"Lawyers is the numbskull boys," she grumbled, "I belave none of them know their business--"

Half past ten o'clock, eleven o'clock, half past eleven--Felicia still knitted, she could no longer see what she was knitting. Her eyes were blurred with unshed tears. It wasn't for herself that she cared, it was for all of the rest of them. From the stairway she could hear Molly's voice comforting the Architect's wife as they helped her down from the nursery to Maman's room,

"Sure, they's no need to worry. Take a peep through the door at Miss Felice. She's just knitting whilst they confab. Sure wid a couple o' hundred papers alyin' there they couldn't get through in no hurry now, could they?"

She managed to wave her hand gaily as they passed but her heart beat

rebelliously. "I just can't, can't, can't give up their house--oh, wherever could I put them all? I couldn't take them to the House in the Woods. I couldn't let them go back--oh, oh, I can't lose their house--"

Out of the mass of things that the Portia Person had tried to make clear to her Felicia could only grasp this; that the house was hers but the taxes and interest and fines must all be paid if it were to remain hers; that Certain Legal Matters had really taken everything that had been left her from the Montrose estate; that he couldn't be found; that there was some other property and money somewhere in France; that the Portia Person had seen some of the papers concerning it when he was a young lawyer, when Felice was a little girl; that these papers had been put into Mademoiselle's hands for safe-keeping when Maman went away; that Mademoiselle D'Ormy was to give them to Felicia when Felicia was eighteen. But though they had ransacked every paper that they could find in the old boxes and the cupboards they could find nothing that had any bearing on the case.

Of course there was more than a possibility that Felicia might find something among Major Trenton's effects. The Portia Person was sure that another thirty days' stay could be secured to enable Felicia to go to the House in the Woods and see if she could find anything, but she made it quite clear to them that the old man's mental condition precluded the probability that he could be of any help to them.

"It's not fair--it's not fair--" her tempestuous heart beat angrily, "Always when I seem to find what I must have, it is as though I had found nothing. This is worse than when I lost Dudley Hamilt--it's not fair--"

She spoke the last three words aloud in her intensity, so bitterly, that the two men, packeting together the papers, turned quickly.

"It's beastly," agreed the Portia Person inadequately, "but you mustn't lose hope yet--"

She caught at his glib words eagerly.

"How silly of me! It was only the Tired part of me that spoke!" She smiled. "I am like Dulcie's Pandora a little. I have opened the box and let out all the troubles--but perhaps I haven't let out Hope--probably everything is as right as right can be--in some of Grandy's papers--"

She was grateful that she had this hope to hold out to her "children" --she thought of them always now as children, these folk who dwelt about her. Perhaps she caught that feeling from Molly, who mothered every one of them.

Of course the journey to the House in the Woods availed nothing. It only brought Felicia back, graver and quieter than ever. The Major hadn't recognized her at all. He had merely called her Louisa and

forbade her to go to Paris, and Piqueur, Margot, Bele, and Zeb had poured out their little troubles to her so that the trip had left her despondent.

She went back to her work dully; she stitched as daintily and carefully as ever, but her whole spirit drooped. This was the end of all her high hopes and great dreams,--that in less than a fortnight she would have to give up the struggle.

At least she was very busy during those warm April days. She had amusing things to sew upon, little tartan skirts for children who were to appear in a huge charitable "May Day" entertainment. They were of gay colors, those frills, like big holly-hocks, she thought as she flung the finished things into a hamper. She helped to make other costumes too, sitting with a score of seamstresses in the auditorium of one of the churches. These women talked a great deal about the entertainment. Naturally, each one of them talked only about the person or the committee who had hired her.

Yet engrossed in her anxieties for her household as she stitched and stitched Felicia listened not at all to the chatter about her. It was merely like the humming of the bees in her garden in the woods. She heard it but heeded it not, because her heart was intent upon her roses.

Because she was aware that the House would soon be taken away from her "children" she strove mightily to make these last days in it the most wonderful days in the garden of their lives. She never let them see that she feared. Just to hear her when she came home in the late afternoon was like listening to a symphony of inspiration. It began at the basement door. How she braced herself for it! How she advanced, head up, lips smiling!

A word to Janet, grumbling over her cleaning; a quick grasp of Molly's warm hand--Molly was her hold on life in those discouraging days! Molly, God bless her, would never admit defeat! Who fought out her part in the battle! She made their slender funds nourish their hungry bodies and she took nothing from Felicia but gave herself as royally as her little lady poured out herself to the others.

There was nothing sanctimonious about Felicia's handling of them. Like the old woman in the shoe, she scolded them "roundly." The Sculptor Girl still laughs over a never-to-be-forgotten-day, when Felice drifted into the nursery, her arms outstretched in droll swimming motions.

"Dulcie Dierckx! How dare you let me find you weeping again! When Pandora is almost here! I do declare you'll have to learn to swim and so will all of us if you're going to drip tears regularly, every day at five thirty--Molly says you're only hungry, nobody else is snivelling all over the place--"

"No, the lawyer c-c-cusses--" sobbed Dulcie.

"Then learn to cuss!" admonished Felice, but her eyes twinkled and the emotional Sculptor Girl's eyes twinkled back through her tears--all of them were for Felice, if that despotic person had only known it. For the young lawyer had been upstairs pouring out his despondent feelings on Dulcie,

"She has just about eight days more before she'll be dumped in the gutter, for there's no possible way out--"

A limp lot they were in the late afternoon, after they'd struggled all day with their unruly Muses and Pegasuses!

"Wouldn't it be droll," Felice asked Molly one day, "if I came home too tired some night and mixed them all up! And told the Inventor I thought his feeling was poetic and told Dulcie that she was getting a wonderful color into her work and talked about soul to the Cartoonist!" Sometimes it seemed to her that of all of them the Architect, with his head bent over his drawings under his evening lamp, typified the hopelessness of the whole scheme, as he wrought so painstakingly at his detailed drawings for the re-construction of the house, drawings that couldn't possibly ever be used! From some absurd fragment he would dreamily reconstruct--his adventures filled the house with nervous laughter.

