

The MAN IN FRONT

By Mrs. Amiger Barclay

HE Leading Woman came back from rehearsal tired and spent, every nerve fiber aching, mentally bruised. The role of Theo in "The Eternal Triangle" was the best part that had ever been given her to create, and willy-nilly, she had to create it as the Big Man, her actor-manager husband, decreed. The part fitted her like a glove. And the Big Man made her murder it.

Once, he had taught her. In her ignorance she had married him so that he might teach her. Now she had got beyond his teaching, and he did not know it. In his vanity he thought he had "made" her. He lived, fattened on that, thrived on the reflected glory of her art, and ghoulish on the woman herself.

There was no escape for her from his exactions of this piece. The author was abroad, in ill-health, so he could not be present at rehearsals. Moreover, because this was his first play, the Big Man took liberties with it as might a theatrical celebrity.

This one rehearsed his wife with the assiduity of an animal trainer, bullying her before the whole company until they tittered and then grew silent with sympathy.

The Big Man came into the room noisily. He was always called the Big Man. The name fitted him. He was big in physique and in self-sufficiency. His face still showed signs of exasperation.

"Rotten! Simply rotten!" he threw at her, striding up and down. "Five years of drilling things into you, and you're as dense as when I married you. You queer the business, you slur your lines. You haven't an ounce of the real stuff in you. Don't look at me with that martyred expression! I'd get rid of you if we didn't have to open on New Year's Eve. Now, look here, we'll go through that business in Act II again, right here, now, until you get it right—my way—see? What's the cue? I can't ask you to sacrifice yourself. . . . (He takes her in his arms). Come on!"

The Big Man's temper was smarting under a recent newspaper criticism in which it was suggested that in his next production he should give premier place to his wife. He specially resented the advice, because the writer hinted that the Big Man, dramatically speaking, did not count. "Come on!" he repeated.

"No."

He stared at her. She had never disobeyed him before. It nearly staggered him.

"I'm too tired tonight. Besides, I don't agree that the scene should be played your way. That was not the author's intention."

He took her by the wrist. "By gad, you'll be saying the play was written for you next!"

It had been. The author had seen her on the stage once. He had purposely written his play round her, because her personality had impressed him. The Leading Woman did not know this. Neither did the Big Man.

"You've got to do what I tell you. If you're tired, what about me?"

Rather than argue, she gave in. It wasn't worth it—arguing with a man who could only reason like a woman. The worst of it was, she could see through him now. She knew he was jealous. She knew he took a perverse pleasure in trying to queer her "business." She was perfectly well aware that could he have dispensed with her, he would have done so; only box-office receipts had been so good since he had starred her. After he had gone, the Leading Woman turned the key in the lock. There was always one way by which she could secure oblivion of her mental sufferings. Not by morphia, or drink, but by letters. A score of them, written by her, sealed but not addressed, lay in a locked drawer of her escritoire. She did not even know the man who, in them, she invoked. Her eyes had never seen him. To write thus was one of those queer feminine impulses that women who suffer give way to in order to save their hearts from breaking. They were the only love-letters she had ever written to a man. She took up her pen now, striving for calmness while writing to her Unknown:

"Oh, my dear, I am so terribly sad, and I am so lonely that I feel like a little child crying in the dark. . . . It can't go on. I can't bear it much longer. Sometimes in my agony I have told myself to do as other women do, to be worldly, venal, to laugh and console myself with the first likely man who comes my way. Pride stops me, and my deep regard for you, Unknown. Shall I ever see you? Will you ever become real, my ideal? Shall I never know what love is? For now my heart is virgin.

"Think of it, Half-of-My-Soul, wherever you are! I am a wife. And I have never known what it is to love, except intangibly, as I love you. That is my punishment for having married without reflection. Beloved, I was such a child, and thought nothing mattered except my art.

"Sometimes, when I first began to write to you, Unknown, I used to ask myself what would happen should I ever meet you? I know, as I know still, that I should recognize you, and at once, I used to think of myself as ever bent to the Big Man's will. But I know now that this would not be right. He has so long forfeited my loyalty. All that is best in me belongs to you, whoever and wherever you are. I could not keep away if you needed me. And I am a religious woman.

"All this life I am living is wrong, unnatural. Surely it can't go on. I am twenty-six—oh, dearest, only twenty-six and there is nothing left to me but work. . . . And in work I cannot forget because it is emotional. . . .

"I am going to write a little prayer here. I have prayed it waking and in my dreams. I send it now on the wings of my spirit, this petition of my soul, that somewhere and sometime I may see you, know you, if only once. . . . a face in the crowd."

