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DOLLY LOGUES



by

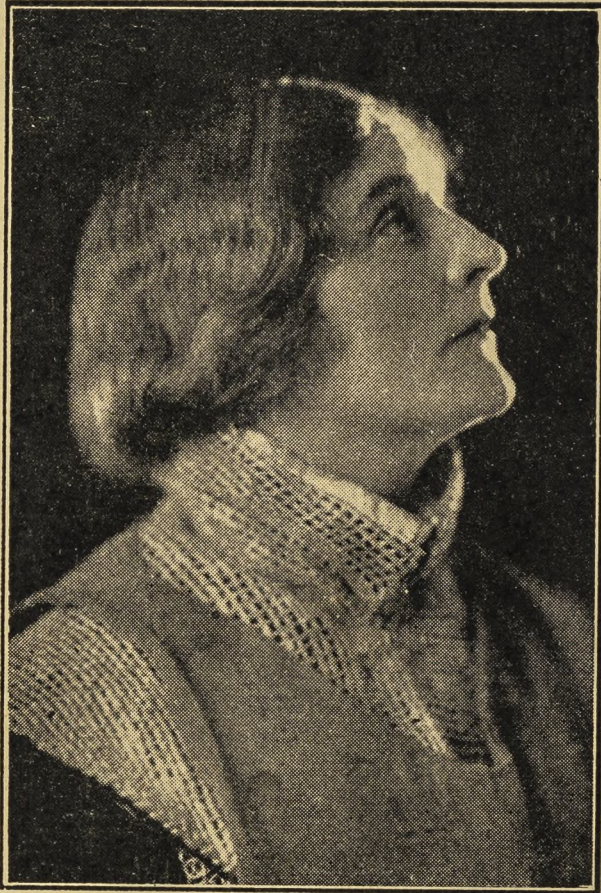
Katharine Bruce Glasier

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DEDICATED TO

Sybil Thorndike's "St. Joan"

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14 Great George Street
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DOLLY-LOGUES

by
Katharine Bruce Glasier

INDEPENDENT LABOUR PARTY
PUBLICATION DEPARTMENT
14 GREAT GEORGE ST., LONDON, S.W.1

DEDICATION.

To my grand-daughter Pat and Sybil Thorndike's
St. Joan,

with sure faith in the chivalrous womanhood of the
"wonderful days a'coming."

Socialism

H 1999

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AUTHOR'S FOREWORD.

What are "Dolly-Logues"?

Like Topsy they "grewed"—out of a short series of unorthodox Woman's Columns, contributed to our I.L.P. "Birmingham Town Crier" in the autumn of 1919. They were written, very literally, to time and space: sitting by my husband, J. Bruce Glasier's side in his study, on the Sunday mornings when I was free from the work of editing "The Labour Leader." He liked them well, save only their title which was then: "A Socialist Dolly Dialogues: with Apologies to Anthony Hope." That has now been shortened, on a schoolboy son's suggestion, to "Dolly-logues."

* * * * *

The whole series has been revised and completed: and under the thin guise of "Ivan the Fool," Bruce's friends will recognise an attempt to suggest something at least of the wonderful wisdom he won for us in that last eighteen months of his life when he rested and wrote for us in bed—"The Meaning of Socialism," "William Morris and the Early Days of the Socialist Movement," and the poems included in the volume of his poems, published after his death, "On the Road to Liberty." All were written after four years facing death: after four years of heroic fighting for Socialism and International Peace against the war madness of the times: of incessant speaking and travelling to and fro, standing for hours on his feet in defence of our C.O.'s, through pain and weakness declared by his doctors to be unbearable.

* * * * *

The I.L.P., like all other movements for human "whole"-ing can only be made by men and women

who live their creed. As the Friends of Manchester, on their Meeting House Notice Board have reminded us: "Christianity is not Christianity until it is applied."

In "Dolly-Logues" the story is told of how a Socialist woman strove to realise her ideal in the unhopeful surroundings of an early Victorian villa. Continually my heroine's face grew clear as I worked by Bruce's side. A year or two after his death friends took me to see, for the first time, Sybil Thorndike in St. Joan, and there was my heroine in the flesh!

And so I have gained Sybil Thorndike's permission to dedicate "Dolly-Logues" to her St. Joan (as well as, very humanly, to my grand-daughter Pat), and to have her photograph as a frontispiece.

With her usual generosity, Sybil Thorndike writes in giving her consent: "I think your book is splendid and am so glad it is to be published."

I look confidently to my comrades to speed the little book on its mission.

KATHARINE BRUCE GLASIER.

Glen Cottage,
Earby,
by Colne,
Lancashire.

DOLLY-LOGUES

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCING DOLLY AND HER RELATIVES.

"YOU will never stick it!"

Dolly looked up from her favourite seat—a cushion on the corner of a raised tile hearth. The tiles were full of soft green-blue lights and made exactly the right back-ground for a fair, curly head.

"I don't want to stick. I hate sticky people. I mean to hold on hard for three months. Then I hope they will be holding hard on to me."

Minna was a real chum, true and wise enough to refrain from argument when she saw that Dolly had made up her mind.

"Is it a big house?" she asked.

"It is an abominable house. It ought to be called 'Such-a-getting-up-stairs!' There is a basement kitchen and a scullery and a pantry—all in the wrong places, and a stupid hideous off-set called a housemaid's parlour below the front-door steps. On the first floor there is a dining-room, a drawing-room, as Carpenter would call it; and what the poor old be-starched Professor calls his den. It is the only comfortable room in the house. Three bedrooms and a bathroom on the second floor, two vast dingy attics and a box-room on the third, idiotic dark passages and awkward corners

everywhere, wasting space. The house has nothing to redeem it but the sky and the plane trees in the garden at the back and the Virginia creeper in the front."

* * * *

"And you are going to undertake the whole work of it?" Minna's eyebrows were rising in spite of herself.

"I am coaxing my dear old Nurse Jenkins to come down and char with me every Friday. She has helped me run this flat while I have been putting in three wretched years as a typist accountant, and getting paler and thinner and crankier every month of it. Now I tell her I am going to take a turn as a muscular Christian, put on flesh, and perhaps even a fresh complexion, and try every one of my pet theories in—well—in a kitchen!"

Minna shrugged. "I guess you'll be trying your temper first. But what special theories do you mean?"

"That all really useful work can be done in such a way that there is no need for a servile class at all; that the whole hideous business of dirty menial work can and ought to be banished, not only from the homes but from the whole life of the people," cried Dolly, her words coming in a spate. "Those just to begin with."

* * * *

"But isn't your present work useful?"

"Not an hour of it! Every bit of it would disappear under a sanely organised system. Anyhow, I am sure no guild of craftsmen would ever ask Messrs. Hallow and Hopkins to come within a mile of them. You should hear their painter men talk of them—or, rather, you shouldn't. The reddest of 'The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists' was mild as mild compared with my Mr. Bilson."

"Why is he yours?" asked Minna, whose disapproval was getting the better of her usual good temper.

"Because I appreciate him," said Dolly, sweetly. "But now do ask me to describe my new master and mistress."

"I thought you said they were your relations—Uncle and Aunt."

"So they are, in some dim and distant, second marriage, twice removed kind of fashion. But I have made it quite clear that I prefer good sound business relations any day to weak not to say unhealthy 'blood' ones. No, I don't want to be nasty; only honest. When I called, Uncle, who is as lean and limp as a taper in a hot August at the best of times, was down in the coal cellar trying to fill a bucket, and there were actual tears in his poor old eyes. Aunt has neuritis as a permanent wall of defence against any possible or impossible calls upon her frail refinement for physical exertion, and they have been subsisting for months on tea and toast and forlorn adventures among restaurants, none of which can be reached without a dreary half-hour's tram-ride. Uncle has solemnly assured me that he is a Liberal to whom even war-time collectivisms are as grit between his teeth. Aunt warns me that she cannot possibly explain our 'blood' relationship to any of her respectable friends, but that if I can really light fires and cook an eatable dinner she won't even inquire what I do with my seven evenings out a week. They have 'given' their only son to their king and country: (I believe he is a lieutenant in some sapper and miner sort of regiment) and they can't be held responsible for their lady help's deserving to be in prison as a Conscientious Objector. She nearly gasped with relief when I reminded her that at

least I should be doing work of National Importance."

* * * *

"Are you going to give up your flat?"

"No; not at any rate for the three months during which I am doing the holding on. I have sublet part of it, furnished, quite profitably, and I shall stay till——."

"Till you have hypnotised your master and mistress into being your devoted subjects, I suppose," said Minna.

"Till I have socialised them, I hope," laughed Dolly. "Anyhow, till I have found out whether Socialist theories will work."

CHAPTER II.

ON CIVILISATION AND BLACKLEAD.

DOLLY was on her knees in the den.

For now three weeks, to quote her chum Minna's words, she had tried her temper as well as her theories on "the whole work of an impossible house." On the previous evening she had summed up her impressions of that trial to herself and her looking glass.

"My hands are ruined, but my colour has come back. I eat like a schoolboy and sleep like a top. But the house is impossible. If the two old dears weren't so tragically grateful I couldn't hold on another day. Hullo, though? That means they have begun to hold on. And that means—strikes!"

Dolly's eyes were like her hearth tiles—green in some lights—blue in others—grey when the lights were out. The green lights had danced dangerously at their reflection in the mirror as she had pondered. They were dancing again now as she plied her blacking brush on the early Victorian expanse of the blacklead on her employer-uncle's study fireplace.

"You call this room a den. I call this stove a beast," she said suddenly.

Professor Lane visibly started and bent his lean length over from his desk-chair towards her. Dolly had pulled off two hard-worked housemaid's gloves, and stretched out two grimy little hands. "Look at those!" she cried, "and remember Rudyard Kipling's soldier!

'Beefy face an' grubby 'and,—

Lor'—what can *she* understand?"

"It is an outrage to make any woman's hands

look like that; and—it's a matter of principle—as a Socialist woman I simply can't stand it any longer. You will have to choose between me and blacklead, uncle!"

"My dear," cried the Professor in dismay. "I positively forbid you ever to touch a blacklead brush again—at any rate in my den. I agree with you—such work is—'er—'er—monstrous for a woman with hands like yours. Only yesterday I was saying to your aunt what a pretty touch you have on the piano."

If the Professor's flattery were designed to lift the frown from Dolly's brows, it failed.

"What do you propose?" she asked sternly.