As on the night when he discovered, high above the doorway in the bare old drawing-room, an ornate bit of copper grating that had escaped the clutches of the dirty filthy heathen. Most of the quaint old hot-tair registers--they had been wonderful bronze things--had been removed and ugly modern ones that did not fit had been substituted. But this one grating--a delightful oval affair whereon chubby Vestal Virgins lifted delicate torches, had remained intact. The reason was plain enough, it was almost impossible to dislodge it. Even with the lawyer and the Cartoonist to help him, the enthusiastic Architect, balanced dangerously on one of Janet's ladders, could scarcely pry it loose. It was just after dinner. It had rained during the day so that the little garden was too damp for the evening and the whole household lingered idly in the bare drawing-room to tease the Architect. When the register was finally loosened, showers of ancient dust descended. The room echoed as with one mighty sneeze. Janet shrieked her dismay.

"Now look at the du-urt!" she wailed, "It's fairly in loomps and choonks!"

The Cartoonist stopped with an heroic sneeze to lift one of the "choonks." He dusted the bit of metal and bowed before Felicia.

"Here is the key to the secret chamber--" but Felicia instead of playing back with some mocking pretense as she usually did when any of them made melodramatic speeches to her, clasped her hands.

"Oh, how stupid I've been! That's the storeroom key! The one I threw away the day I was angry at Mademoiselle D'Ormy! And it tinkled down,

down, down--" she was hurrying out of the room." All of us, now, we can go up--the store-room will be fun and maybe--" They were scrambling up the stairways, a laughing crew. "Bring something to break wood with you," called Felice over her shoulder, "for those shelves that Dulcie put over the door that we thought went into the front room--it doesn't go there! Wasn't I stupid! That's the door into the storeroom--it's the long narrow space between the two walls and it had trunks and a bureau--"

It still had them! The men folks pulled out the dusty boxes into the immaculate neatness of the nursery floor and for the next two hours they delved and delved through the forgotten treasures. The Poetry Girl called it the "Night of a Thousand Hopes" but the Inventor sardonically added at midnight "of Blasted Hopes--"

The nursery looked like a New England attic when they had finished mauling. Felice gave things away recklessly, whenever one of them admired anything.

How they all shouted at the Painter Boy when he triumphantly pulled forth a sage green taffeta frock with long bell sleeves, voluminous skirts and quaintly square-cut neck.

"Look! all of us!" he shouted buoyantly as he limped across the room to hold it against Felicia's shoulders, "here's her color!"

"Put it on her!" begged the Architect's wife. In the end the women dressed her in it while the men folk trooped down stairs to mess Molly's speckless kitchen with their masculine ideas of how to make lemonade.

She curtsied to the Painter Boy good-humoredly.

"I don't feel at all like me! I feel like Josepha or Louisa or whoever she was who wore it--" she laughed. Her laughter was tremulous in spite of her bravest efforts. They were all of them on the ragged edge of tears. They'd hoped so that the storeroom would give the house back to them! Only the Painter Boy seemed not to care. He waited, his eyes gleaming, until after the others had trooped off to their own quarters, each with his or her bit of the loot. He caught at the hanging green sleeve. For that was the night the Painter Boy came into his own. The night he knew that he was going to paint The Spirit of Romance.

"You're so paintable!" he begged, "I know it's rotten to ask you to sit for me, you're so busy now with all of us on your mind and the sewing and posing for Dulcie that you'll think you just can't--but oh, Dulcie Dierckx--look at her! Isn't she paintable!"

Dulcie agreed she was.

Felicia shook her head.

"It's only the frock, Nor'. I'll lend it to you, I can't quite give it to you, I love it so--but you shall have a really model--we'll manage somehow--and you shall paint the frock--that's what's paintable--"

Of course in the end she didn't refuse him. She never refused them anything she could possibly manage, but it was rather difficult to find the time. She never knew exactly how she found it.

It was in the "paintable" green dress that she "pretended" her way to fame and it came about this way. Without actually realizing it she was getting accustomed to a fairly large audience on the Sunday afternoons when she whistled for the Wheezy's friends. They were so eager to hear her and their chance visitors were so numerous that the Matron arranged for her to do her "pretending" in the chapel hall at the front of the Home. And it was there that an enthusiastic member of the May Day committee chanced to hear her, one sunshiny April Day, an enterprising member who bluntly asked Felicia Day if she wouldn't "pretend" for the May Day program at the Academy of Music. It didn't occur to Felicia to make excuses, especially when the committee member explained things a bit. The only thing at which she balked at all was when the energetic person murmured, "Name please?"

"I'm not--anybody--" explained Felicia, "I'm not even sure myself who I am--"

"But we have to have a name to print on the program--"

This was the first time that anybody who'd been asked to appear hadn't eagerly supplied much information as to middle initials!

"Vairee well," suggested Felicia, "we shall make up a name. I shall be called Madame Folie--no, Mademoiselle Folly--will that suit? Then if it has been a mistake to put me on your program that will be a small joke, eh?"

It looked very well indeed, "Vairee business-like"--

"Number 17--DIVERTISSEMENT--Mademoiselle Folly in PRETENSES"

She didn't even bother to tell them about it at home. It seemed to her as casual as the Sunday afternoons when she whistled for [her accustomed audience of] the Wheezy and her friends. That is until the hectic morning when she obeyed a summons to rehearsal in the empty, auditorium--Felicia always says that the rehearsal was worse than May Day night! So too were the behind-the-scenes confusions and the nervous moments while the makeup artist dabbled her cheeks with rouge and pencilled her eyes--_that_ left her limp with stage fright.

After all, she thought as she waited her turn, "It's only for ten minutes! And an encore if they like me!"

The moment when she actually faced her first big audience--a tired and fluttering and yawning audience, for two hours of Brooklyn amateur

talent will wilt even the most valiant listeners!--she had but one thought, and that was--that there wasn't any pattern to an audience!

Other thoughts raced like lightning.

"But I must remember to smile. They are persons and I have to please them, they're sounding rather fretty--"

Perhaps you happened to see her when she stepped out on that vast stage, looking tinier than she really was, with the lights shining on her satin-smooth hair and white neck, with the coral comb and the carved bracelets making bright spots of color. Do you remember how her wide green skirts spread about her as she made her deep curtsy? Do you remember her smile? Or were you rustling your program until you heard that deep contralto voice of hers beginning with,

"What I am going to do for you I shall have to explain a little."

There was a bald grouchy human in the front row, he honestly believed she was talking just to him! He leaned forward. "I am going to do some songs for you but I can't exactly sing--" The bald man grunted, he considered that plain foolishness and it was! "But I can play this lute a little--and I can whistle--"

"Louder!" called the voices at the rear.

She lifted her chin defiantly.