She was strung up and she covered pages, giving her emotions full play. To a woman of acute sensibility there is something very convincing in the idea of a soulmate. It was that Leading Woman's consolation and her beacon of hope. During the following weeks while the new play



HER EYES TOOK THEIR FILL OF HIM



"YOU'VE GOT TO!"

was being rehearsed she wrote more frequently to the Unknown than she ever had before. Her need was greater.

The Big Man's professional jealousy had overrun his discretion and his business instinct. As the first night approached, reckless of consequences, he deliberately sliced and cut her part except where it fed his own. The Leading Woman said nothing. She knew it would be useless.

Quite at the last moment, too, the Big Man made a vital alteration in the principal scene of the second act, delaying her entrance so that he might have the stage to himself as long as possible. It was an error of judgment which even vanity did not excuse; and in the sense that it maimed the play and injured the actress, it was a crime.

The Leading Woman knew the play was a good play, and that there was one way to save it. The remedy lay with her. If, instead of acquiescing in her belated appearance in the second act she came in as arranged in the author's script, the Big Man would have no alternative but to go on with the action as it had been written. Should she do it? All she knew on the opening night was that she could pull the play out of the fire if she dared.

Before the first act was over any help of hers seemed hopeless. It hung fire, was received with comparative silence. When the curtain fell she had ten minutes in which to make up her mind whether or not to take the step she contemplated. She stood on the stage, looking at the house through a peep-hole in the proscenium.

Right in the center of the front row of stalls the seated figure of a man enchaind her gaze. It seemed as if he returned it, for his eyes were fixed on the precise spot from which she regarded him. She went hot and then cold; for she knew beyond a shadow of doubt, as women do sense such things, that the man in front was he whom she had called her Unknown; for whom she had kept her heart empty all the lean years of her married life.

She went quickly back to her dressing-room. Not only for the author's sake, but for her own; her mind was made up to revert to the earlier entrance and risk everything, including the Big Man's displeasure. She was going to act for the man in front, to forget that she was the wife as well as the victim and chattel of the Big Man.

She dressed feverishly. Then she sent for the stage-manager.

"I'm going to take my original cue in the second act," she told him. "It's my responsibility, of course. I'm going to play my part as the author wrote it. I shall speak my original lines, and those engaged in the scene will ignore the cuts made yesterday. Will you please tell them to be prepared? The prompter as well."

The stage-manager had always considered the Leading Woman a pliable, weak creature. The inexplicable change in her left him so amazed that he had no word to say. She passed him on her way to the stage, stood behind the center entrance for her cue. . . . and took it.

The Big Man gasped and forgot his part, which was nothing new. Beneath the artificial color his face was livid with rage. The house applauded as the Leading Woman took the stage. Under cover of the noise, he jerked out:

"What the devil are you up to? By thunder, I'll make you pay for this."

She was smiling, looking into the black void of the house. Her lips moved, answering him: "Yes, afterwards. . . . I don't mind paying then."

From that moment she took the play into her hands and made it what it was meant to be. The members of the company, inspired by her revolt, and latent dislike of the Big Man, supported her loyally. With the vigor of the big scene restored to it the play took on a new and convincing aspect. Even the impotence of the Big Man could not arrest it progress. The inspiration of the Leading Woman carried it on the flood tide to success. The emasculated first act was forgotten. Finally, the curtain descended on a play made.

At the end, the call for the author grew vehement. They called for the Leading Woman again, and she, coming forward, bowed. . . . to the Man in Front. . . . and then she trembled and grew weak, because he looked straight back at her and smiled. The Big Man made her pay when they got home that night. Exactly how does not matter. This is a civilized world, but the veneer of civilization lies very thin on natures such as his.

She sat up all night writing to the Unknown whom she had seen at last. Bodily pain and mental anguish were forgotten in the ecstasy that drove her pen over the paper.

"I have seen you! I knew you! My heart has shaken hands with you. . . . and oh! if you would call to me, how gladly would I come."

The next evening she pleaded she was too ill to play. She really was. But the Big Man laughed. She had reverted to the original script. She would play it so every night. . . . and pay for it after.

The Man in Front was there.

He was there the next night.

And each night the Big Man made her pay so terribly that the last shred of her allegiance to him slipped from her.

On the third night, at the end of the performance, as she was preparing to go home, the telephone bell in her dressing-room rang. She picked up the receiver.

"Yes? . . . I'm the leading woman. . . . To whom am I speaking?"

"The author of the piece," was the answer she received promptly.

She grew faint at the sound of the voice.