"Couldn't, wouldn't that nice old nurse of yours do it for you, Dolly? Your aunt says she would be a sensible woman if you didn't spoil her.—An extra sixpence, you know—"

The coaxing syllables died away on the Professor's lips. There was something terrifying in the cold directness of Dolly's gaze right into his eyes.

"We shall have to begin to understand each other," she said, "and this stove is as good a starting-place as any other. I called it a beast just now. I should have said it was bestial—an outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible disgrace. Cleanliness is next to godliness, and a civilisation that first creates utterly unnecessary, hideously dirty work to do, and then keeps dear, loving women so poor that comfortable people think they can pay them with an 'extra sixpence' to keep on doing it for them—such a civilisation is bestial, and the people who defend it are—"

"Dolly, don't." A touch of true dominie's dignity had come to the Professor's rescue, and his genuine affection for his niece gave him wisdom.

"Only yesterday you told me, 'no man can be virtuous on another man's decalogue,' and your aunt and I had never even heard of the Socialist Ten Commandments till you came so kindly and so helpfully into our lives. Be a little merciful, my lassie, and now will you tell me what you propose?"

"Not a gas stove," said Dolly, "though I believe I ought to be thoroughly consistent. But a well fire, with red tiles, and a raised hearth corner for me to sit on when we've both done our work for the day. I know the man who put mine in for me. It is your own house, and you'll get it back if you ever want to sell it, and you'll save it in coal and—"

"And blacklead and my niece's good graces," laughed the Professor. "You had better see about it at once, my dear. For I warn you, you will never be allowed in here with a blacklead brush again!"

Dolly looked at him demurely, and then slowly nodded her head.

"You are a good sort on your own decalogue," she said; "but let me show you a bit further into the heart of mine, and you'll forgive me for being in such a rage just now. It was all so typical. That dear old nurse of mine. She really is a nurse. Her husband has been a cripple for years, with an incurable wound, that needs constant dressing—the tenderest handling. Then her daughter is married, and has just had a little baby. She can't afford to have the district nurse more than once a day, and my dear old Mrs. Jenkins is doing nearly everything for the baby. It just seemed sacrilege to risk roughening the dear woman's hands on your silly stoves—or on her own for the matter of that. It had far better be mine."

Her uncle had captured one of Dolly's hands by this, and had raised it to his lips, grime and all.

"And you really think we could get rid of all dirty work," he said, wistfully.

"For women, anyhow, if we put our wills into it," said Dolly decidedly. "I think the Greeks were right in the main when they taught 'strength for the man and beauty for the woman.' It hurts a woman's self-respect to be dirty in a way it never does a man's. Besides, it seems to me part of believing in God."

"But how?"

"Why, just as John Ruskin said: God never made a world in which it was necessary to hurt so much as the finger of a little child in order to have the noblest types of men and women. So I am sure God never made a world in which women had to have hands so hard and grimy they were no use to sick folk and babies. But, gracious goodness, it's half-past ten, and I haven't even started the dinner."

CHAPTER III.

ON AUTUMN LEAVES AND MARY ANN ARCHITECTURE.

WHY, Dolly, my dear child, I thought. . . ?" Mrs. Lane was sitting up in bed, with a cobwebby mass of white Shetland shawl about her shoulders. A chilly October had reinforced her niece Dolly's cheery suggestion that breakfast in bed was the best preventive against neuritis to be found in the pharmacopeia.

Dolly set down her breakfast tray carefully.

"Aren't these Virginia creeper leaves just glorious?" she said. "They blew into the porch when I was taking in the milk, and now they've turned an egg-on-toast breakfast into a red and brown and golden rhapsody!"

"I—I hope they are quite clean," said Mrs. Lane, eyeing the four glowing leaves which lay beside her china toast-rack with a fastidious apprehension that had no room for colour harmonies.

"Clean?" There was a flash in Dolly's blue eyes, and a rush of red down neck and up brow, that reached poor Mrs. Lane's cushion-dulled imagination far more effectively than the words which pelted about her ears. "Clean! after a whole summer-time of sunshine, washed by the autumn rains, blown by the autumn gales, falling into a garden with dear brown earth and wonderful green turf and then straight from a gravel path into an open porch. Auntie, you deserve to have to live in a slum!"

With swift, deft fingers Dolly had lifted the four offending lakes of colour off the coarse, unbleached linen square, one of her own easily-washed store,

with which she had covered her Aunt's japanned tea tray and disappeared from the room.

Mrs. Lane looked piteously at the closing door, and then down at her unadorned breakfast.

Everything about her seemed suddenly to have gone grey. Her delicate hands trembled so that she could hardly pour out a cup of tea. As she lifted it to her lips two big tears of sheer self-pity rolled down her fragrantly powdered old cheeks. Then the door opened, and a transformed Dolly came back, carrying the four leaves in a little transparent glass vase.

"See," she cried, "I ought to have known that you would have liked them this way best."

Then she saw the tears on her Aunt's face, and, kneeling beside her in a rush of contrition, she tenderly dried and kissed them away.

"Ah, forgive me!" she pleaded. "I've been up since before six, redding up the mess the new stove-man had left in uncle's study, and singing inside to think how bright and cosy it would be for him when he got back. The red tiles in their oak mantel frame, and the brown paper on the wall behind the book-shelves, and the books all shining from the cleaning nurse and I gave them yesterday, with that new wash-leather—wrung clean for every shelf, auntie!—it all sort of made me top-heavy, like a ship with too much sail on. And—let me tell you the whole of it. You can't suspect a pepper-box like me of wanting to preach! I have been reading a wonderful new book that has lit up all the religions that ever were, even for a heathen like me. It is one of Mrs. Besant's theosophical books. It pictured the whole world as the result of the descent of the Spirit of Love into matter. It made me seem to see a glorious radiant

Sun-God, leaping with widespread arms out of the heart of the universe into a sort of prison-house. And wherever there is life, there He is, striving with it in a myriad ways to bring out beauty and gladness and health and harmony. And wherever the Sun-God wins, wherever the Love Spirit has its way perfectly as in the flowers, and the trees, the mountains and the streams, the birds and the happy children, there beauty is bound to be. But wherever it is obstructed, there is, there must be, ugliness, poverty, and pain. And auntie, dear, forgive me, but I must tell you. The difference between that cold, drab bedroom upstairs, where your servants have had to sleep all these years—not a touch of beautiful colour—not a suggestion that anyone loved them, and the dark kitchen downstairs, where they have had to spend their dark days—and uncle's den—his study—when love had had even a little bit of a chance! . . . I tell you, it had got into my head somehow, like David's vision did, after he had been playing to Saul. You remember Browning's poem. Uncle read it to us one night last week. And then the milkman came, and he was nearly crazy with joy because he had heard his son was safe after he had heard nothing for weeks, and then those Virginia creeper leaves blew in! They just seemed to put the finishing touch. They were so lovely, and—but—you didn't—of course—you couldn't—understand all they. . . ."

"No—I only asked you if they were clean!" The tears were falling now in earnest as Mrs. Lane yielded herself wholly to the kind warmth of Dolly's strong young arms and leant her grey head on her breast.

"And after you had been up working for your

uncle and me since six o'clock—oh, my dear, my dear, have you had your own breakfast yet?"

"You bet," said Dolly, "but I'll have another cup of tea in your saucer, if you just wouldn't mind."

CHAPTER IV.

ON MARY ANN UNIFORM AND BLACKLEG ANGELS.

WITH the glow of the Virginia creeper leaves still in her cheeks Dolly came down the long stairway leading to the kitchen.

Nurse Jenkins was on her knees there, industriously polishing a stupidly-patterned oilcloth considerably the worse for wear.

"Thief!" exclaimed Dolly. "You know that is my work. How often am I to tell you that you are the skilled worker in this establishment? There's a chicken to stuff and peas to shell, and a junket to make, all before dinner-time. Get off your knees this minute!—But—Nursie," the playful reproach in her voice deepening to real earnest, "What are you doing in that hideous cap and apron? Why aren't you wearing your overall? The Educraft people sent our two new ones last night. Unbleached calico and the fetchingest purple yokes and belt and pockets worked with all sorts of cunning purple, blue, and green stitches. I am dying to see how the colour suits your dear grey hair. The purple frill of the cap against my yellow mop is just IT! But, Nursie, something's the matter. Come and sit in this chair and tell me all about it."

Mrs. Jenkins, however, with a distressed shake of her head, continued her polishing.

"It's no use, Miss Dolly dear," she said slowly. "I know you meant it for kindness. There's nothing else in you. There never was. But it really isn't kind. Only last night, Mrs. Lane showed me as clear as could be, that it was doing you a wrong for me to be wearing the same things

as you. Why—it might make the neighbours think as me and you were relations!”

“D—nation!”

“Miss Dolly!”

“Well? you didn’t expect me to begin and intone the Lord’s Prayer, did you? I have known for a long time that Mrs. Lane, poor wretch, had enough class poison in her to run a regiment of W.A.A.C.’s. But I never dreamed she could turn a dear angel woman like you into a blackleg!”

“Miss Dolly!”

“Yes—a blackleg! And I hope you realise what that means to me. I have done, and I’ll do a lot for the old dears—but I won’t work with a blackleg. So—off with that abominable cap and apron, and on with your new overall—this minute, or the Lanes will be left lamenting without their lady-help.”

“Oh, Miss Dolly! please, not the new one. Here’s the other one in this parcel. I took it home last night, and the cap, and it washed beautiful, dearie, just as you said it would—and it slipped through the mangle as easy as a bolster case, and hardly wanted a touch of the iron to look as good as new.”

“Put it on and let me see it,” returned Dolly, relenting momentarily under Nurse Jenkins’ adroit praise of her very latest “top-hole” discovery. “You are right. The blue hasn’t faded one least little bit, and that cunning bit of orange and red in the stitches looks brighter than ever. Why, Nursie, the whole kitchen looks different, and your dear face under that blue frill is like a glorified Michaelmas daisy. How dare you go back on the poor millions of house drudges, just as we were beginning to let a bit of brightness into their dreary

scullery prisons? Oh, wait a bit. I know how to turn the tables on you.”

Dolly ran to the kitchen window, which, with even more than the usual measure of brutality which marks all Mary Ann architecture, looked out neither on the front nor the back garden but on a side entry of about two yards width; so that it was confronted with the grey side wall and precisely similar kitchen window of the semi-detached villa next door, and only reflected sunlight ever entered it.