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Maybe some of them are deaf like the Wheezy's friends, oh dear! How slowly I must speak!" she admonished herself in her thoughts. Her knees were shaking. But her voice lifted itself a bit; she enunciated carefully,

"These are not new songs, they are just songs you know. So you'd better not look at me while I do them. You'd better shut your eyes and pretend--oh, I _do_ hope you're good at pretending--you must pretend that you are seeing the first person you heard sing these songs for you when you were little. The first one I heard, Marthy sang. Marthy was lean and small and ra-ther old. She lived over our stable in the cleanest rooms! With red geraniums in the windows!"

Oh, do you remember the adorable way she took you into her confidence? Do you remember how strangely familiar she seemed?

"Marthy used to sing 'Cherry Ripe.' Do you know it?" she asked so anxiously that one sympathetic soul murmured "yes" and hid her confusion in a cough as Mademoiselle Folly began,

"It's about a young man who thinks his sweetheart's lips are like big ripe cherries, so he sings,

"Cherry Ripe,
Cherry Ripe,
Who will buy my cherries?"

She hummed the tune tentatively. She swung the narrow green ribbon of the lute over her shoulders and her fingers touched the strings. And then suddenly the soft flute-like trill of her wonderful whistle was wafted out toward them.

Ah, who can describe the miracle, the mystery whereby her simple songs made them all feel young again! She was just a little seamstress, aged twenty-seven, who had lived an unreal life of sentiment and dreams and memories and they were just a sophisticated, tired, jaded audience. Some of them twisted their lips and scoffed. Some of them weren't especially moved by "Cherry Ripe," but the bald man in the front row pattered his hands together before she was through bowing and noisily told his neighbors,

"Gee, that's the stuff. You can't beat the old stuff! S'lovely stuff--"
A few pioneers about him pattered too. It was enough to encourage Felicia. She smiled.

She was still frightened but her voice was firmer. "If you liked that one, maybe you will like the song about Robin Adair. There was a young woman a long time ago, who loved a man named Robin Adair. You see he went on a journey, I imagine a long journey--" Ah, Felice! he'd gone on a very long journey, that Robin Adair! A journey that a generation of rag-times and turkey-trots and walkin'-dogs had almost obliterated. Yet from the tone of her voice they suddenly were very sorry that Robin had gone a journey. "So the young lady sang a song asking

'What's this dull town to me?
Robin's not here--'

Like this it goes."

This time she did not use the lute but put it down carefully and folded her hands quietly together. Her own repose made it easy for her listeners to rest until the last questioning trill had died away. The applause was louder this time. Some of them were talking delightedly and the rising murmur of their approval warmed her trembling heart.

"Another! Another!" called her excitable bald friend.

"It's vairee good of you to like them. Do you think you'd enjoy a French one now? That is if it isn't ten minutes. They told me to do this for ten minutes--"

The intimate way she took them into her thoughts made even the most sceptical of them lean back and smile. If they felt like questioning the genuineness of her feeling it could only be explained on the ground of consummate art and either way it was something they didn't want to lose.

"Margot taught me this one. It is about a forest. I heard it first vairee early in the morning, the first morning I evaire did see a

forest. Pretend you can see it. It was spring before the leaves had come but the tops of the trees were swaying and the branches had the colors you see when you dream--and the wind was warm and sweet and sighing. And on a maple tree a blackbird whistled--so--and in the shining melted snow-pools the little green frogs made this kind of noises--and down in the old stone stable two little new lambs were crying--it was a wonderful spring! You must pretend you can see Margot sitting in a gray stone doorway sorting seed in a little broken brown basket. Margot is rather brown herself, but she has gray hair and black eyes and she's fat and she wears a blue dress, vairee old and clean and faded and a big white apron. Her voice isn't pretty I'm afraid, but her song is. Her song is the oldest song I've evaire heard. There was a Frenchman, Maitre Guerdon, who made it a long time ago. He was a fine gentleman with ruffles of lace on his sleeves and he had a lute--perhaps like this--" she picked up hers again "and what he says in his song is that he wants every shepherdess to hasten to pleasure and to be vairee careful about time for Youth alone has time to have fun with. Because, as he tells them, time slips through your fingers like water and then you have nothing left but a sorry old sad feeling. So the best thing that you and the shepherdesses can do is to run around in the spring forests and spend all the time you can--" her voice faltered "--loving--"

The absurdity of the thing never struck them. Most of them couldn't have endured a forest ten minutes. But she had them completely under her spell and it suddenly seemed the most fascinating thing in this world to be young and "--run around in a spring forest--loving--"

Her melody began. It matched the dainty spirit of the words and I think if Maitre Guedron, in that heaven where all music makers, good men or bad, should go, could have heard her, he would have bowed his admiration just to hear the tender graceful spirit that her softly muted whistle gave his quaint old song. It was a spirit never lagging, that tripped ahead of the faint strum of the lute strings.

The plaudits were coming whole-heartedly now. Felicia adored them for liking her--she leaned forward to catch what a man in the side box was saying. Bolder than the rest, he coughed and let his desire overcome his temerity as he cried out,

"Do you know--er--'Ever of thee I am fondly dreaming'?"

Felice came quite close to the footlights and peered at him,

"Is it like this?" she hummed it over softly--

"That's the ticket," he nodded; "do you know the words?"

She shrugged.

"I just know it's about a person--who was thinking about some one he used to see," she translated dreamily, "and he thinks he can hear her voice and that cheers him up vairee much when he's feeling low

spirited and so it's like this--" She whistled it.

After that they just shouted at her, as eager as children. She never failed one of them--save once, when a gasping person demanded "After the Ball."

That did puzzle her.

"The ball," she echoed regretfully, "I think I don't know about it--what sort of a ball, was it, M'sieur--a little tennis ball?"

But the puffy old lady who asked for "White Wings" was rewarded with the gentlest smile--

"It is stupid of me, I think I never heard the words except those two lines 'White wings they never grow weary--I'll think of my dearie--'" and she finished the "Fly away home," with a charming gesture of her little hands and a triumphant warbling of the tune.

Can you wonder that they loved this amazing person who tugged their hearts this way and that with all the dear old songs that those they'd loved best had once sung to them? Janet's crooning Scotch songs, Molly's wistful Irish ballads, Margot's naughty French and Marthy's sentimental loves, Grandy's English favorites too, it seemed as though she could never give them enough of them--ten minutes! They'd have kept her an hour if they could! She talked, she hummed, she played her lute--but best of all she whistled for them because they liked her--little Mademoiselle Folly!