"I want to thank you for what you have done for my play. The papers are full of you. I wasn't able to be present, although seats were sent. I was there in spirit, I think. . . . It meant so much to me."

A voice within her asked a question. "What seat—did they give you?"

"The middle of the front row of the stalls. Number ten."

Her voice grew staccato. "You weren't there? You sent no substitute?"

"No. I can't even drive round and thank you. The doctor won't let me out."

Words dried in her throat. She got them out harshly.

"Shall I come to you? . . . The address? When will I? Now!"

Before she left the theater, she questioned the man in the box office.

"Number ten, front row of the stalls. Who had it?"

"Nobody, madame. It was reserved for the author."

"Did you let anybody else have it in his absence?"

"No, madame. It has been empty each night."

The cab stopped at the hotel. She got out. The elevator took her to an upper floor. At the door to a room she dismissed the bellboy.

Alone in the long corridor she paused for a moment, her knuckles poised over the door panel. What was the opening of that door going to mean to her. . . . the shutting of another? She knocked softly. There was no answer. She went in, closing the door quietly behind her, her eyes going instantly to the still figure in the arm-chair.

It was the man she had seen in the theater—in the seat that had been empty all along. Waiting for her, convalescent after a long illness, he had fallen asleep.

Standing there, her eyes took their fill of him. Her senses swam with the joy of looking upon him while he was unconscious of her presence. Her eyes loved him.

The room was untidy, inhospitable as a hotel apartment always is. It needed a woman's touch. There was a writing-table by his side with papers on it and a woman's photograph. . . . hers!

The grate was full of ashes, the fire low. Silently she stepped across the room and knelt by the grate.

The man, roused out of a fitful slumber, awoke to see the woman tending up his hearth.

And thus, early in the year, a new happiness was dawning.

LATE MARKET REPORTS

Denver Newspaper Union News Service.

DENVER LIVESTOCK.

Prices on all divisions of the Denver livestock market show little change. The cattle market shows little improvement over the lifeless condition which has prevailed. The hog market has been active under a keen competition among buyers. Prices on hogs generally were called steady to strong, while pigs sold on a slightly higher basis in some instances. Trading on the sheep market has been reduced to a minimum. Feeding stuffs are in demand, while fat stock has been scarce.

Cattle—Fair supplies of beef stock have been received on this market. Buyers were on the lookout for choice beef cattle and a fair trade on this class of stock has been registered. Country buyers were inclined to be slow about taking hold of the offering of feeders and stockers. Trade on this division was inclined to be drab. One load of choice beef steers topped the market at \$9, while good stock was quoted at \$5.50 to \$7.75. Medium to fair steers sold at \$7 to \$8. Good killing cows sold up to \$6.25. Fair cows sold at \$5 to \$5.75, with more common grades at \$4.25. Heifers sold up to \$6.50. Best feeding steers were quoted up to \$7.50, with more common grades selling at \$6.75 and down.

Hogs—An active market prevailed on this division. Prices generally were called steady to strong. A top of \$9.25 was reached on a small lot of choice hogs, while the carload top was reached at \$9.15. The bulk of the offering found an outlet at \$8.60 to \$9. Pigs were in good demand. One string of choice stock brought a top of \$9, with good stock bringing up to \$8.75. Fair to medium pigs were quoted at \$8 to \$8.50.

Sheep—Buyers were of the opinion that choice fat lambs would bring up to \$8.75, while something fancy would bring up to \$9. Medium to fair fat lambs were quoted at \$8.25 and down. Best feeding lambs were quoted up to \$8.75 and \$9, with good stock around \$8.50. Medium to fair feeders range at around \$7.50 to \$8. A fairly active trade on ewes has been recorded. Best fat ewes were quoted up to \$3.50 and \$3.75, with fair sorts at \$3 and down. Feeding ewes were quoted up to \$4.

HAY AND GRAIN.

(Buying price (bulk) Carlsons, F. O. B. Denver.)

Corn, No. 2 yellow	1.85
Corn, No. 3 mixed	1.80
Oats, per cwt.	1.80
Barley, per cwt.	1.60

Timothy, No. 1, ton	25.00
Timothy, No. 2, ton	23.00
South Park, No. 2, ton	23.00
South Park, No. 3, ton	22.00
Alfalfa, ton	17.00
Second Bottom, No. 1, ton	16.50
Second Bottom, No. 2, ton	16.50
Straw	8.00

Dressed Poultry.

The following prices on dressed poultry are net F. O. B. Denver.

Turkeys, No. 1, lb.	43
Turkeys, old toms.	38
Hens, lb.	27
Ducks, young	27
Geese	27
Roosters	18

Live Poultry.