Flinging the window wide at the bottom, Dolly climbed up and jumped out over its narrow window sill with a dexterity that spoke of practice. The next moment she was tapping with merry recklessness at the frosted window-pane opposite.

“Hush! the old cat’ll hear you.” A frightened-looking, untidy maid-of-all-work peeped out through three stout iron bars, which were added to her window’s attractions. “I’ll come through the hedge to your back door if you’ll have it open so as I can slip right in a’fore she sees me.”

* * * *

Five minutes later Nurse Jenkins was looking on at an impromptu transformation scene which had more of the heart of beauty in it than any ever staged at Drury Lane.

Eliza Smith had been, as Dolly phrased it, brought *down* in an orphanage, till drudge was written in every line of her face and body. But in the purple and white Educraft overall and its dainty dustcap—big sister garments to those which have worked similar miracles for the slum children of the Rachel McMillan Baby Camp in Deptford—with her sandy brown hair brushed neatly back in a wave off her temples, and coiled on the top of her head, she looked, even to her own tired grey

eyes in the kitchen looking-glass, and as Nurse Jenkins delightedly hailed her, "as pretty as a picture."

"Oh, but!" she cried, "the missus 'll never let me wear them!"

"Won't she, though," cried Dolly. "We'll see about that." And she did.

CHAPTER V.

ON COMING UP.

IT was a festival dinner in honour of Professor Lane's homecoming, and what he had himself described as the renaissance of his study.

His delight in its glowing hearth, the centre of so many improvements, and his gratitude to his niece Dolly, as the creative artist who had wrought the change was unfeigned.

The dinner-table was aglow with old-fashioned finger bowls, filled with carefully-arranged Virginia creeper leaves. Every one of them had been picked up from the lawn or gravel path as a self-imposed penance by Mrs. Lane herself, in spite of aching back and trembling fingers.

The chicken, peas, and junket all had been triumphs in their way, and Mrs. Lane, in her black silk and Venetian rose-point collar seemed to the Professor's eyes to have shared with his study some subtly transforming influence.

But there was a weight on his mind, and he confessed to it over his coffee cup.

"Dolly, my dear, I am very sorry. It seems like putting on your royal good nature—but the Vicar is coming to dinner to-morrow. I met him, coming down from the station, and—well—he practically invited himself."

"He would," said Dolly.

"He certainly seems to like coming here," said Mrs. Lane, preening herself nervously. "Don't—don't you like him, Dolly?"

"No," said Dolly with cold decision, "I detest him. He came up through a wolf."

The Professor's laugh rang out like a boy's.

"Have you been sharing Leadbeater's and Mrs. Besant's clairvoyant adventures into past incarnations?" he asked her.

"No," said Dolly. "I never even heard of that book of theirs till this spring. No, it's a queer trick that my fancy has played me ever since I can remember. Sometimes all of a sudden, when I have been talking to somebody or watching them talk and move, I see the animal they used to be. In my nursery days, long before I had ever heard of Pythagoras, I knew that one of my nurses had been a hen. Dear old Nurse Jenkins was an Alderney cow. And, my goodness, she made life sweet for us!"

"Did you ever by any chance," asked the Professor, trying not to notice his wife's horror-struck expression, "have a notion of what you were yourself?"

With one of her irresistible, flashing smiles, Dolly gave her curly head two or three vigorous shakes forward, and a tendril-like mass of golden red-brown hair fell over her forehead, half concealing her twinkling eyes.

"Someone gave my brother an Irish terrier," she said, "and the minute he came into the room, I was just ten years old, we knew each other. It made Dick as mad as a hatter, but Sandy would always desert him for me. I cried myself sick when he died."

The Professor's smile lingered tenderly on his niece's face. "Almost thou persuadest me," he was beginning, when his wife interrupted him.

"But, Dolly, isn't it almost wicked to judge people so harshly with no more foundation than a foolish fancy? I know your poor dear father was Irish, and I suppose you are bound to be imagina-

tive—but to suggest that Mr. Hazelton, for instance, came up through a wolf!"

"He did come up through a wolf," persisted Dolly, incorrigibly. "He can't hide his hateful teeth any more than the wolf could who ate Red Riding Hood's grandmother. It's worst of all when he smiles—like Mr. Carker in 'Dombey and Son'—he only smiles with his teeth. And, badness knows, he has made his share of widows' and orphans' houses with his abominable recruiting sermons! He needn't want to come and devour our dinner as well," she ended, with unwonted bitterness.

Mrs. Lane's face was a study in conflicting emotions. The mother in her was conscious of an almost wild sympathy with Dolly's outbreak, but she made yet one more dutiful effort.

"I am afraid you new young people don't, any of you, respect the clergy as you ought," she said. "But, Dolly, do you think of all clergymen as wolves?"

"Oh, dear, no," cried Dolly, recovering her good humour. "Crowds of them came up through crows and rooks and blackbirds. I can never hear them intoning in the Cathedral without seeing a black flight of rooks against the sky. Come, auntie, I know you aren't really shocked. Not deep down, I mean. I have met a good few ministers who were real true shepherds. And the best one I ever knew—he was as glad as could be when I told him he had been a Scotch collie. He said he thought so, too. And the rooks, and even the crows, are as nice as can be in their own element. They take no end of trouble to build nests for their babies. And, like all the birds, they compel us to look up occasionally. St. Francis knew they were his little brothers."

"Look here," said the Professor, coaxingly, "do tell me what I was."

Dolly hesitated. "You won't think I am rude," she pleaded. "But I saw you as clear as could be the other night, when you stayed out so long looking at the stars. It was out in Egypt where you learned that habit, and it is what makes you so dear and funny and awkward in these stupid gaslit streets. You were a kind, patient, gloriously-going camel."

"You're right!" cried the Professor, nearly knocking the table over in his excitement. "Wife, I've always promised you we would get to see Egypt and the Holy Land before we died. This settles it."

"Not quite," said Mrs. Lane, laughing nervously. "Please, what was I, Dolly?"

Dolly's eyes grew very gentle as they dwelled upon the worn old face. The mother of an only son, and he a soldier—how many there were like her all over Europe, patiently, dumbly submitting to the cruel fate that had befallen them!

"You were just one of the dear mother-sheep," she said, "out in Palestine, the sheep that David and Isaiah, and the greatest Teacher of all, used to love to watch, feeding in the pastures, with their lambs beside them. How He dreaded the false shepherds—blind leaders of the blind! I wonder—were there ever ditches like unto the trenches?"

CHAPTER VI.

ON SHELLS AND SLAVES.

"DOLLY," said the Professor, glancing yet once again round his new-made study. "I want to 'bid you discourse' as you invited us in the old song this evening. What uncanny wisdom have you for guide that has helped you to make this study so—so perfectly restful both for mind and body?"

"That's soon answered," laughed Dolly from her yellow linen-covered cushion on the red-tiled hearth corner. "It's the 'shell' theory—not mine, of course. It is worked out in detail in a book called the 'Art of Building a Home,' by Raymond Unwin, the Garden City architect. I just shut my eyes and tried to think of a room that would fit you, and auntie, too, when she wanted a quiet corner—fit you like a shell fits the whole need of the fish inside it. And"—with a suspicion of Irish blarney in her coaxing voice, and a hand outstretched to Mrs. Lane, who sat in a low seat beside her, happily knitting, "When there were two such dear gentle folk to fit—beauty was bound to be."

"H'm," said Mr. Lane. "Would you mind descending from the abstract to the concrete?"

"I think you ought to call it ascending in this case," said Dolly, wrinkling her nose. "It's such a lot more trouble to explain. But take the size of the room first. For winter-time its two-windowed length was too big; and with your desk in the space between the windows, flat against the wall, you were always cold and had nothing in front of your eyes but that tiresome Raphael cartoon of

'The School of Athens.' And you couldn't even see that for the pattern on the wallpaper!"

"I certainly was cold," admitted the Professor.

"Well, I just called in Nursie, and asked her, couldn't we make a cosy wee room at the hearth end of it by pulling your desk round at right angles to the window nearest the fire? Light on your left hand—fire near enough to warm your right hand if you hung it behind you, and all your dear books shining out their thoughts at you in front and on the right; the grass and trees and sky if you looked to the left. Then when we had made the wee room, Nursie suggested how much warmer the linoleum floor would be with the cocoa-nut matting on it that was doing nothing in my flat all day. And then it began to look so cosy that I ran and fetched auntie's favourite low chair, and it just filled in the corner behind your chair, when you are working, as if it had been measured for it."

"Oh, but I shall never think of sitting in your uncle's study when he is working," said Mrs. Lane. "I know too well how sensitive he is. Why, when he has been finishing an article I have sometimes been afraid to walk across the hall for fear of disturbing him. I trained Willie, our son Wilfrid, to go about on tiptoe, when he was little—didn't I, my dear!"

"Poor Professor!" said Dolly, wickedly. "It's a wonder you haven't ended up a neuro-maniac with such a fearful amount of sympathetic suggestion. But I tell you candidly that the coal and gas ration in these days won't run to decent fires in the dining room and study, as well as the kitchen, even with a wellfire. We had better try the suggestion that the Professor can work ever so much better when he knows you are sitting cosily behind him, knitting for Willie and his soldiers."

"I am sure I shall," cried the Professor, shattering the cherished illusions of a lifetime without even realising that he had done so, and doubling his wife's daily quota of happiness and halving the upstairs coal bill into the bargain. "But let us come back to the shell theory. What about patterns? Why do you exclude them so—so almost savagely? I could show you some wonderful colour schemes, patterns even, among the shells."

"Yes, but the creatures made them for themselves," cried Dolly, springing up to fetch the "Mollusca" volume of the big Encyclopædia and flying over the leaves until she found the coloured plate she wanted. "Look at those wonderful spirals, the flash of those colours, auntie! Whether you call the shell a shield, or a mantle, or a roof, or even an outside skeleton, they tell of life and growth within them in every particle. You can't imagine shells like that being made in tens of thousands, by wretched, wriggling slaves who lived themselves in horrible, dark holes, can you? or compelled by hunger to feed machines to turn out ornamental walls and floors and curtains for other lives till—till—they grow so dull and blind that they don't even know that the flowers are beautiful or their own children ugly!"

"My dear Dolly, I really cannot follow you! I suppose it is the slums again; but what nave they got to do with patterns?"