Last of all, she stood very quietly and looked at them while they were still laughing over something she'd picked up from Zeb, a ridiculous scrap of New England,

"Pretend I'm Eunice making the gol-dern-est huckleberry pie and that I'm singing,

"Once upon a time I had a feller
Way down in Maine. AND
He took me home under his umbreller--"

"There is just one more I can do for you. I am a vairee little tired, perhaps you are too. This song you have heard before tonight. I heard this music playing it. Perhaps we can make them play it again. It was Piqueur who told me this song. Piqueur is a vairee old gardener, who once was a soldier. He fought in battle. He was hurt vairee much. His head has nevaire been quite right since then. But some one taught him to be a vairee good gardener and that made him forget how frightful war had been. But in the spring, because spring makes all of us remember when we were young, Piqueur would remember--war. He used to tell me about it while we planted the garden. Early in the morning when the sun was rising. And he would sing this song, in French of course. It was Margot who told me what the words meant. You know them--"

"Ye sons of France, awake to Glory!
Hark! Hark! what myriads bid you rise!
Your children, wives and grandsires hoary--"

The violinist caught up his bow, the orchestra leader was on his feet. Felicia was not smiling any more; her great eyes burned with excitement; she saw Piqueur singing; she heard Piqueur trying to tell her about war--she did not mute her whistle. She let it ring--

And after that they stood on their feet and whistled and sang and cheered with her while she poured out her whole heart at them, gave them her whole self until her tears blinded her and she turned and ran away. To the blessed shelter of the wings where some one opened comfortable arms and let her weep.

Nor could her rapturous audience get so much as even a little glimpse of her again.

"Ladies and gentlemen!" called the chairman of the committee, "I beg of you to be lenient. Mademoiselle Folly thanks you but she cannot whistle any more tonight--she says--" he cleared his throat, "to thank you--to tell you her lips and her heart are too much puckered up!"

I think of all her audience perhaps the Portia Person was the happiest and the proudest. She took him absolutely by surprise. He hadn't remotely connected the Mademoiselle Folly of the program with his shabby client, but it was he who took her back in triumph to her "children" and let them understand something about what had happened and it was he who protected her interests during the excitable days that followed. It took more tact to manage this new Mademoiselle Folly than to arrange matters with the strange persons who sought her out. Mademoiselle Folly still measured the value of her services by the same standards that had governed Little Miss By-the-Day's. She couldn't understand at all why one should be paid what seemed to be fabulous sums for a brief half hour of "pretending" that one loved, when a whole day's work that one hated meant only two dollars. I think if it hadn't been for the dire necessity of those last days before the impending auction they could never have made her consent to do it for money. Impossible mathematician that she was, she could see the multiple of even the lowest salary that vaudeville managers offered, meant hope that she could sometime pay the appalling sum total of the debts on the house in Montrose Place; that is, if, as the young lawyer pointed out, she could "keep things coming her way." Surely it seemed during those first delightful weeks of her amazing vogue that she could "keep them coming" forever!

She was so flushed with enthusiasm, so joyous over these unexpected opportunities! She was so earnest in her desire to give "for value received"!

Never for a moment did she rest on her laurels. In spite of vast hoards of songs in her amazing memory she set herself very humbly to finding more.--The Wheezy's friends helped her so joyously! Her

audiences helped her so artlessly! And the Poetry Girl fairly lived in the library unearthing treasures for her! It was a wonderful, wonderful month, that month of May! She whistled and sang and talked and gestured her way into thousands of hearts, she smiled naively at her audiences' delight in her. She constantly varied her methods. Some of her happiest results were merely lucky accidents--as on the day when Babiche followed her out on the stage and sat at attention like a trick dog. After that Babiche appeared at all the children's matinees and oh, what a delicious lot of animal and children songs the Poetry Girl discovered! And did you ever see her do "Battledore and Shuttlecock" to minuet time?

But it was Uncle Peter, with whom she still played chess whenever she could steal the time, who found out in some mysterious way about the house and its difficulties and it was Uncle Peter, (who wasn't half dead, not by a long shot) who sat up and forgot his ailments and held long conferences with the young lawyer and the Portia Person. And it was Uncle Peter whose own generous gift, coupled with what he coerced from his friends, who made it possible for the burden of taxes and interests on that great house to be lifted. It was "vairee businesslike," the same sort of "businesslike" that Felice herself had been when she made the bargain with the Poetry Girl to pay double rent if she should ever be earning anything. The stockholders in the new corporation that took over the house were to sell their stock back at par whenever the house should be put on a paying basis, or whenever Miss Day should have earned enough to pay them back. She was immensely pleased with that idea. She was sure that even though it should take her as long as it had to rebuild the garden of the House in the Woods that she would some day be able to do it.

The "children" revelled in her reflected glory. They all of them loved knowing that their little Miss-By-the-Day was the mysterious Mademoiselle Folly who'd set the whole town talking.

The Sculptor Girl fairly chortled her glee when she came back from Manhattan after a walk down the avenue and brought an amusing census of the shops that sold "Mademoiselle Folly" novelties!

"Lordy," she related to the Architect's wife, who couldn't even go into the garden these days, "When I think of it I could shout! The toy shops have battledores and shuttlecocks! They're actually selling lace mits like Louisa's and coral combs like Octavia's and the hair dressers' shops have windows full of silly wax-headed figures with their hairs all neatly coiffed in the middles and knots tucked down behind like Felice--and the darling doesn't even know it!"

How could she? She never had time for walks down the avenue--it was hard enough to find time for "pretending" these busy days when the carpenters and painters and masons and plumbers descended upon the house to carry out the architect's beautiful plans--the house fairly hummed with activity.

Yet there came a day when the house was still when all the workmen

were sent away, when all that dwelt in the house walked restlessly in the garden; a night when Mademoiselle Folly hurried back from her audience with her little fists clinched and when she made Molly come sit and hold her hand. That was the night when in Maman's room the architect's feeble wife fought out her battle; a night that seemed interminable. But early in the morning, after all of them had gone to bed save the doctors and the nurses and Felice, Molly came running up to Mademoiselle D'Ormy's room with the honest tears coursing down her cheeks.

"It's you she wants, darlint, it's you they says can see her--it's a little girl she has--" and Felicia went down the stairway with her gift under her arms, the gift she had found that night when they ransacked the treasures of the storeroom and that she had hidden because she knew directly she peeped at it, what she would do with it.

She knelt by the old sleighback bed and took a thin hand in hers. She smiled into the proud and happy eyes.

