

Little Miss By-The-Day

Lucille Van Slyke

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LITTLE MISS BY-THE-DAY

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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 Scotchy 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 chirkiely, "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 destruction but that mightier pride that goeth before construction! 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 today!"

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 circlet 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 Josepha'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 Rabbits, 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 laft practife 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 temperamental 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, "Them 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 whirl 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 frowsy 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 veek--you vant 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 grumbingly 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 whir 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 drawling 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 mornin', 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 Jehosopha, 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 frowsy 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

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