Mrs. Lane's face was pathetic in its bewilderment. Dolly crossed the room to put the Encyclopædia back in its shelf. She was tired, overtired with her day's work, and the pain at her heart was an old one.

"Do you know what made Nursie's husband the wreck he is? It was just breathing in the dust from a machine that cut out gold leaf to ornament the

wrappers of cigarettes! And he is only one of tens of thousands—toiling painfully till they drop and die; not for any decent result—not that people should have honest food or clothes or warmth or real beauty—but for idiotic patterns on the top of idiotic ornaments and draperies, bric-a-brac, fringes, beads — ” She stopped half-choked.

The Professor came over to her, and, drawing her to him, kissed her tenderly, solemnly on the forehead.

“My dearie,” he said, “I believe I have read all you are trying to say to us—all that we ought to have learned long ago, in a chapter of Ruskin’s ‘Stones of Venice,’ called ‘The Nature of Gothic.’”

“Yes,” cried Dolly, eagerly brightening. “And William Morris—you know what beautiful furniture he made—and designs too—he wrote a wonderful introduction to it in a little book, printed in his own Kelmscott Press”——

“I haven’t read that,” said the Professor, “but I don’t think a thousand chapters of theory could have made the secret of beauty as clear to us as a single day of living it with you, Dolly.”

“But what is the secret?” asked Mrs. Lane, whose perplexity still possessed her.

“Joy in labour!” quoted the Professor, with a triumphant rush of memory.

“And fellowship and freedom!” chimed in Dolly. “Do let me bring the Morris-Ruskin book. We can read it through together easily in a couple of evenings. Why, we might start a reading circle?”

“We will,” said the Professor.

CHAPTER VII.

ON GETTING UNDERSTANDING.

DINNER with the vicar as guest was over. The vicar himself had left, to wind up the evening’s proceedings at a boys’ club, where he was supposed to be immensely popular, and both the Professor and his wife had come down into the kitchen with Dolly, solicitously insisting on helping her with her dish-washing and evening tidying-up.

“All right! It will be awfully jolly to have you to talk to me,” cried Dolly, hurrying into her overall, which was short-sleeved like her soft silk dinner frock, and made her look as perfectly fit for work as a moment before she had been for leisure and pleasure. “But you must just sit, both of you, by the fire till I have everything arranged to my liking. No, there are no saucepans. Nursie has taught me to clean them directly I have done with them. She says they love to be clean just like we do, and can’t help being horrid if they are neglected. To hear her talk you would think everything she uses had a soul and will of its own. She can’t bear to ill-treat even a duster.”

“It certainly pays to be respectful to saucepans,” said the Professor, lighting his pipe, and stretching out his long limbs contentedly on the big kitchen hearth. “I once put your aunt’s potato saucepan, black from the fire, into a bowl of greasy water, and it took me nearly an hour to clean up the infernal mess it made.”

Dolly laughed whole-heartedly.

“Grease and smuts—a study in lamp black! I sympathise with you. And you hadn’t got Nursie to tell you how to get your hands clean.”

"What does she use?" asked Mrs. Lane, eagerly. "I find rose water and glycerine such a comfort."

"Nursie's recipe goes deeper than that," replied Dolly. "She looks for a duster, or a towel, or an apron, or anything else that wants washing, and by the time that is clean her hands are lovely, and no soap wasted either."

"I don't suppose Nurse ever heard of James Hinton's 'Others' Needs,' but I guess she has been working out his scheme of salvation all her life," said the Professor with the deep, warm tone in his voice which always woke instant response in his niece and gave wings to her easily-stirred imagination.

The greasy plates had been wiped over with soft paper that then went to help the fire-lighters. The knives stood, handles up, in a jug. The spoons and forks were ready in a bowl with a dust of soap powder over them, waiting for a kettle full of boiling water, and Dolly held out an invitingly clean drying towel to her uncle.

"I guess you hitched your wagon to a star from the beginning of your camel days," she said, gratefully. "No, I don't suppose Nursie has read Hinton, but she and her husband have read and re-read Tolstoy's 'Twenty-Three Tales.' It was only a shilling before the war—just a marvel of a book. Do you remember the Godson, and how his Godfather sent him to watch the workers at their work, and note what they did and teach them what he knew to help them. He promised him that he would get understanding that way, and he did."

"Understanding of what," broke in Mrs. Lane's plaintive voice. "You two mix things up till I don't know what we are talking about."

"The Godson wanted to know how to atone for his own and the robbers' sins," said Dolly gently.

"He had made an awful mess of things with his first attempt on his own account. Mr. Jenkins read the story to me once in my early days as a Socialist, when I was always making messes, too. We called Nursie's husband 'Ivan the Fool' after one of the other stories, you know, because he is so wise. It was he that taught me that so long as there is any hard and disagreeable work to be done we all ought to take a share—that that was what the washing of the disciples' feet meant. And since I have begun to do it in real earnest, oh, I have understood lots of things!"

"I believe you," said the Professor. "But I can't see what that has to do with Socialism. The glory of the kind of service you speak of is that it is perfectly voluntary."

"Exactly," cried Dolly. "And what we Socialists are wanting is to set all the people free that they may have the glory of voluntary service, too."

"Take care you don't make us all slaves instead," said the Professor.

"We will take care," said Dolly. "What you highly-paid intellectuals will not face is that the mass of the peoples are slaves already—compelled to slave to make money for others. We may have to compel everybody for a little while to do a bit of work for the Life need of the whole community. But our faith is that they will soon realise that that service is very real freedom, even the rich ones. There is no burden like the gain of oppression."

"Not for you, my dearie," said the Professor. "But how many are there like you?"

"Millions," said Dolly confidently.

CHAPTER VIII.

OLD WORLD DARKNESS AND NEW WORLD LIGHT.

IT was three p.m. on a Friday.

The Professor and his wife had had bad news by the morning's post. Dolly and Nurse Jenkins were down in the kitchen, cleaning the silver.

"I don't know what we are going to do with our two poor old dears, Nursie. It's all very well for a new poet like Miles Malleson to dream dreams and write rhapsodies about the 'Young Heaven' where the dead soldiers are: but we women have to keep wide awake and to go on living with the old Abrahams and Sarahs. And it doesn't make it any easier to comfort them that they are largely responsible for their own misery. I used to wonder whether Sarah knew about Isaac's sacrifice—Now I am afraid she did know, and kept Abraham up to it!"

"You can't say that about poor Hagar, anyhow," flashed Nurse Jenkins.

Dolly looked at her a moment and then laughed in spite of herself.

"You mean *she* couldn't bear to see her son die? I never thought of that. But it wasn't much good putting him under the bushes, was it?"

"It was a man or a lot of men who wrote the whole story," said Nurse sturdily. "Any woman can see that. Hagar never put her boy down till she had done her utmost to find water for him, or the Lord would never have troubled to help her. She wasn't one of your fine lady women."

"Nurse Jenkins, I really believe you are becoming class conscious," cried Dolly. "We shall have to tell Ivan about you. But you haven't told me

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how to comfort my Sarah or my Abraham either. There are no angels nowadays to stop their folly."

"Did you say it was both the master's nephews, Miss Dolly?"

"Yes, all the real nephews he had to his name. I came in with the 'steps' you know. I fancy they never forgave my poor little mother for marrying again—especially an Irishman! Both the lads were under twenty-five—fine lads, too, I believe: tall and clean-cut—Lanes every inch of them. They were both killed, within the same twenty-four hours, and James Lane, their poor old father, seems to have only survived the shock two days. Their mother, thank goodnes, died before the war was heard of—perfectly happy! Incidentally it means that our Professor comes in for a good deal of money. But that's no comfort to him. I have just left him, pacing up and down, up and down his study, and his dear old face is grey. Of course it has quickened his fear for his own lad. It was bound to; but it is more the vision it has given him of the cost—the unspeakable cost of his own theories."

"I have heard folks say that fat sorrow is better than lean sorrow, anyday," said Nurse Jenkins, meditatively. "But I am not so sure. Rich folk can keep on with their feelings till they are nigh driven crazy. Poor ones have to go to work. And there's no comfort like work."

"Not if it's worth doing," said Dolly. "But imagine going to sharpen fresh bayonets, or mould more bullets, or prepare the powders for their hateful poison gasses! Inever can make out how those munition girls in your road stand it, Nursie."

"It's the wages, mostly, poor things," said Nurse pitifully. "No one ever gave them the chance to earn half, nor a quarter of the money for anything

good they ever did. Besides, the papers, clever writers like your uncle, and the vicar, most of the chapel ministers, too—nigh everyone they meet, tells them its splendid! I'll own I never knew a woman as went munition making for comfort. There was Lizzie Paterson, poor lass, after her sweetheart was killed—she did say as she kept on at it because 'revenge was sweet.' But she's in the asylum."

"And that's where poor old Uncle will end if he goes on working himself up into these unnatural furies of belief in killing! You see he is sincere. He isn't one of the sort who only believe they believe things, like Auntie, for instance. Only last week he wrote a perfectly atrocious article—declaring that the Christian and Buddhist sentimentalists who said it was wrong to kill any human being were fundamentally materialists. They set the flesh above the spirit and would sacrifice every ideal in the world to the base business of eating and drinking, and—and of dying in ones' bed! I only saw the article yesterday and we had an awful row—the worst yet."

"What did you say to him, Miss Dolly?"

Nurse laid down the spoon she was cleaning in her interest in the answer. Dolly finished rubbing her's and then spoke slowly—and with a deepening flush in her face.

"Lots of things I wish I hadn't. I lost my temper of course, like I always do. Anyhow, I made him admit that there was no cowardice in being afraid to kill: that that was a fear utterly unknown to animals and low-typed men and women: that it had taken a very long time to develop in the world and that at least it couldn't do a thousandth part as much harm as the lack of fear to kill. But nothing touched him till I quoted our dear 'Ivan

the Fool.' " How tenderly her voice dwelled on the name from Tolstoy's Tales which Nurse Jenkins and she had given to the invalid husband because he was so wise.

"Yes?" Nurse urged her.

"I told him how Ivan had said that he had begun to think that no man really believed in God, or denied God, except as he saw Him or failed to see Him in his fellowmen: that the pure in heart always could see Him there and therefore never despaired of them. But to refuse to see God in a whole nation, or even in one man, to declare that there was no good in him to appeal to—that nothing but killing him was any use—that that was to be so impure in heart as to believe not in God but in the Devil and to be better dead."

"Miss Dolly!"