"I brought something for her, Mary, I brought her first present. It's vairee old, it is--clothes--I found them first when I was ra--ther-- little myself." She talked softly, her slender fingers busied themselves with the old leather case. She held up the beautiful wee garments. Even by the dim bedside light the Architect's wife could glimpse their fragile loveliness. She protested faintly,

"You shouldn't give them away--they're so old they're sacred."

"I know they are but I want her to have them. They were Josepha's first clothes, I found that out from Mademoiselle D'Ormy."

"I mustn't take them--"

Felicia laughed softly.

"The nicest part of our all being poor together is that we can give each other anything we have. And I'm proud, proud, proud I have these for her. Isn't she--little--" she touched the tiny cheek longingly, "Oh, Mary, I wish she was mine--she makes me understand something. It's this. About the Poetry Girl and the Sculptor Girl and you and me. It's that women aren't half so happy making statues and poems as they are making--gardens--and babies--"

The Architect brought the leather case back to her door as soon as daylight came. He thrust it into her hands as she stood, with her beautiful old dressing gown about her. What they said to each other neither of them remembers. But after he was gone and she had spread out the opened case before her Felicia Day reverently unfolded the papers that had been hidden. They were such yellowed, faded papers with their ancient seals! Those papers that Louisa had found in Madam Folly's boudoir, those papers that Louisa had taken to Paris! Those papers that Octavia had tucked away, smiling to think how Felicia would smile when she found them. Indeed it was Octavia's letter that

made everything clear.

Dear Daughter:

Now that you are old enough to understand and Grandy is himself old enough to be more patient I think perhaps you will be the one who will be able to make him forgive Louisa for going to France. He would never let me tell him; I tried to but he wouldn't listen because he thought it was going to be painful; he would only say that the past was over and done with and then he would walk away from me.

We've had such an unfortunate habit, Felice! We women of this family! We would run away with the men we loved! The first of us to run away was Prudence Langhorne who ran away with an old Frenchman who came to America to try to forget the miserable troubles of his country.

There were many reasons, some of them political, why she couldn't explain who this Frenchman was--and besides I think she was so happy and so busy that she never minded what people thought. She was a little careless about explaining things until it was too late--for she died and left a daughter, Josepha, who never knew that her mother had been really and truly married to her father and who was bitter and unhappy because there was a deal of gossip about her. This Josepha was not asked about whom she wanted to marry. She was just taken to France and married to a man whom she never learned to love and sometimes people taunted her so that after he died she took just one of his names and came back to America with her daughter Louisa and built this house in Montrose Place. She did not think it was time for Louisa to marry. She meant to arrange things carefully when it was--but Louisa was like the rest of us--she fell in love when she was still very young and she ran away with her man--(that was Grandy) and she promised him that she'd always like to be poor with him. She would have, of course, only after her mother died she learned there was a great deal of money that belonged to us and when she knew that I was coming she wanted things for me. So she made a silly mistake. She kept everything a secret from Grandy; she used to go to the lawyer's when he didn't know about it and then some one told Grandy about her going and Grandy misunderstood--he thought she loved her lawyer. So they quarreled and quarreled, for Louisa was furious because he mistrusted her and in the end she was so angry that she sailed away for France with her lawyer. She couldn't make Grandy believe that it was true that she really had business in Paris; he thought it was only an excuse of the lawyer's to take her away. So Grandy went away to war and Louisa stayed in France and that's where I was born and that's where I lived until Louisa died and the Major came for me.

Sometime I hope that Grandy will take you to France and let you live a little while at least in that house. I loved it so--sometimes I think I loved it even more than I loved the House in the Woods or this house.

It was in this house that your father learned to love me--it was in this house here that I waited a long time hoping that the Major would

let us marry. You see Louisa, my mother, did leave me these houses and a great deal of money, some of it in France, and Grandy thought your father wanted to get it, so in the end, after we had all been unhappy and wasted many precious years I did like the rest of them--I ran away.

You must not blame Grandy too much. I know that Louisa and her mother Josepha were as much to blame as he.

Felix and I were not patient. We all of us made many, many mistakes. They look so silly now that we are older but they seemed so necessary when they happened.

When we knew you were coming, your father and I, we used to laugh because you see, I had so many names and a title too--and I'd run away from everything just to be with Felix and I'd no way to get at what I owned without going back to Grandy. Besides it seemed to me that what I owned had made all of us unhappy. So we used to say all we'd give you would be the names and the titles but we'd keep you away from the rest of it--and that we were glad the days of princesses were gone for both our countries, America and France.

But I think that when the time comes, for you to marry you will like to have all these papers that tell you who you are and I think too, that if you are wise, having the houses and the money that belongs to you cannot make you unhappy--I like to think you will find some way to be happier than the rest of us have been, for you have something that none of us had, something that was your legacy from your father. He was very poor, Felice, but everyone loved him because he never let himself be morose or unhappy. He taught me that you can't be happy yourself if you are making anyone else unhappy. He said the delightful thing about not possessing much was that one could be prodigal and extravagant about being happy. He said he had no obligation in this world except to be happy.

He made a game of everything he did whether it was something he liked to do or something he hated to do. Toward the end he had to do many things he hated, that he wasn't strong enough to do. But he did them gaily. He made everyone around him laugh as he did.

When the time comes for you to go out of this world you will have found that so little in it really matters and that everything in it matters so much! It is not until we are ready to go that we know how precious is the thing within us that men call--self. It is made up of all the loves and hates and good and bad of the men and women who went before us. It does not really belong to us. It belongs to all of the people who will come after us. There happened to be only a little of me left to give you, Felice, but the part that is left is the happy part--the rest of me was lost a long time ago. And the titles and the names that they called me were not any of them so dear as the one you gave me--that is

MAMAN.

Which think you Felicia Day loved more? That letter or the thick old parchments that told her that she was the great-great-granddaughter of a king?

It was the end of June. If you wanted to get little Miss By-the-Day to sew for you the Disagreeable Walnut would tell you that she'd gone away without leaving an address. If you wanted to hear Mademoiselle Folly at the theaters you discovered that she wasn't playing.

But in the house in Montrose Place a shining eyed woman made a new "pattern" for the garden of her life--for the garden of the lives of all the folks she had taken into that house. They did not know all about her. They did not know how large the fortune was that was coming to her. They merely knew that there would be enough to take away the irritating fight for bread and butter and that each one of them would be taken care of until each one of them had taught his or her particular art to provide, and they knew, too, that each one was expected to repay in a "vairee" businesslike way--by helping some other fellow. They all of them knew that Miss By-the-Day was planning to sail for France. They knew it was about something in connection with the French property but they did not know that she was planning the most wonderful "pretend" of her whole life.

