

been the board of county commissioners the "consistent-church-member poor commissioner" would have been promptly told to "get out and go to work" at something heaven meant him to do—if heaven took any note of him at all; but in Kansas men with Lena-Graham hearts are seldom chosen county commissioners. "My dear sir, were we to treat the poor sympathetically, or even civilly, we would be overrun—they'd swamp the treasury. We've got to have a man for poor commissioner that will talk rough to these paupers. Taxes are high enough as it is." Such is the logic of the average county commissioner. It was not Lena Graham's logic. After a whispered consultation with her aunt, and having obtained more specific information as to the family's residence, she immediately left the meeting, and, utterly regardless of the beneficent teachings of political economy and the oracular wisdom of county officialdom, went her unscientific way to "pauperize" these suffering people by extending to them Christian charity. She visited the afflicted household, and going out to the nearest grocery, hurried the deliveryman around with food in such quantities that the poor woman said, as her tears flowed, that the house "looked like a wholesale grocery." Returning to the little house she went about putting it in order, and then held the baby while the wife prepared supper, for she had tasted no food that day, and no sufficient food for weeks, and gave the sick man some of the delicacies Lena had brought to tempt his palate. By this time it was getting dark, and the general manager's daughter, carefully concealing her identity lest it might arouse prejudice, was about to depart, all aglow with the glorious feeling which comes of doing good, when the poor woman she had so generously befriended, embracing her in impulsive gratitude, said:

"God bless you, dear! We have suffered more than I can tell, and you and a workingman as poor as ourselves almost, are the only people with hearts we have seen. Mr. Cotterell has paid our rent, or we would have been in the street. He has given us money to buy medicines, too, and I have had to pretend we had plenty to eat when we were starving or he would have made us take his last cent. And I have found out he walks to and from the shops so as to save car fare—and think of his helping us! He has a father to help, too. God bless you, dear! There are some angels yet, heaven be praised!"

The tears came to Lena's eyes, but they were not tears of sorrow. Already her benevolence had been rewarded of heaven through this poor woman's words.

"Where does this Mr. Cotterell live?" she asked.

"He boards at the 'Cottage,'" said the woman; and further inquiry elicited more definite information as to the location of that public institution.

Promising to return on the morrow, Lena hastened to the point some blocks distant where she could catch a car, and happened to take one filled with men going home from the shops. As the car got further up town, one shop man said to another near Lena:

"John Cotterell is going to kill himself walking away up town that way after working hard all day. He oughtn't to do it, even to save his daddy's farm. See yonder how tired he looks. He can hardly drag one foot after t'other."

Lena looked out the window, and at the next crossing she got out, went to the sidewalk and waited for John, who, with his head down in a brown study, as had been usual with him of late, did not see her till they were face to face, and her voice had roused him from his reverie. It was the corner where he usually turned into an almost deserted side street which led to his boarding house some blocks away. He was astonished and confused, and feared he might be dreaming, as he wiped his blackened fingers on his coat and made arrangements to clasp the gloved hand extended him. She joined him and walked along with him as she talked, John carrying his tin dinner pail on the side opposite Lena and trying to keep it out of sight; but, of course, that was the time for the lid to fall off and make him go after it into the gutter.

"Mr. Cotterell," said she, "I heard one of the men on the car say you are killing yourself walking home after

working hard all day, and you look as if you were. Don't wear yourself out this way. Excuse me for my impertinence, but it pains me to see you look so worn and weary."

"Oh, I'm not tired," said John, trying to brace up and look spry. "I'm not tired."

Would you have had him confess it in such a presence? Then you have never loved a pretty girl and you have much to learn.

"Were you on that car that just went up?" he asked, much as he might have inquired if she had been to the moon.

"Yes, and when one of the men said that, I looked out and saw you. Why do you walk?"

John was silent from embarrassment, and she continued:

"The men on the car said you walk to save money for your father. But that isn't so. I have found you out in your sins, Mr. Cotterell, so you had as well confess. You are saving money for somebody else in Graham."

John was astonished. Did she think he was saving up nickels in order to marry some woman? Her remark, much more her manner, puzzled him. He waited for her to continue.

"I know all about it. You are walking because you have been paying a poor sick man's rent. Confess it."

"Who told you that, Miss Graham? I hope no one on the car said anything like that." And poor John was as much troubled as the criminal who fears his wickedness has become public knowledge.

"No, Mr. Cotterell, your secret is unknown to the world. The sick man's wife herself told me about your goodness to them, and about your walking, too, in order to save and help others. She told it to me while tears of gratitude were in her eyes, poor woman!"

"How long have you known these folks?"

"Oh—two or three hours."

"Where'd you see them?"

"Pray, where could I have seen them but in their own house? The poor man is down ill and his wife cannot leave him."

"Miss Graham, you've convicted yourself of the same crime, for they wouldn't have been talking so freely unless you had got their confidence." And he laughed as does the policeman who has "got the deadwood" on some poor wretch and gleefully sees a prison yawning for him in the distance. "But—how are they fixed? She's kept telling me they've plenty to eat and keep 'em warm, but I'm almost sure they're starving. Did you find out?"

"They had nothing whatever in the house to eat, but they have plenty now. I left the wife at a good supper and even the sick husband was able to eat some fruit."

"Miss Graham, you're an angel!" exclaimed the blacksmith impulsively. "I didn't believe there could be such a young woman among your class of people."

"And what have I done but spend a little of the money which my class has taken from yours? You see I have profited by your lecture. Compare what I did with your noble self-sacrifice! I gave of an abundance which will be made up to me again without privation or effort on my part, while you gave outright what you have worked so hard for. And, then, see how you are walking after your hard day's labor! If you call me an angel, Mr. Cotterell, you must confess yourself a god."