"Yes, I know," said Dolly ruefully. "And this morning he said it half to himself, half to me. 'It is true I do, I do believe in the Devil, and I would be better dead.' It made me feel like a murderer."

"Well, that is nonsense," cried Nurse, gathering up the silver. "If you don't want to murder the Devil I do—especially when there isn't one."

Whereat Dolly began to laugh wildly, dried her eyes and put on the kettle for afternoon tea.

CHAPTER IX.

"ONE LOVING SPIRIT SETS ANOTHER ON FIRE."

—Augustine.

DOLLY stood just within the study door, her hands tight clasped together.

A minute ago Mrs. Lane had come flying down to the kitchen with a speed that knew nothing of neuritis, her tear-swollen face aghast with a new horror.

"Oh, Dolly! go to the Professor! I am afraid he's had a stroke or something. He has not moved for nearly half an hour—just stood there, looking out of the window."

Dolly was gone on the first word, and Mrs. Lane, sinking into the kitchen chair by the fire, detained Nurse Jenkins, who would fain have followed her.

"Oh, don't you go. If anyone can rouse him it will be Dolly. It's a sort of brooding fit—he used to have them when he was a boy and anything angered him. He always came out all right—only this time it has passed all bounds. It kept getting darker and darker, and he never moved. And when I asked him to light the gas he never heard me. I called him, and he took not the least notice. And then, when I touched his hand, it was like something dead."

Upstairs there was a sound of a vigorous poking of the fire and the putting on of coals. Nurse Jenkins smiled a bit drily. "I guess you are right," she said, "Miss Dolly will know how to manage him."

But upstairs, on her knees before the study fire, coaxing it to the gift of bright light as well as heat, Miss Dolly was conscious of a fluttering fear at her heart.

Two nephews killed—and their father, the Pro-

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fessor's only brother, dead of a broken heart, in one week—in the war, which he, the Professor, had declared it impious to think of ending till Germany lay prostrate, confessing her sins, begging for mercy.

Dolly felt the paralysis of the pain of it all creeping over her own heart, and bent her head in her hands. Then she rose to her feet, and went swiftly to the gaunt, dark figure by the far window.

"Uncle," she cried, her low voice athrob with passionate longing to help him. "I haven't dared to ask you before, but I am in trouble—there's something you can do for me that nobody else can." She had thrust the kind warmth of her body between the man and the cold darkness of the window where he stood; into the folds of his coat she pushed her way, and bit by bit compelled his stiff arms to relax and hold her.

"It is a big trouble," she urged him. "I had never any hope before; but now—I've seen it clear—this minute—by the fire—it can be helped. It need not be. And you can help me. You can do it all for us—all—if only you will."

Again and again she urged the suggestion, purposely keeping her thought vague. She, Dolly, was in trouble. He could help, and no one else could.

Before he knew it, the Professor was in the big chair by the fire, with Dolly on her knees beside him, pleading, her blue eyes full of unshed tears, with love's sunshine behind them; a combination that has lit Hope's rainbow ever since the world began.

"You will help me, won't you. Oh, promise me, you will."

At last the Professor heard. And it was with his young niece, Dolly, as it was with the shepherd lad, David, when he saw that with the playing of his

harp that King Saul, whom he loved, was "refreshed and well and the evil spirit had departed from him."

Eagerly she acclaimed the change.

"You will; you promise me, you will?"

"I will." The blood came back to the Professor's blue lips with his effort to frame the words and his hand covered Dolly's on his knee as her story tumbled from her like a mountain torrent.

"Then, listen. You know a bit about Nurse Jenkins—how good she is to us. I couldn't possibly manage without her. But it is far too much strain upon her to keep coming to and fro. It hurts her so, to leave her husband, all but helpless in his chair. And in that tiny kitchen, in that narrow back street, there's neither light enough for his work, nor air enough to give him the least chance to get better. And for months now he has been getting steadily worse. You don't know Ivan as we do. But I tell you that he's just the dearest, wisest man that ever lived. It's a crime to have him die when he needn't."

The Professor was wholly himself and listening eagerly.

"I will do anything," he began.

"Then I want you to make his picture come true," cried Dolly. She enjoyed the Professor's perplexity for a moment, and then set to work in grave earnest.

"I don't know how you think things happen," she said. "But Ivan says that everything is thought first, and that is why thoughts matter so terribly—and so gloriously! People in trouble are always coming to him and after a little he nearly always can show them the way out. He says, 'it just comes' to him 'in a picture.' And nearly three months ago, Nursie was very downhearted. They

were desperately poor. You see, since Ivan got poisoned at that horrid factory, he has earned nothing, and she couldn't see how they were going to get the rent. And that night Ivan saw one of his pictures. He told us how he was sitting under a big high-up window through which the sun came and such a fresh breeze; and he was working at a handloom, specially formed to fit his lameness, with a beautiful pattern with a gold thread in it! The last part has come true already. I knew one of the Peasant Crafts' Revival people and he was so interested, he came right along with a handloom for beautiful towels and Ivan earned the rent the first week. He is defter with his fingers than any woman and he is making his own patterns already and just loves the work. But the window, the sunshine, the fresh air—Uncle—do you know? kneeling by the fire there, just this minute—I wanted to comfort you so I didn't know what to do, and suddenly I saw a picture. It was Ivan's picture, but it was mine too, as clear as clear can be. He was sitting under a high-up window and the sunshine was pouring in on his loom, on the gold thread in the pattern in it, just as he said, and there, right in front of him by the wall was your kitchen clock downstairs, and under his feet was your kitchen hearthrug! Uncle—can't you see it? that dark kitchen downstairs—you could break through the blank wall which faces on the garden, let in a top window, and all the morning and afternoon sunshine and the fresh air—turn that dark housemaid's parlour into a sort of Scotch bedroom, and make a real cosy little flat just for Nursie and her husband—for Ivan—and he will live and not die!"

She stopped out of breath, but the Professor's eyes were lit with a light as bright as her own.

"We'll start finishing that picture to-morrow," he said.

CHAPTER X.

ON PRINCES AND PRINCESSES.

THE maid from the next door kitchen had slipped in for a bit of a gossip, as she always did directly her mistress's back was turned. It was Dolly's wont, even at her busiest times, to allow the lassie a rapturous five minutes by the clock, and then speed her back again, bright faced, with half a dozen new ideas to keep her mind working happily as well as her fingers.

This special morning Dolly had been looking out for her. She had designed a poppy red frill to a new dust cap, with poppy red yoke, cuffs, belt, and pockets on an unbleached calico overall, as just what Cinderella's sandy brown hair needed. For Cinderella, shortened to Ella, had been Dolly's name for Eliza Smith, of the Orphanage, ever since her first transformation.

The cutting out and difficult fixing were all done, and the specially selected apple green and bark brown embroidery threads were lying ready with a packet of needles, that Ella might have the rare delight of seeing beauty grow under her own fingers. For days, under Dolly's tuition, she had been practising the simple stitches needed. Now all was ready to her hand.

Dolly had looked and worked hard to see her new friend pleased; but Ella's speechless ecstasy in contemplation of the pretty new working rig designed for her touched her almost to pain.

"Child, don't look like that!" she cried. "Why, Nurse Jenkins and I have been saying you ought to have a real party dress for Christmas week, with pretty slippers and stockings——"

Dolly got no further, for Ella had fallen on her knees on the floor, and hidden her face in Dolly's working smock, with a rush of tears that let loose the pent-up longing of her girlhood.

"Well, if that isn't the stupidest trick!" cried Dolly. "Here am I trying to make you look like a real princess, and you go smudging up your face and reddening your eyes and nose like a silly school-girl. What will the prince, your lover, say, if he comes and finds you like this?"

Dolly made the old jest at random, but there was a tightening of the arms about her knees, and a shame-faced, "Oh, Miss Dolly," that brought to that young lady's much experience a sudden light of understanding.

"So there is a prince," she cried eagerly. "Oh, Cinderella, you must tell me all about him, and call in here and let me do your hair and help you dress whenever you go to meet him. Is he a soldier prince?"

"No, oh no, Miss Dolly, he's not strong on his chest, an' he's only 17, and his mother's put him to window cleaning. He cleans your windows as well as ours, and he just thinks you are too lovely for anything. He never took no notice of me till he saw me in here with you one day, an' you kissed me. Then the next time I had that purple cap and smock on, an' he said I looked like your shadow."

"I hope you boxed his ears," laughed Dolly.

"Why, no," said Cinderella simply. "I thought it was just a lovely thing to say—and he meant it lovely, too—and when he walks out with me now he's never done asking me what you've been doin', and what you've been sayin' to Nurse Jenkins and me. He says it's more interestin' nor any play. And he's begun goin' to the Socialist meetings

where you go, an' I've promised to go with him, if you don't mind."

"Mind! Why, it's just the nicest thing that could be," cried Dolly. "And when the workmen have finished the kitchen window, and Nursie and Ivan come to live here, we'll have you and your lover here as often as you can manage it. Why, Cinderella, we really will get you to the ball now! There are lots of jolly socials and dances at the Institute, and I'll soon teach you the steps."

"Oh, Miss Dolly," gasped Cinderella, catching hold of her poppy-red pile of needlework, as if to assure herself that it would not vanish away. "Me! in a pretty frock an' dancin'. It's too good to be true!"

"See, here," said Dolly, with a sharp note in her voice. "Do you think that anything is too good for that lover of yours?"

"Not—not if he could get it honest," replied Cinderella, her eyes fixed nervously on Dolly's face. "He's a real good lad, Miss Dolly, and works all weathers and most days a deal too hard for his strength."

"Then, for pity's sake, my lass, wake up and learn to love yourself properly," cried Dolly. "'Love your neighbour as yourself,' you know the golden rule. Well, unless you do love yourself, unless you claim all you need to make you a healthy, bright-eyed, noble lassie—as beautiful as God meant you to be—and claim it as your right so long as you are willing to do your share in the world's hard work—what worth is your love of anybody else going to be? Answer me that. You bring your lover round to me the very first chance, and if he doesn't think that you deserve bright colours and merry music and pretty slippers, and a bonny frock and nice things to eat with any girl in

the land, then I'll send him packing. He isn't good enough for you."

"He is good enough for any lady in the land," cried Cinderella, with sudden spirit. "But he's got an old mother, an' he's bound to think of her first, an' I wouldn't have him not to. You don't know everything, Miss Dolly."