The Portia Person was the only one who shared her secret--it was to the Portia Person that she always confided her troubles.

"There is a man I know," she told him, "a man named Dudley Hamilt. When we were both of us vairee young--he--liked me vairee much. But I went away. And when I came back and he saw me again he did not know me at all. It was vairee hard for me--that time. You see, I looked vairee funny and old. Much more funny than when you saw me. As funny as those little pictures Thad makes so that people will laugh.--I wore Louisa's bonnet and coat--they were such vairee ugly things--and so--he just didn't know me.--But now! I--I want to pretend something! This man--I asked it in the telephone--has been gone away for many weeks in the west on business and he is coming back soon--and I want you to make a way--to bring him to the little rectory yard some evening. It is only a 'pretend' of mine--" she blushed adorably, "perhaps, I can't do it. But I will try. I will be by the gate and you shall say, 'Here's a girl you used to know, Dudley Hamilt!' And then you'll hurry off and leave it for me--I can't pretend I'm young and pretty but I can pretend I'm--I'm a little amusing--and it will be the last night before I go to France that I do it--so that if--he doesn't--find--me amusing--it won't really matter, because the next day I'll be gone and it will just have been--a 'pretending'--do you mind helping me?"

The Portia Person didn't mind at all. He wiped his eyeglasses and coughed and didn't look at her at all. But he promised.

There was so much for them all to do in those brief days before she sailed. She took a quick journey to the House in the Woods. She rushed back to settle a thousand details about the house in Montrose Street--

joyous details of which perhaps the happiest was the moment she found that the Poetry Girl had named it Octavia's House.

She awoke very early that last day of all. She still slept in the little room at the top of the house. Her modest traveling bags were packed and ready. Over the back of the chair hung her demure traveling coat and veil. But tucked away out of sight in the walnut bureau were a scarf and a carved Spanish comb. The very thoughts of them gave her stage fright. It was only by keeping her mind sternly upon her journey that she could steady herself at all. She dressed herself absent-mindedly in one of Dulcie's much mended frocks,

"Maybe there's a garden with my French house," she thought as she looked down into the back yard. She reached for _The theory and practise of gardening_ and tucked it into the top of Grandy's bag.

All day long the house seethed with the excitement of her leave-taking. Most of the morning belonged to Dulcie, who was still working feverishly on Pandora. The Painter Boy made believe sulk because it was late afternoon before Felice would come to sit for him for the last time. He was really quite through with his painting. It was only because they were all longing to have her in the green gown and he'd promised the women folk that he would keep her so occupied that she wouldn't know what a wonderful farewell party her "children" were planning for her.

She shook her head when she stood looking at the picture.

"It's not I you've painted, Nor', it's some one who's young! Shall I tell you a secret? I do wish you could take all your brushes and make me as lovely as that girl in the picture--oh, Nor'--she hasn't a gray hair!"

"Pouf! Those two or three little gray things that you got worrying about us!" he touched them lightly, "Why do you care how old you are--"

He kissed the edge of her sleeve awkwardly. His eyes were dancing.

"I guess something--" he teased her. "I guess you only 'pretend' you're old--"

It was the Architect who rescued her. He was in such a temper that he completely forgot that Felicia was to be kept at the top of the house until the hour for the "party."

"It's all very well, Miss Felicia Day," he sputtered, "for you to pick up a lot of poor old half-blind carpenters that nobody will hire because they're old--it's a nice sweet philanthropic idea! But they're absolutely ruining everything! It would cheaper to pay 'em for their time and let 'em sit outside while we hire some regular persons to work! What they've done today is spoiling the whole scheme--the yard looks like a Swiss cheese--come and see--its simply awful!"

She winked archly at the Painter Boy. She gathered up her green skirts daintily and descended the broad stairs.

"Sssssh!" she whispered, "walk lightly, Mr. Architect or you'll wake up little Miss Architect--besides, we'll have to sneak by the kitchen or Janet and Molly will see us. They really don't know that I know there's going to be a party, though I should think--" she paused to sniff critically as they passed the pantry door, "that Molly would know that anybody could guess there was a party with celestial smells like that." She had soothed him somewhat even before they reached the back yard and of course the lattices weren't really so bad as they had seemed to his fastidious eye. They did deviate from his neat blueprints. Even the sullen old carpenters admitted that they did, but presently things were adjusted and the workmen had departed bearing the offending trellisage with them with absurd little newspaper patterns pinned to the tops.

Felicia was flushed and panting from having cut those ridiculous patterns. She waved her shears slowly to and fro, and the Architect shouted with boyish glee.

"Silliest way I ever heard of," he chortled, "perfectly silly, but the old ducks did seem to take to it. Felicia Day, you are a little old wonder."

She gazed up at him mournfully.

"Old!" she echoed and shivered.

"I didn't mean 'old' really," he stammered, "I just meant, well, I just meant you were--" he paused awkwardly.

"I don't look awfully old, do I?" she asked it with such delicious anxiety that he laughed. "I mean, I don't look so awfully old as I did, do I?"

He thought he was saying a perfectly satisfactory thing when he answered.

"You look just like your wonderful self and we wouldn't have you changed for worlds. Why, you're our fairy grandmother."

Her little hand crept to the back of the bench. She steadied herself. And decided something very quietly.

"Do this for me," she commanded. "Telephone Mr. Ralph. Tell him I said that I didn't want him to keep the engagement that I had him make for me this evening. That I won't be here at nine o'clock, that I have to go out. That he mustn't bring the visitor I asked him to bring. That I've changed my mind about seeing that visitor."

And when he had gone away whistling atrociously and cheerfully she sat

down on the bench and buried her face in her hands. The air was soft and warm and sweet. It almost threatened rain. And at her feet in the border of that rebuilt garden little pansies shriveled in the heat of the afternoon sun. All her life long she would hate the odor of those dying pansies. She sat very still. She thought that she had come to the very end. There was nothing more in the world that she wanted to pretend. Except perhaps that she was hearing Dudley Hamilt's voice singing, very woodenly, "But my heart's grown numb and my soul is dumb--" Like Dudley Hamilt, she couldn't bear to think of the rest of the song, there wasn't any hope of "After years"; the most precious thing in life, the soul of their youth, had been snatched away from them and there was nothing left that mattered. And so she sat for a long time underneath the ivy-locked gate, unheeding the happy babble of voices that floated out from the windows of the dear old house.