Turkeys, 10 lbs. or over	36
Hens, small, lb.	16
Hens, good, 3 1/2 lb. and over	20
Ducklings	25
Goslings	25
Broilers	25
Springs	22
Cocks	13

Eggs.

Eggs, strictly fresh, case	17.50@18.00
Loss of, per doz.	75¢@80

Butter.

Creamery, first grade	50
Creamery, second grade	45
Process butter	42
Packing stock	25 @ 28

Vegetables.

Beans, navy, cwt.	8.50@9.00
Beans, Pinto, cwt.	6.00@6.75
Beans, green, lb.	30@32
Beans, wax, lb.	30@32
Beets, Colo., doz. bunches	40@45
Beets, cwt.	2.00@2.50
Cabbage, Colo., cwt.	1.00@1.25
Carrots, cwt.	2.00@2.25
H. H. cucumbers, doz.	2.50
Celery, Colorado	50@1.25
Leaf lettuce, h. b. doz.	30@40
Lettuce, head, doz.	30@40
Onions, Colo., cwt.	1.50@2.00
Peppers, new	15@17
Potatoes	2.00@2.25
Radishes, long, h. b.	30@40
Radishes, round, h. b.	30@40
Furnips, cwt.	2.25@2.50

GOVERNMENT MARKET REPORTS.

Washington, D. C.—Live Stock and Meats—Chicago hog prices established a new low record, averaging \$8.97 being reached. A slight reaction followed with a gain of about 20c, but the week closed with prices generally 60c lower. Other declines were: Beef steers, 50c@1.00; butcher stock, 75c@1.50; canner, 50c; calves, 50c@1.00; feeders, 50c; fat lambs, \$7.50@12.50; yearlings, \$1.75; feeding lambs, \$1.00@1.25; fat sheep, 75c@1.25. December 17, Chicago prices: Medium and good beef steers, \$7.50@12.50; butcher cows and heifers, \$4.15@10.25; calves, light and medium weight, \$3.00@10.00; feeder steers, \$2.20@10.00; fat lambs, \$8.75@10.75; yearlings, \$6.00@8.00; best ewes, \$3.00@4.50; feeding lambs, \$8.50@10. In the eastern wholesale dressed meat trade, price declines were general under slow demand. Beef declined unevenly, \$1.00@5.00, better grades breaking modestly. Veal trade uneven and prices fluctuating, declining \$3.00 in some markets. Lambs down \$1.00@2.00; mutton barely steady to \$1.00 lower; pork, unskinned, December 17, wholesale prices, good grade meats, eastern markets: Beef, \$15.00@19.00; veal, \$16.00@20.00; lamb, \$23.00@25.00; mutton, \$11.00@16.00; light pork loins, \$19.00@22.00; heavy loins, \$17.00@18.50.

Grain—The outstanding features of the week's grain markets have been heavy exports sale of wheat and great difficulty in securing cash wheat to fill oil sales. Great Britain bought in the United States 1,500,000 bushels of wheat; Italy bought 1,200,000 bushels; Spain, 250,000 bushels. Argentine exports fine crop prospects with yields running above expectation. There has been a heavy and general buying movement of futures including wheat, corn and oats. Heavy export business in wheat continued; corn also bought by exporters. Stronger demand for cash wheat in southwest. All old export sales and much wheat going direct from country stations to Gulf ports. Omaha reported exports totaling \$10 over Chicago March for wheat up to middle of January. Exporters have also bought large quantities of rye during the week. Flour trade continues dull; stocks low; estimated at half of volume of year ago. For the week Chicago March wheat advanced 1/2c to \$1.63 1/2; May corn up 1/4c to 7 1/2c; Minneapolis March wheat up 5c to \$1.60; Kansas City up 4c to \$1.54 1/2; Winnipeg May up 4c to \$1.76 1/2; Chicago December wheat, \$1.69 1/2; May wheat, \$1.59; December corn, 6c.

Feed—Market inactive. Production Minneapolis mills approximating only half normal. Buying is for immediate needs only. Dealers' stocks generally light. Springs, Quoted: Minneapolis, \$26.00; Chicago, \$29.50; New York, \$36.00; middlings \$2.00 lower. Lined meal demand slightly improved. Quoted: Cincinnati, \$45.00; New York, \$45.00; Minneapolis, \$40.00; Chicago, \$41.00. Cottonseed meal 3/4 per cent—Atlanta, \$33.00; Chicago, \$34.50; New York City, \$37.00. No. 1 alfalfa—Kansas City, \$26.00. Hominy prices easier. Chicago quoted white hominy, \$35.00.