"Cinderella!" cried Dolly, her eyes just brimming with pride in her. "Forgive me. You are a real king's daughter, 'all glorious within'; but we are going to have you all glorious without, too, in the wonderful days a'coming. And we will 'get it honest, too'! Never fear. That is just what Socialism stands for. Oh, I'll have to teach you the chorus; it's just grand to polish floors to."

And Dolly sang out the lines to a rollicking sailor's tune as she ran for her cedar mop:

"Then leisure and pleasure shall be free,
And hardship and hunger shall go,
When the worker has her place at the top of the tree,
And the loafer is somewhere down below."

CHAPTER XI.

ON THE UNWISDOM OF ELDER SISTERS.

IT was again "a breakfast in bed day" for Mrs. Lane, and Dolly, after bringing up the tray, had settled cosily down beside her.

"Auntie, can you play the old 'John Peel' gallop and 'Come Lasses and Lads'? The old country dances are ever so much jollier than these new-fangled 'Trots' and Jazzes. We are learning quite a number of old dances and songs combined, down at the Institute, and I do so want Cinderella to know at least the 'Sir Roger' figures before she comes to-night."

Mrs. Lane's brows drew together as she carefully peeled the apple which lay beside her bacon plate.

"I can play the dances you ask for, Dolly; but I am not at all sure that it is right of me to play them for you if it is to encourage poor little Eliza Smith to begin going to dances. Her mistress is dreadfully upset about it, and says in her experience it is the beginning of the end for any respectable servant girl."

"Oh, auntie," cried Dolly, springing up from her seat on her aunt's bedside, and beginning to pace the room. "If you only knew the harm these cold-blooded, respectable women do in the world! I have always thought the elder brother in the parable had a lot to do with the younger one going off into the far country; but the elder sisters are ever so much worse. How did your people come to let you learn even to play dance music if they thought it was all wrong?"

"Oh, but they didn't!" cried Mrs. Lane. "Why, I was considered one of the lightest-footed dancers

in Buxton before I married your uncle. That pretty flowered muslin you saw in my bottom drawer the other day was the dress I was wearing when I met him. That is why I keep it——"

She stopped, warned by the gathering colour in Dolly's face that she had somehow strayed upon dangerous ground. Dolly took a rapid turn or two in the room before she spoke.

"John Ruskin said the masters of England wanted to keep their workers flat in the head so that they would be content to toil on for ever for a bare subsistence," she said, bitterly. "But the mistresses would seem to want their maids to be flat-footed and flat-chested, and blind and deaf into the bargain. Why, in Heaven's name, if it was right for you to go to dances and meet your lover there, is it to be wrong for Cinderella?—Eliza, I mean—or any other poor little maid-of-all-work?"

Mrs. Lane put out her hand in almost piteous appeal.

"Don't be angry with me, Dolly. I know it must sound horrid and narrow to anyone so generous and kind and—and innocent as you are. But my dear, my parents were in a position to educate me, to safeguard me in all sorts of ways. They never, of course, allowed me to go to public dances, at least, only to the very best, and then with a party of friends. It is all so different with these poor girls. They have not been educated, and there is no one to protect them, and—and all sorts of things can happen to them of which you can have no idea. I—I am certain it is kindest to keep them away from dancing altogether as things are."

Dolly was standing at the other end of the bed, and her hands gripped the wooden corner posts till her fingers were white to the tips.

"As things are," she repeated slowly. "I wonder, poor little auntie, if you have the remotest notion what those words cover, have covered, and will continue to cover East and West if some of us don't make a break once and for all. Now I do know something of what they mean. The worst vision I ever got of it down East was in a low public-house in Bristol once. I was trying to help organise some slaughterers there—get them in a Trade Union. The poor fellows were abominably paid, for abominable hours of abominable work. And there was a dancing saloon next door. What I saw and heard as I came to the top of the outside stairway at the end of a long meeting—there were two stairways side by side—just terrified me sick. But there was a fine old Trade Union navvy with me, and he put his hand on my shoulder. I can hear his voice now. 'Don't take it too much to heart, lass,' he said. 'Only never forget it! If we wanna help th' young folk grow above th' belt they mun grow below it!' And, auntie, isn't it true? What does protect a girl as you call it—or a boy either, for that matter? I am certain it is never walls and fences—certainly not prison walls. It is the waking up of the real self within them—self-respect, people call it—and to dare to teach a girl that she cannot be trusted to learn to dance—why, auntie, it almost seems to me the wickedest thing one woman could do to another!"

There was a blaze in Dolly's eyes which held Mrs. Lane's gaze. She made no attempt to answer her niece. Indeed, the pictures which Dolly's swift speech had set before her imagination were too strange and hard for her timid, sheep-like nature not to be at first appalled before them. What were the young girls of to-day coming to?

But Dolly had recovered herself in the silence.

"Shall I tell you what we are trying to do down at our Socialist Institute instead?" she said, gently. "We believe that all the girls and boys of England, or any other country, have an equal right to the chance to enjoy all the beauty of every kind which their race has harvested. Our Institute is really an artist's studio, and he lets us have the use of it in the evenings. With its polished floor, bare walls, and glowing coloured hangings, and often fine pictures, which he has borrowed for us—it gives our young folk as refined surroundings as any Duchess need ask for her daughters. Then we have quite a good stringed band, and a decent piano. More than that, we sing our Socialist songs, and light up our dreams of a nobler, better world with our Chinese lanterns. We believe Ruskin was right when he said that our music and dancing ought to be part of our worship of God—of all that is good and true and beautiful and loving—and not be given over, as it is to-day, to the worst Devil of all—to money-making. We dance in and for the cause at our Institute. And I tell you, auntie, we have had many a beautiful love story start there, but I have never heard of an ugly one yet."

She stopped, and the light in her blue eyes had become soft and warm. It was reflected in her aunt's faded ones.

"Child, you are right! Help me to dress quickly, and I'll play for you and your Cinderella as many dances as I know. And—Dolly—I never thought I could part with it—but if you thought that flowered muslin could be made to fit her——"

Dolly's hugging arms finished the sentence.

CHAPTER XII.

ON "SOLVING THE SERVANT PROBLEM."

THE County Red Cross Ambulance drew up at Professor Lane's door, and there was great speculation among the neighbours not in the secret. Had the soldier son been wounded? Was it he that was being carried in on the stretcher—and by the basement door?

It was the second week in December, and the dark blue uniforms of the ambulance men were powdered with snow.

"Come in!" cried Dolly's cheery voice. "Ivan's chair is waiting for him by the fire, Nursie."

Dolly watched the two strong men's gentle handling of the weak one with almost breathless interest.

"You can't stay for a cup of tea, sergeant?"

Then as Nurse Jenkins took possession of her husband she turned to the ambulance men.

"Why not? Anyhow, tell me, in these days of housing shortage, did you ever see a better way than this of making one house home two families?"

The sergeant's quick gaze rounded the kitchen. He had had a few surprises in his life, but never one quite like this. Instead of the dark and more or less stuffy kitchen he had expected, the primrose yellow of the distemper on the walls, with the black wainscoat and flame-coloured curtains reflected in the tiles of an up-to-date kitchen stove, and concentrated in a huge bunch of tawny chrysanthemums on a small black table set in the far corner by the old kitchen clock, gave him an almost overpowering sense of bright warmth and airy space.

An engraving of Walter Crane's "Solidarity of Labour" hung over the mantel-piece, and the I.L.P. "Flags of All Nations" glowed on the opposite wall.

The sergeant's man hailed it with a cry of delight.

"I might have known it!" he cried. "This is a Socialist turnout, sergeant. Look at that bookshelf! And just look behind them looped-back curtains there! If it isn't a bedroom, as cosy as a crippled man could want in this world."

"And a bathroom, leading out of that," cried Dolly triumphantly. "When Professor Lane starts anything he doesn't do it by halves. I was determined to show it to you, sergeant, for I do want you to think about it when you have disabled soldiers to deal with. There are hundreds of the poor fellows already living in grimy little houses, getting grimier every day, because the wife has to go out to work for both of them. Here, Ivan's wife has her work all under one roof, and I can't tell you what a comfort it is to us to have her. She was my nurse, you know, long ago, and Ivan, though he isn't able to walk, can wheel himself about in his chair, and do all sorts of things to help us all. That's his handloom at the end of the kitchen. You should see the sun stream in through the top window in the morning, and the wonderful, bordered linen towels he is weaving. You will think about it, won't you, comrade, and you too, sergeant?"

"Think about it! Rather, and I'll talk about it, too," said the sergeant. "I don't know about Socialism, but I know a bit of commonsense and decent human kindness when I see it. And I don't expect the Professor will lose by it either, in these days of high rents and no servants."

"That's true," struck in his companion. "I

don't blame the lassies for not wanting to go out as servants in the ordinary way; but there would be plenty of women and good women too who would be ready to tackle the work of a house if they'd a cheery homey bit of a place like this to call their own. Leaving out the disabled husbands, this war has left no end of widow women with just one or two children. A little flat like this—why—it 'ud be fair Paradise for them."

"Now, you'll have to drink a cup of tea," struck in Nurse Jenkins' voice. "Ivan here has got the bread and butter cut while you three have been talking. Thank the Lord it's a motor you have got waiting out there and not some poor steaming horse. But it was good to hear you put in a word for the servant lassies and the widows. I used to say, sergeant, like you did, as I didn't know about this Socialism. But if you were to live with Miss Dolly here and Ivan they would soon convince you it was the only thing that made life worth living."

"I do believe it 'ud mean letting the land of England get back to the people who could use it and make it grow honest food for folks instead of pheasants, anyhow," said the sergeant's man, accepting his cup of tea without much ado, "and Socialists wouldn't tell the men when they come back there's no work to do when there's tens of thousands of houses wanted—in London alone, a matter of 300,000, they tell me, and all the furniture and fittings of 'em, too."

"It would mean doing for all the poor disabled soldiers and sailor lads and for their widows, too, what it has done for our Ivan here," chimed in Nurse Jenkins, "giving them a chance to do some useful work they could do, well and happy, in a home of their own, with those they love about them; not putting them off with a miserable bit of

money or packing them into an institution with hundreds of others, to die slowly out of sight. If you were to see the strong beautiful bits of stuff our Ivan weaves now, sergeant, you'd be crying for the old hand-looms. They beat the factory stuffs every way you look at it."