The Sculptor Girl almost shook her to make her look up.

"There's a man wants to see you. Awfully theatrical looking person. I've a hunch it's that beast Graemer. He wouldn't say. Just said he must see you."

Felicia stiffened.

"It's stupid of him to come here. We did send for him, the Portia Person and I. I wanted to try once more about 'the Juggler.' I said dreadful things, Dulcie, to the little lawyer man that he sent. I told the little lawyer man that I thought his wicked Mr. Graemer was afraid to come to see us--so that's why he's come now, I suppose. I don't want to see him half so much as I did. I feel vairee cowardly. You must send your Majesty-of-the-Law down to me. I am a little afraid alone. And tell Blythe to come. Tell him quickly. I do not like this job, so I must do it quickly."

Felicia was absolutely wrong about why the erratic Graemer had come to see her. He hadn't the remotest intention of bothering to answer the oft-reiterated claims of the persistent Miss Modder; he wasn't at all interested in any unknown Miss Day. The person he had come to see was Mademoiselle Folly and he had come purely on impulse. His agents had been able to make no headway with Mademoiselle Folly's agents. It had aroused his curiosity when he discovered that the actress was living with all those queer geniuses who were dwelling in the much discussed Octavia House and he assumed that she was merely one of the proteges of the mysterious wealthy backers of that unusual enterprise. He thought it very good business indeed that the clever young woman had known enough to disappear for a brief time that she might whet her audiences' appetite while she let her agents lift her prices. It didn't at all occur to him that she was actually abandoning such a career as her extraordinary success seemed to foretell. He had in mind a romantic play in which she should make her bow as a legitimate actress and he had a flattering mountain-to-Mahomet speech ready with which to introduce his august self to her. He was debonnaire in his smart summer clothing. He felt rather Lord Bountifullish. And besides, he was in a very good humor because he had come directly from a

rehearsal of "The Heart of a Boy." The play was scheduled to open very shortly and it seemed to him that it was going to be an easy success. All the way over to Brooklyn he had contemplated bill posters who were slapping their dripping brushes over great posters--corking posters Graemer thought them, with their effective color scheme of dull greens and pale yellows.

Almost any one would have commended those posters. A charming little figure in the shadows of a wall stood tiptoe with her arms upstretched and her blonde head shone in the light from a church window above her as a florid choir boy leaned over the wall to embrace her.

"Felicia, I love you with all my heart and soul!" the choir boy was declaring in large red letters, which was rather versatile of him considering that his lips were pressed firmly upon the blonde lady's. The placard further announced that he was embracing "America's foremost romantic actress Edwina Ely" and though there was nothing about their posture that could have offended even the ghost of Anthony Comstock, it had an almost galvanic effect upon a stalwart man who had stopped to look upon it.

It was just about the moment that Miss Ely's manager had stepped into the taxicab that was to bear him to Brooklyn, that the outraged citizen had paused before a side wall at a theater entrance to gape sceptically at a paste-glistening sheet. That particular poster was not yet in place. The fair lady still lacked her feet and a painstaking artisan was just delicately attaching them to her knees. He never finished attaching them.

"Dat guy you see going around de coiner," he explained to the gathering crowd who helped to pick him up. "I wasn't doing nothing to him, I was just stooping over when all to onct he hit me and threw me paste in the street and grabbed me brush and trew it after me paste and just as I was going to lam him one he ups and shoves some money in me fists and groans, 'Beg your pardon, of course you aren't responsible' and off he goes--and somebody better watch after him for he must have a heluva jag."

The stalwart citizen did not stop to reason even after he had vented the first edge of his rage upon the innocent bill poster. He let himself intuitively guess at the whole damning chain of the Fat Baritone and his eternal gossiping and the pretty actress and the acquisitive manager. The intensity of his manner when he pulled open the manager's door frightened the manager's stenographer into an unwilling admission that Mr. Graemer had just left for Brooklyn. And a dazed taxi starter, who decided that somebody's life must be at stake, remembered with much distinctness that the address, which Mr. Graemer had given some half hour before was Montrose Place, Brooklyn. He remembered it because they'd had to look it up in a street guide.

If Dudley Hamilt had been in a temper before he heard that address he was literally enraged when he did hear it. Of what had happened in Montrose Place during the spring months while he had been in the West

he had not the faintest inkling. The last time he had seen the little street it had looked as desolate and forlorn as on the day when Felicia had come back to it. He assumed with that rapidity with which an angry mind makes decisions, that Graemer was proceeding to Montrose Place for more of the damnably clever "local color" with which he was wont to dress his plays; that not content with having dramatized Hamilt's youthful woes to the orchestra circle he wanted to reproduce the whole thing photographically.

Hamilt's thoughts raced turbulently as his own taxi followed the route of Graemer's. He was keenly aware that his frenzy was utterly illogical, that he hadn't a reasonable argument to present against the play, that there was no possible way in which he could prevent any man from writing any play he wished or naming his heroine any name he chose and yet he grew angrier and angrier as his cab bumped over the old bridge.

"There's not a chance in a thousand of my getting my hands on him, but, oh, if I only could--" he thought vindictively.

As a matter of fact his "chance in a thousand" was a very good one, since he was able to direct his driver explicitly because of his familiarity with the neighborhood.

Moreover, the astute manager was not making very speedy headway in his interview with the erstwhile Mademoiselle Folly. His quick eyes commended the charming figure that the lady made in her quaint frock against the crumbling garden wall. He spoke a very pretty speech about her appearance. But he found her haughty indeed considering that she was nothing but an upstart vaudeville performer. She had no manners at all, he decided, for she did not even suggest that he sit down. He actually had to make his proposition standing.

"Your agent let us know that you're starting for abroad. That's a nice little plan but it won't get you anywhere at all," he began tersely. "Except of course that you may get a little fun out of it if you've never been on the other side. But the best thing for you to do before you go off for your vacation is to have a contract, signed and sealed, in your inside pocket. Frankly, I'm charmed with your--er-- personality. I saw you a couple of months ago at the Palace and I like the way you get hold of people. I should say that with the right kind of training you ought to go quite a long way: who knows?" he was laughing so good humoredly that he did not see her wince, "some of these days I might pick up a nice little play for you--"

The lady was standing perfectly still. He decided that she had admirable repose. Her wide eyes looked straight into his. The intensity of her low voice was a bit thrilling.