Hay—Markets continue weak; demand very limited; shipments light. Prices have declined \$1.00@3.00 the past week. Alfalfa showing greatest weakness. Quoted: No. 1 Timothy, New York, \$38.50; Chicago, \$28.00; Cin-

IMPROVED UNIFORM INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

(By REV. P. B. FITZWATER, D. D., Teacher of English Bible in the Moody Bible Institute of Chicago.)

LESSON FOR DECEMBER 26

JESUS FEEDS THE MULTITUDE.

GOLDEN TEXT—Matt. 14:13-21. GIVE YE THEM TO EAT.—Matt. 14:18.

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL—Matt. 15:32; Mark 8:34-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-13.

PRIMARY TOPIC—Jesus Feeds Many Hungry People.

JUNIOR TOPIC—Jesus Feeding the Five Thousand.

INTERMEDIATE AND SENIOR TOPIC—Helping to Feed the Hungry.

YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULT TOPIC—The Ministry of Jesus to the Multitude.

Since we took the "Birth of Jesus" for our Christmas lesson last Sunday, let us now study the alternate lesson for last Sunday instead of the review.

I. Jesus Healing the Multitude (vv. 13, 14).

1. Jesus retired to the desert (v. 13). The news of the cruel death of John the Baptist brought grief to the Master's heart, and He withdrew to a place of quietness to commune with the Father. The very best thing for us to do in time of sorrow is to flee into the presence of God. Jesus accepted John's death as typical of what they would do to Him.

2. Followed by the people (v. 13). He could not be hid. Their interest in Him was so great that they followed him on foot. Where Jesus really is the multitude will gather.

3. Jesus healing the sick (v. 14). Although the rulers had broken with Him, He did not abandon His work but continued to preach and to work for the good of those who would hear. The multitudes broke in upon Him and disturbed His quiet hour with God, but the great heart of the King was moved with compassion as He beheld the suffering multitudes—sick, lame, blind and palsied. Though the people brought their desperate, hopeless cases to Him there was nothing too hard for Him. The sight of the multitude as sheep without a shepherd moved Him to pity.

II. Jesus Feeding the Hungry Multitude (vv. 15-21).

According to the connection in John 6:1-14 the real purpose of this miracle was to show himself as the Bread of Eternal Life sent down from heaven.

1. Jesus' conference with the disciples (vv. 15-18). (1) The disciples' request (v. 15). They asked that the multitude be sent away. They knew that they were in a desert place, therefore prudence would indicate that they would go to the village to buy victuals, (2) Jesus' command (v. 16). "Give ye them to eat." Such a command would have been utter foolishness had He not possessed the power to create the supply; but always with the command of Jesus goes the power to do. (3) The disciples' perplexity (v. 17). They said "We have but five loaves and two fishes." They were counting on their meager resources, leaving Christ out. To be face to face with the humanly impossible is a threefold benefit (a) To make us feel our dependence upon Christ; (b) to drive us to Him for His help in our need; (c) to lead us to give the glory to Him for results.

2. Jesus' method in feeding the multitude (vv. 18-21). (1) The Lord's part. He created the provisions. He is able to create that which will meet the needs of the hungry multitude. (2) The people's part. They were to sit and eat. They were not responsible for the creation of the supply nor its distribution, but they were responsible for obedience. (3) The disciples' part. This was to take that which the Master had blessed and distribute it. We are laborers together with God. God has made us partners in the salvation of the world.

III. Jesus Alone in the Mountains Praying (vv. 22, 23).

1. He induced the disciples to get into the ship (v. 22). The reason for this was that He desired to keep them from being mixed up with the crowd, for they desired to force him to be king.

2. Multitudes were dismissed (v. 23). This was to prevent the multitude from trying to force Him to be king. When they saw His wonderful ability to feed the hungry multitude they desired to have such a man made king.

3. Praying alone (v. 23). He doubtless was praying for the disciples. He knew what trials they would have to undergo. Having been induced by Him to enter the ship and being overtaken by the storm, they were doubtless tempted to think that a mistake had been made; but we should learn that the way which the Lord would have us go is not always without its storms.

Symbol of Divine Spirit.

In Scripture the dew is used as a symbol of the Divine Spirit and His quickening and refreshing influence as He works on the otherwise arid and barren lives and hearts of men. It is the living Lord Himself who here speaks: "I will be as the dew unto Israel." I will come to the barren and fruitful Israel, and affect him as does the dew when it falls on the parched and profligate earth in the rainless, scorching days of summer, and transform deadness into life and beauty.