"This little flat beats half of a four-roomed cottage in a dirty street, anyhow," said the sergeant. "It has fair taken my fancy. And if it's Socialism—"

"Oh, but you mustn't think it is Socialism," cried Dolly. "It is just the best we could do to-day with an abominable house built to suit an abominable social system—and for Ivan's lameness. But I'll tell you what is Socialism, sergeant. There are two families living together here under one roof, and mutually, equally, helping to build each others' homes. Look at those chrysanthemums on that black oak table! Mrs. Lane used to have that in her drawing room, and they were hardly ever noticed. Now she insists that they are to be by Ivan's loom, and I don't think I ever saw her get so much pleasure out of anything."

"That's Socialism, anyhow," laughed Ivan. "But she will have to go shares in the Christmas daffodils we are growing or we won't have her chrysanthemums, isn't that right Mistress Dolly?"

"Yes," Dolly agreed, "but there's nothing that is quite Socialism to-day. That can only be—

When all mine and all thine shall be ours,
And no more shall any man crave
For riches that serve for nothing
Save to fetter a friend for a slave."

CHAPTER XIII.

ON CASTING OUT DEVILS.

“**M**INNA ! I’ve won ! Those cold, dark deserts of attics are to be fitted up with electricity and the dinkiest bathroom. They are to blossom out into our ‘dear niece Dolly’s flat.’” Dolly’s imitation of Mrs. Lane’s delicately perfect articulation was here inimitable. “Primrose yellow distemper, black paint and flame curtains ! It has taken exactly one year, three months and fifteen days, but I’ve done it,—and you and your man can get married and take my five years’ lease off my hands so soon as ever you like.”

“You mean you can let us have your old flat, unfurnished—to put our own things in—to make it a real home of our own—to grow our own shell, as you call it? Oh, Dolly, it seems too good to be true !”

“How often do I tell you? Things are too good not to be *made* come true. Nourish active rebellion against the other sort, of course. And have all your ‘goods’ ready to take the place of the ‘bads,’ or look out for the Seven Devils ! That is one of Ivan’s special warnings. And my flat is only ‘natural gratitude.’ Uncle and Aunt said so when they gave it me for an Armistice Day present. Besides—it is a good investment as things go. The miracle is to come. The Spare Bedroom has vanished ! Great Babylon is falling !—is falling ! and not even Mrs. Lane is weeping.” Dolly chanted her exultation as she ended and waved her woollen wrap above her head.

“You mean that they’ve parted with that huge mahogany four-poster and all the set of bedroom

furniture that went with it? Their wedding present from their grandparents? Dolly, you are a witch.”

“Witches went out with their abominable brooms, my friend. That spare bedroom was just a whited sepulchre. Everything in it was too heavy to move without a chain gang of domestics. You couldn’t even begin to open the windows unless you could pick your way like a cat on the huge dressing table in front of them, smothered with useless ornaments; or climb up great sprawling, rattling curtains, four lots of them, muslin and rep, for the two windows—like a monkey. And then there were Venetian blinds ! I never once got the windows fairly open but it came on to rain and I had to rush up to save the curtains. Like the sheets and blankets and bedspreads on that abominable bed they cost a small fortune to wash. Then there was that gigantic double washstand, covered with jugs and basins and footbaths and pails, all just crying to be cracked, because they were ‘a perfect set and very valuable.’ I daren’t begin to talk about the pictures on the walls, and their ‘massive gilt frames.’ They nearly broke the furniture man’s back as well as our step-ladder getting them down, though it was partly my fault for making him laugh.”

“What were you saying to him?”

“Only that I wished *I* could have one of the pictures—an engraving of some lovely Marcus Stone sort of ladies and their darling dependent daughters, pretending to skip with perfect elegance and refinement on a velvet-pile lawn with skirts longer and more impossible than Burne Jones’ draperies !”

“Why, what would you do with it?”

“Hang it up in our I.L.P. Guild of Youth Club. And next time any of our St. Joan cyclists, in their

bonny white blouses and silver corduroy breeches dared a growse, I'd tell them, 'There but for a few brave women, would you have gone—down to your graves!' Why even my mother, up at Girtton, had to spend hours and hours of her precious free time ripping off yards of disgusting brush-braid, foul with the mud of the streets, from skirts, just as insanely clinging and trailing and even purposely weighted. But, seriously, doesn't that picture show how revolutions come and keep on coming: and ninety-nine out of every hundred men and women don't even know they have been revoluted? Oh, it is true, as I tell Ivan, the mass of decent, kindly men and women have come up spiritually through sheep, or even more timid creatures like rabbits. They just spend all their time and energy with their noses down near the ground, meekly making the best of things as they are. They have no imagination. It never occurs to them that things could be different."

"And some of the decent ones are dogs, and one of them was an Irish terrier. Isn't that the notion? Pity the poor rabbits!" laughed Minna.

"Ah, but when we even begin to climb the Holy Hill we have to give up hurting and destroying. Ivan says that it is 'the hill of the world made whole': the End the morning stars saw when they sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy. Ivan thinks Job and Isaiah saw the truth of evolution in their own poets' way quite as clearly as Pythagoras; and they saw *our* part in it a lot more clearly than most of the Darwinians did. Even the asp got there—so there will be room for a terrier. But not for a Spare Room!—of the sort that is so vast and grand, it is a holy terror to think of having to use it, anyhow. There will be plenty of prophet chambers! But, Minna, you've

never asked me how that revolution came. And its the strangest sort of how! I believe I ought to feel a perfect brute about it, only somehow, I can't help knowing it will end up right. At the moment the poor Professor and his wife are even more upset than their old Georgian mansion. It's their only son, Wilfred. His Colonel writes privately that they all out there think it's a sort of shell-shock. You know he was badly gassed a few weeks back and has been in hospital since. But the letters said he was better and that he would probably be sent home among the first set of demobilised troops. The old folks were making every sort of Christmas preparation. And now he has written himself, quite an intelligent sort of letter in one way; but as dark as the darkest sort of horse to his father and mother. He says he is practically well again in body, but he doesn't feel able to come home yet; perhaps not for a year or so. He says he has taken on some kind of useful work out there. One of his fellow officers called it 'tidying up graves.' He says he will explain more fully when he feels more fit for letter writing. But it is impossible for his poor old parents to understand how he can stay away from them for anything. And for a year or so! It is breaking their hearts."

"Have you never seen him?"

"No. But I intend to," said Dolly ominously. "He has got to come home, and this Christmas, if only to see his new set of chambers and go back again."

"Chambers! You mean they have made over that huge spare bedroom —?"

"Yes—into a regular bachelor's study, smoking room, den; what you will. And a jolly little service bedroom with hot and cold water and shaving

mirror all tucked into one end and partitioned off so cleverly; book-shelfed off, really. How the Professor enjoyed arranging it once he started. And I persuaded the old mother that shell-shock was a bit like milk fever. The patient must have fresh surroundings, a fresh start every way, and be saved everything that reminded him of his old life before he went to the war. For some of us, anyhow, it is the sin against the Holy Ghost to talk as if human beings could come back and be just what they were before *that* judgment."

"I won't, anyhow," said Minna, sadly. Two of her brothers had been "given" to their country, never to return home again. "But, tell me; what do you and Ivan mean by the Holy Ghost?"

Dolly turned to her friend's bookshelf over a bureau. "That can best be answered in Ivan's own words," she said, gently. "I copied a bit of his Whit Sunday letter to me in the first year of the war on the flyleaf of that volume of Browning you borrowed. Here it is:

"Instead of the queer words, "Holy Ghost," I believe we should say "Spirit of the Whole,"—the Spirit of that One Life in which we and all things live and move and have our being. Then we should understand not only Jesus and the Sermon on the Mount, but why the disciples, when the Spirit of the Whole possessed them could not fail to speak to the heart of the men of all nations, and why they just had to share the good things they had with their fellows. It is the wisdom of the Spirit of the Whole that is behind all our International Socialist striving.' "

"That's a bit of seed-corn thought if ever there was one. But what do you think is the matter with Wilfred Lane?"

Dolly put back the Browning in the bookshelf, then turned to face her friend and delivered her diagnosis slowly, but with absolute conviction. "Self-consciousness. He was officer in charge of a

gas attack and was gassed by the leaking of one of his own infernal contraptions. He seems to me to have taken the whole horrible business of the war personally; a special judgment arranged for him, you know, and he is all out now to work out his own salvation—grave-digging—without one thought for anyone else, not even for his parents."

"And what do you propose to do about it?"

"I've *done* it," said Dolly. "I've written him. I've told him if he is out for atonement he had far better dig the foundations of sun-lit garden houses for the living than the loveliest graves for the dead. Further that he has no kind of business to bury his poor old parents' happiness and peace of mind this Christmas. I wound up with Ivan's saying, 'Self-consciousness is the Devil, but self-righteousness is the cruellest devil of them all.' "

CHAPTER XIV.

ON LIFE AND DEATH AND THE NATURE OF THINGS.

"Amid the measureless grossness and the slag nestles the seed, perfection."—Walt Whitman.

NURSE Jenkins was sitting by her husband Ivan's side, watching him weave a wonderful strand of red and gold into the coarse bluish brown weft of a rough apron.

It was one that he had been specially designing for Dolly to wear while working at the kitchen sink.

"She told the Professor she didn't believe that even Brother Lawrence could have 'practised the presence of God' washing dishes if they had not given him a window over the sink where he could see the sky and the trees and hear the birds sing," said Ivan. "So when the Professor gave her her window and had the sink set round with those fine, red tiles to match the hearth, I called it her altar. And quick as anything she said 'Yes!' and now she must have an apron for vestments that would make her 'feel as fresh as a May Morning even to look at it!'"

"And it had to be strong enough to keep every drop of muddy or greasy water off her frock and yet loose enough to let the dirt out easy when it was washed," added Nurse Jenkins. "That is what only a bit of real hand-woven stuff will do. Miss Dolly will be wanting one for every servant-girl in the suburb before she is done."

"She has given old Nietzsche the lie anyhow when he said women were incapable of friendship," said Ivan. "She works just like spring sap in the veins of the charwomen and servant girls she has persuaded into her union."

"And she has made a new man of Mr. Wilfred," said Nurse Jenkins. "He came home for a day and he has stayed a month already. If Miss Dolly gets her way he will be the new Warden they want at the Settlement. No one has ever won yon rough lads over like he has. And he and the Professor have bought that great bit of waste land she was so keen about and the huts for the 'Foresters' and 'Landsmen' are going up already. She painted the big sign board for them herself. How pleased she was when the club lads voted to give the weak-chested ones the chance to live out there while the strong ones only went out on the motor wagon, or any way they could, to help."