"If evaire I did want a play," she answered coolly, "I would know exactly where I would 'pick it up,' as you call it. I would not 'pick it up' the way you 'pick up' plays, M'sieur Graemer. I have a friend whose play you 'picked up'--" she gestured toward the house. Her

deliberate reiteration of his chance phrase was irritating to say the least. He turned uncomfortably to look at the stairway toward which she was motioning. And he did have the grace to look rather disconcerted when he saw Miss Blythe Modder approaching. He glanced quickly back to the woman he had come to see.

Felicia stepped close to him.

"I did not want you to come to my house," she began passionately. "I just wanted you to see the lawyer who attends to certain legal matters for me." The little breathless rush of her words fascinated him, the alluring way she slurred her syllables together, the quick staccato with which she paused on short words! At first he hardly grasped what she was saying, so intent was he upon her extraordinary manner of speaking. It made him feel somehow like a child. It irritated and soothed him at the same time. "I did not want you to come here at all." She stamped her foot for emphasis. "It is insulting for you to be in Maman's garden! But now that you're here and Blythe is here and I am here, why, I think we must talk things over. With this lawyer who lives here with us. It is Blythe's play 'The Magician' that we will talk about. It was in your offices for almost a year and you had it there at least two years before you wrote 'The Juggler,' didn't you? Tell me!"

"The two plays are utterly dissimilar--"

"The two plays are utterly similar." Felicia's cool voice corrected him. She had an exasperating directness of manner! "Whenever you are counting how much money you did have from 'The Juggler' do you not sometimes think that the girl who wrote the play ought to have some of those moneys?"

"The two plays were totally dissimilar--" he repeated hotly.

"Felice! Felice!" groaned the Poetry Girl. "You're just wasting your breath! It's no use talking to him! Why, I almost got down on my knees to him! I wept--"

"I shall not weep," said Felicia calmly. "I shall just tell him how simple it would be for him to explain. He can just tell people that it is her play and that some of it is her moneys and then he can give you the money. Oh, you couldn't have understood how bad, bad, bad you made things for her! Even this spring, while you were still getting money from her play, she was poor and sick and almost starving--just like the girl in her 'Magician'--"

She paused eloquently but she never let her eyes leave his. He fidgeted with his hat. He tried to avoid that clear gaze, but whatever the faint stirrings of his conscience might have prompted him to say the blundering but well meaning lawyer prevented. That indiscreet person stepped briskly forward.

"I am one of Miss Modder's legal advisors," he began importantly. "You

probably know that we are anticipating bringing another and much stronger action against you. But if you should happen to feel that you wanted to enter into some sort of negotiations for an adjustment of--"

Graemer caught his breath.

"I'll be damned if I do--" he ejaculated. He was white with chagrin to think that his stupidity had trapped him into such an annoying situation. He was moving blindly toward the stairway; all he wanted was a quick termination of the whole irritating interview.

Felicia stopped him. She put her hand on his arm.

"Let me explain for you a little," she pleaded, "I am sorry that these lawyer men do not understand. I know exactly how you happened to do it. You didn't mean to take it at first, did you? I know because I once took something that was not mine. It was food," she smiled a little at the memory. "It did not seem like stealing because it was just a little food. It just seemed like something I wanted and that I must have and so I took it. Maybe that was the way it was with you about 'The Magician.' It was something that you wanted and must have! Perhaps it didn't seem like stealing because it was only something that was written on a paper. It wasn't even like something you could hold in your hand. It was just something somebody wrote down on some pieces of paper. Maybe you didn't understand that it was all of her hopes and dreams--"

"Gad! What a Sunday School you do keep!" he sneered. He tried to pass her. He had jammed his hat back upon his head. Perhaps he would have actually gotten away from her only that that was the moment that Dulcie Dierck opened the long French doors at the head of the little outside stairway and motioned down the steps to the excited man who was following her.

"There's Mr. Graemer," she said; "here's some one to see you," she called wickedly, as she leaned across the balcony.

It was all over so quickly that afterward neither the Poetry Girl nor the lawyer could tell how it happened. Dulcie could tell a little more because she watched it from above.

Dudley Hamilt went down that narrow stairway in a sort of running leap. He faced the agitated Mr. Graemer squarely but he gave him something less than half a minute in which to defend himself. And then he proceeded with a most satisfying thoroughness to pummel and pound and thump. Their struggling figures shoved to and fro in the pebbled paths. Janet and Molly O'Reilly ran screaming from their kitchen. The Poetry Girl scrambled out of their way by jumping to an iron bench. She dragged Felicia up after her.

"Stop them! Stop them!" shrieked the Poetry Girl.

But beside her Felicia clasping her little hands under her chin,

watched with shining eyes; her anger was as the anger of the man who was fighting. She did not realize who he was or why he had come to the defense of her Blythe. She only knew that he was doing exactly what she had been longing to do ever since she had first heard about the acquisitive Mr. Graemer. And when she heard Blythe Modder shouting beside her she began to shout too. Only she did not entreat them to stop fighting. A curious thrill of victory made her voice vibrant with rapture.

"Do not stop striking him! Do not stop!"

And then suddenly, she saw to whom she was calling. And with her new found joy in her heart she shouted still louder, "Strike him much, much more, Dudley Hamilt!"

He stopped, absolutely dazed. He thought that he must be struggling in a dream. He actually stepped across his fallen antagonist as he strode toward her. His blonde hair was rumpled from wrestling, his eyes shone with the light of victory. He stretched out his arms.

"Are you real--" he stammered, "tell me quickly, are you real--"

"I am vairee real--" she answered breathlessly, "but I am old--"

Old! She was agelessly young as she stood there, smiling at him from her perch on the little iron bench. Her slender figure in the sage green frock was silhouetted against the wall, her head was lifted joyously.

It was the young lawyer who came to his senses first. He shoved the disheveled Graemer out through the rear gate, the stable gate--it happened to be open and he took an immense satisfaction in after years in remembering that it was the stable gate, did that cocky young lawyer!

The rest of them fled through the kitchen doorway, or rather Molly O'Reilly adroitly pushed them through it and for the next half hour the household babbled discreetly behind drawn blinds.

But outside in the wee garden the years slipped back as though they had been Time in Maitre Guedron's song.

"Dudley Hamilt! Dear Dudley Hamilt! You are hurting my arms a little--"

"

"Felice! Forgive me! I didn't mean to--it's only that I am afraid you are not real--I am afraid to let you go--"

Ineffably content she stood tiptoe to put her hands on his shoulders. She lifted her adorable head and smiled.

"Nevaire do--" she murmured with her lips on his.

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