"Why, what would you have a man do? Let people suffer and not try to help 'em? I couldn't act like that, Miss Graham. It's not in me to do that."

"I would have you do the noble thing you have been doing—only you ought not to walk. That is going too far. Think how few men are like you—if any are; and if you ruin your health you will be unable to do anybody good. Don't walk any more. Please don't. Won't you promise me that?"

"I'd promise you to die if you'd ask me, Miss Graham," said John emphatically.

"No, I don't want you to die. I want you to live and do good. Promise me you won't walk any more. Do, please!"

"It's foolish in a man," said John in a trembling voice as he drew his coat sleeve across his eyes, "but it breaks me all up—your kindness to those poor people."

"No, it is not foolish in a man to

have tender feelings. You know 'the bravest are the tenderest.' But, you will ride hereafter?"

"Yes, I'll not walk any more. But how'll you know? You're not likely to see me again."

"Why? You're not going to leave Graham?"

"No, but you will not likely be down this way."

"By the way, Mr. Cotterell," said Lena, seeming not to have heard his last remark. "I want you to promise me another thing. Promise me that, while I remain in Graham, you will allow me to take care of that family without any interference on your part. Promise me that you will not give a cent while I am here. If you do not leave them entirely to me you will deprive me of a great pleasure. I am going down there to-morrow evening to remain for supper, and I shall make them promise to drive you away if you attempt to help them—unless you promise me now you won't try to."

"I wouldn't want you to say anything to them. I'll agree. I'd like to drop in on 'em, though, since you've been there, and see how everything looks."

"I shall be there till 8 o'clock to-morrow evening. We shall dine—as soon as you arrive. But I must be going. Good-bye." And she was gone.

John's step was wonderfully light as he trudged on to his boarding house, thinking of to-morrow's supper; and his fellow boarders noticed that he was gayer that evening than he had been for days before.

In all probability, every one of my readers, of whatever social condition, and however liberal in opinions, will have felt an impropriety in Lena's conduct on this occasion. Not because her conduct itself was improper, for had she been a washer-woman's daughter or a "hired girl," no such feeling of impropriety would arise. Not because of John's moral or mental character, for had he been a mediocre and ignorant, spindle-shanked little society young man, or a fashionable young libertine, whose beastly nature a pure thought about women would shun as an angel would shun hades, would anyone have thought it improper for Lena Graham to walk with him a block? Nor does the notion of impropriety arise out of any difference in nature, however differently the two had been reared; for let John inherit a fortune and put on fashionable garments, or let Lena become poor and work for wages, and the impropriety would instantly disappear. The reader knows well enough out of what difference between John and Lena arises this feeling of incongruity—the difference between one having the entree of fashionable society and one doomed to manual or menial work for a living. All, even the poor themselves, have been educated to regard the fashionably idle and the usefully employed as distinct orders of beings between whom social intercourse is a thing forever impossible.

Once mankind were all masters or slaves; later, they were nobles or serfs. The nobles and their ladies shone at their sovereign's court, and each castle in time had a court of its own. These lords and ladies, and such others as they admitted to the charmed court circles, looked with disdain upon the toiling churls below. Last century wealth began to imitate the aristocracy, and the rich began to have their courts of money as their social superiors had courts of birth; they gave parties and balls, held receptions, visited in summer the seaside resorts, attended the opera, traveled in style, and sent their sons to the universities. This new "society" was made possible by the change of serfs into wage-workers in factories and in mines; and these new lords and ladies of the court of Midas looked with disdain upon the toiling masses below. Since then, class after class has imitated the very rich, till salaried clerks of varying grades have their court circles whose members look down upon wage-workers; the wage-workers who get \$4 a day, and the ladies of these aristocrats of toil, look down upon those guilty of getting only \$1.50; while all alike look down upon the unskilled laborer and the hired girl. Each circle fans the hope of sometime penetrating the next above, and, hence, each "lady" of whatsoever grade, avoids being "seen with" people beneath her lest those above her



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should frown disapproval. Fashionable society to-day in America is but the base counterfeit of the court circles of mediæval kings and nobles, and it nurses the same contempt for the wretches known to be guilty of the wickedness of honest work. In Kansas, at least, this one sentiment of contempt for manual labor is, aside from finer clothes, the one distinguishing characteristic of the "best society." Not intellectual gifts, not mental culture, not good breeding, not moral nobility is required as a condition of social status, for the reverse of each of these qualities is often enough conspicuous in the charmed circles of fashion. On the other hand, no power of mind, no refinement of manner, no degree of moral beauty, can gain for its possession admission to invitation lists if he or she be guilty of manual labor.

The members of each of the various social circles, being constantly yearning for admission into the more exclusive circle above, are all alike moral cowards—slaves to the requirements of uncertain social position; and so they are all constantly "cutting" all in the circles beneath, while, by means of "teas," "high-fives," "progressive euchres," etc., indulging in ostentatious display, with the hope of gaining favor in the eyes of those above. No man, no woman, in this contemptible, trifling society at all, no matter what the grade, dares have any opinions out of harmony with those entertained, or at least professed, by the particular "set." As each subordinate grade takes its cue from the higher grades, it is obvious that the priests and priestesses of wealth nearest Mammon's altar give the law to society throughout all its circles, and control its opinions absolutely on all theological, moral and political subjects whatsoever. This is the formidable barrier over which progress must make way; this the massive door against which the unhappy reformer must beat in almost desponding impotence his honest breast. It is an historic fact that, without a single exception, every reformer who has arisen in any age has been ostracized and executed by the "society" of his time; for society seeks to prevent change—its ideal is ossified mediocrity. Whoso would be free—whoso would be a man or a woman, cherishing a noble ideal

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