"I wonder what that old wolf in sheep's clothing, the vicar, thinks of it all," chuckled Ivan. "Till Miss Dolly went down to the Institute he had everything his own way. Nothing but Church Brigades, the army and navy or emigrant schemes for all the likeliest lads. Now she has taken the lead out of his hands. There isn't a handicraft needed for home building and furnishing but she has found up a teacher and half-a-dozen lads and lassies to learn it. When she first started she sent that swearing old drill sergeant back to his arm-chair in his club. The vicar told Mrs. Lane he was afraid Miss Dolly was one of those dreamy mystics who never really accomplish anything. But the Professor told him, on the contrary, that he thought he would find her one of the strongest driving forces he had ever met. She has nearly driven him out of the lads' road, anyhow, and it's my belief Mr. Wilfred will finish him."

"I wonder what Miss Dolly thinks about Mr. Wilfred," said Ivan, meditatively. "She took such a dislike to her notion of him before he came

that I was afraid for once she would fail. None of us can help anyone we dislike."

"Ah, but Miss Dolly told me, only last night, that she knew she had been wrong about Mr. Wilfred the moment she set eyes on him—so tall and dark and quiet. She says she saw him—plainer than she had ever seen anyone, and he was just a stag, cruelly wounded and only wanting to go off alone into his thicket to die. She says he had never been the selfish prig she had thought him. But for months and most of all when he had lain in the hospital, fighting for his breath after he had been gassed, he came to think so differently about the war and the whole terrible wrong of it, that he had been afraid to come home. You see *he* didn't know how his father and mother had changed from their first crazy enthusiastic ways. They hadn't dared to tell him and he didn't dare to tell them."

"Aye, aye," agreed Ivan. "They were keeping up a silly sort of bluff for want of faith in each other's goodness. But you might as well try to keep an oak tree from growing with cob-webs as check the new vision of the truth that is coming to honest men and women these days. 'All members of one body'—aye, aye. But where is Miss Dolly? It's nearly time she was coming down to see about the tea and I did want her to see how her apron is growing."

* * * *

Probably by the nature of things—at that very moment the absent Dolly was urging on her newly-discovered step-cousin, Wilfred Lane, a visit to Ivan. A change of burners in her electric stove was in process and on the plea that he could fix them better than she could, the young ex-lieutenant had invaded her eyrie-like dwelling.

Dolly had perched herself in the enlarged and deepened window-seat of her gabled attic window. Even against the flame colour of her curtains there was a sense of glow and warmth about her. She was wearing a heathery-purple homespun frock out of which her fair head rose like a touch of thistledown on a moorland.

"I wish you would come down and let Ivan tell you how he gets at things," she was saying. "Ever since I was seven years old and starting on my first garden with him he taught me that the best way to think of life in this world was that it was only a kind of winter to our summer in Heaven. We are down amongst the roots of things here. That is why the old Church used lilies so much—they were their symbols of resurrection. It isn't so much what happens to us that matters as what we let it make of us inside."

"I'd rather get the teaching from you, thank you," said Wilfred. "You seem to have mastered the art of turning January into June this side time. But, Dolly, I'll have to confess it to you"—he was down on his knees in front of her stove, working with a screw-driver and his next sentences came in jerks. "I can't get rid of the feeling—that somehow—for me at any rate—it's a kind of black betrayal—of the *other* fellows—to let myself be as insanely happy—as I have been—since I came home—to have forgotten—so soon—even for a moment!"

"You will never forget," said Dolly, with quiet conviction. "None of us will who went through the war with our eyes open. Our whole life is pledged to the 'Never Again!' But to be afraid to be happy! Why—you might as well say the flowers ought to stop growing or the birds singing!"

"Queer you should say that. It's just what I *did* feel—often—over in France. But the flowers and the birds were innocent. They never made the war. We men did."

"And we women. I make no claim of exemption there. And I've said it—for those of us who understand what we did or allowed to be done, our lives are in pledge to un-make everything that lead to it in the past or can lead to it in the future. We must re-build and on far better foundations. But the question is—what kind of lives will build the new world best? You seem to think a 'miserable sinner' sort of melancholia useful. I don't. You don't either when it comes to real work. Look at you among those club lads last night."

"I'd rather look at you," said Wilfred, standing up and laying down his tools and pulling one of Dolly's favourite great hassocks near to her perch in the window. "We can talk better this way and you can kick me when you want to. I have made up my mind. I must go back to France and help good old Holden lay out those graveyards as I promised him. Of course we are doing it chiefly for the sake of relatives and friends and our own self-respect as a nation. But I know when I get out there I'll be talking inside to every poor fragment of a Tommy or a Fritz we lay in his last billet. There will be a few hundred thousand of them. You might give me something to say to *them*."

He was consciously provocative in his grimness.

"You had better take care you get through to them," said Dolly, drily. "Ivan would tell you that in the Jacob's Ladder story the angels ascended before the others were able to come down. He holds there is an angel self inside the worst of us, you know. And you must realise your angel self

to go up. It is as much a law as any in electricity. To get our heart's desire we have to sing unto the Lord. Whining is no good, anyhow."

"Kick Number One!" muttered Wilfred. "But I'll grant it you. That's perhaps the biggest part of the trouble. There was precious little angel stuff going about among us out yonder, Dolly. I guess we had better keep to what we know, this side time."

"No. I can't pretend to work it out if I do. And you don't seem very good at it with your messages to Tommy and Fritz. Besides, Ivan says he doesn't think any human being has really begun to live till he *knows* he is never going to die. One-half the human race is always awake and the other half asleep even in our little earthdays. So Ivan says it is in our longer life and what men call death days. It is only another kind of sleeping and waking. And for all the loving imaginative souls the other side, the summer side, is far better. We can get into the spirit of creation better there and work gloriously with it. But good gardeners are able to do a lot in the winter, too. And nobody can be a gardener at all unless they can see a bit ahead what the summer will be like."

"For weeds and nettles—bonfires? Is that in your parable?"

"I'd love everything that was weed and nettle in me to go up in blue smoke, and only leave a sweet ash behind to help the flowers grow," cried Dolly. "Ivan always says, 'Thank God for His promise of fire'—purification—you know the Greek meaning. Seriously, I don't find myself troubling about the dead at all. Even the Greeks, in their lovely old Athenian world, said 'Those whom the Gods love die young,' and Whitman, after his awful North and South war, where it was more

like brothers killing brothers even than in this war, wrote 'that low, delicious word death.' His poem, 'Compost,' is one of Ivan's special favourites. And our abominable industrialism has made life so hideous and unhappy, such a brazen prison for the bulk of our factory slaves that I can't help feeling that quick death would be a merciful deliverance for tens of thousands of them. If only they could have taken their women and children with them!

"Why—in some of our London air raids when I used to watch our poor slum-dwellers swarming out of their hiding-places into the tubes, I could have prayed for a Sodom and Gomorrah rain of fire that would have cleansed us Londoners out of existence, West and East, and given the rest of humanity a chance to start afresh. I don't suppose it would have been much different in any of our big rich towns and cities to-day—Paris, Brussels, Berlin, and St. Petersburg. Revolutions always break out in towns. It is misery boiling up and bursting—your bonfire, if you like. And even Ivan once showed me in the 'Refuge and Strength' Psalm how the works of the Lord included 'desolations'!"

"By Jove, Dolly; but you are a queer mixture! You've just toiled at this dreary old cavern of a house till you've made it into three perfect homes. I ought to say 'four' only I'd be so tempted to stay in mine. Mother says she doesn't know anyone who realises how the little things matter like you do. You turn a pudding into a poem by the way you dish it up for us. And then you go and talk as if a whole host of town populations could be wiped out and leave you cheerfully smiling."

"No. I'd be too sorry for the folks who were left, especially those who were anyway respon-

sible," said Dolly, her whole heart going out in longing to make herself clear. "You see I really do believe in the Holy Spirit—that Spirit of the Whole which includes us all—dead as we call it, as well as alive—just as if we were inside some vast eggshell—the Holy Spirit that broods over us, and our earth's great wheel of life: the Holy Spirit that is *in* us as well as round us and can never let us rest till we are each one of us whole and consciously working with the great loving plan for a whole human race on an earth made whole. I know that it is literally true that 'the child's sob curses deeper in the darkness than the strong man in his wrath,' and that 'a little linnet in a cage sets all Heaven in a rage.' But there's the other side to it. Every real joy belongs to us all, too. Even God 'renews His ancient rapture' with every spring-time. He loves us to be glad. It is what we were made for. The mystery of pain, as Hinton saw, is all explained in the sympathy it wakes in us—making us whole men and women, fit for the joys of Heaven—able to help make it on earth. That is why we *have* to be International Socialists before we can be really happy. Jesus said it: we can't know unless we do. But the minute we begin even to try to be 'comrades' in real earnest—why it is like hearing the music at the heart of things. 'Keeping time with the Conductor,' Plotinus called it. Oh, don't look so—so torn in half. It is really quite simple once you accept the organic view of life. See! you are a tall, strong, finely-brained man, but the whole of you knew when I pulled that white hair out of your head."

Dolly suited her action to her words and found her fingers fast gripped and held prisoner for her pains.

"The whole soul of me knew," Wilfred cried,

hoarsely. "Dolly! What must you think of me? I am not even physically fit yet. Every idea I started the war with has gone into the melting-pot. The only clear notion I have as to my future work in life is that I must help bury every poor chap lying out yonder in some beautiful burial ground before I can start life again. And yet, Dolly, from the first minute I saw you, I knew I loved you with every bit of my being. I have fought and fought against it, but——"

"But so have I!" The little whispered cry as it broke from Dolly's lips and the exquisite flush of love's floodtide in her face levelled every barrier between them.

How long they had been sitting together in the attic window-seat before Nurse Jenkins whistled up the speaking-tube to ask Miss Dolly if she wanted muffins for tea, neither of them knew or cared.

"Wilfred is going back to France to-morrow to help make the soldiers' burial grounds beautiful," Dolly explained, trying to steady her voice to speaking-tube conventions. "But you can tell Ivan that he says he is coming back again in the spring-time to marry me, and that I shall want a hand-embroidered veil."

FINIS.

*The Blackfriars Press Ltd.
Leicester & London-21833*