

congratulations upon your appearance this afternoon, and also to tell you that the Committee have appointed you to address the Assembly on Home Mission night."

"Hooray!" cried Brown. "Your Committee, Doctor, is composed of men who evidently know a good thing when they see it."

"Sometimes, Mr. Brown, sometimes," said the Superintendent, shrewdly.

But Shock refused utterly and absolutely.

"I am no speaker," he said. "I am a failure as a speaker."

"Well, Mr. Macgregor, I will not take your refusal to-night. It is the Committee's request, and you ought to hesitate before refusing it."

"A man can do no more than his best," said Shock, "and I know I cannot speak."

"Well, think it over," said the Superintendent, preparing to go.

"Oh, sit down, sit down," cried Brown. "You must want to have a talk with Shock here, and I want to hear all about this afternoon."

"Well," said the Superintendent, seating himself, "it is not often I have a chance to talk with a Prospector, so I will accept your invitation." And by the time the talk was done it was too late for Shock to think of visiting his home, and Brown went asleep with the happy expectation of what he called the "kick-off" next day.

THE WAITING GAME

BROWN was early astir. He knew that he could not keep Shock so fully employed as to prevent his going home long before ten o'clock, and it was part of his plan that Shock's first meeting with Helen should take place in his own mother's house.

"The first thing we must do," he announced, "is to see a tailor. If you are going to address the General Assembly you have got to get proper togs. And anyway, you may as well get a suit before you go West again. I know a splendid tailor—cheap, too."

"Well, he will need to be cheap," said Shock, "for I cannot afford much for clothes."

"Well, I will see about that," said Brown. So he did, for after some private conversation with the tailor, the prices quoted to Shock were quite within even his small means.

It was half-past nine before they reached Shock's home. Brown took the key out of his pocket, opened the door, and allowed Shock to enter, waiting outside for a few moments.

When he followed Shock in he found him still standing in the centre of the little room, looking about

upon the familiar surroundings, the articles of furniture, the pictures on the wall, his mother's chair beside the table, with her Bible and glasses at hand.

As Brown came in Shock turned to him and said, "Is this some more of your kindness, Brown? Have you taken this care of everything?"

"No," said Brown, "that is not my work. Every week since the house was closed Helen has come over and kept things right."

Without any reply Shock passed into his mother's room, leaving Brown alone.

When half an hour had passed, Brown, glancing out of the window, saw Helen approaching.

"Thank goodness!" he exclaimed, "here she is at last."

He opened the door for her.

"Oh, good morning," she exclaimed in surprise. "I am sure this is very kind of you."

"Yes, I thought I would help," said Brown in a loud voice. "You see, Shock was anxious to come, and I thought I would come up with him. He is in the next room. He will be out in a minute. We were coming up last night, but could not get away. The Superintendent dropped in, and we talked till it was too late." Brown kept the stream of his remarks flowing as if he feared a pause.

Helen laid the bunch of flowers she was carrying in her hand upon the table.

"Oh, Brown," she exclaimed, "how could you! This is very unkind." She turned to go.

"Hold on," said Brown in a loud voice. "Shock will be here in a minute. He'll be sorry to miss you, I am sure."

For a moment Helen stood irresolute, when the door opened and Shock, pale, but quiet and self-controlled, appeared. He had just been face to face for the first time with his great grief. The thought that filled his mind, overwhelming all others, was that his mother had passed forever beyond the touch of his hand and the sound of his voice. Never till that moment had he taken in the full meaning of the change that had come to his life.

During the minutes he had spent in his mother's room he had allowed his mind to go back over the long years so full of fond memory, and then he had faced the future. Alone henceforth he must go down the long trail. By his mother's bed he had knelt, and had consecrated himself again to the life she had taught him to regard as worthy, and with the resolve in his heart to seek to be the man she would desire him to be and had expected him to be, he rose from his knees.

When he opened the door the dignity of his great grief and of a lofty purpose was upon him, and he greeted Helen unembarrassed and with a serene consciousness of self-mastery.

"I am glad to see you, Miss Fairbanks," he said, taking her hand. "I am glad that we meet here, for it was here, in this house, that you gave such loving and tender care to my dear mother. However long I may live, whatever may come to me, I shall never for-

get what you did for her through all the year, and at the last."

His quiet dignity restored to Helen her self-possession.

"I did all I could for her. I was glad to do it, because I loved her. But she did more for me than ever I could have done for her. Her last illness was very brief, and her death was full of peace."

"Tell me," said Shock, placing a chair for her. "I want to know all."

With gentle, sweet sympathy the story was told in all its beautiful details, till the very end. Instinctively Helen seemed to know the points that Shock would desire to hear, and he listened to her with his heart shining through his eyes.

"Thank you, thank you," he said. "Never can I thank you enough for all that you have done. And you, too, have had your great sorrow. Brown told me about it all."

At this Brown rose hastily, and looking out of the window, exclaimed, "I say, there's Boyle. Wait for me."

"Yes," said Helen, when Brown had gone, "it was a terrible grief, and mother has never recovered from it, nor will she. Betty was the life of our house. She was so bright."

"Oh, bright, indeed. How well I remember her brightness that night in your home."

"I remember," said Helen. "And Mr. Balfour," she continued, "The Don. He has been with you?"

"Yes, indeed, poor chap. And nobly he has done," and Shock told of The Don and of his work in the Pass.

"How good you have been," exclaimed Helen, "and how much you have done. I am so thankful, and so proud. We are all so proud of you."

"No," said Shock gravely, "that is not the word, Miss Fairbanks. There is no room for pride."

"Well, we think so," replied Helen. "You will come to see us? Mother will be so glad."

Helen was wondering at her own calmness. She could hardly make herself believe that she was talking to Shock, and so quietly, in this room where so short a time ago he had held her in his arms.

"I do not know," replied Shock. "It may be as well not to—not to see much—to see you."

Shock became unexpectedly conscious of their previous relations. The memory of that scene in which they had been the chief actors came vividly before him. For weeks he had dreaded this interview, and now it was almost over. He felt like a man who, in the hour of victory, is unexpectedly threatened with defeat. Well, sooner or later he must speak his mind plainly; there would never be a better chance than now, and though he wished he could get back that perfect self-mastery of the past few minutes, he resolved to go through with it now. He took hold of himself with a stern grip.

Helen saw it in his face. A great fear seized her. She started up.

"Oh, I must run!" she exclaimed. "You will be

sure to come and see us, Mr. Macgregor. Indeed, you must come."

Her manner was light, almost frivolous. Shock felt the change instinctively, read her fear, and decided that the moment for speech had passed.

"Good-by," he said, looking steadily into her eyes. "Good-by. God bless you for your kindness to—to us both."

The little catch in his voice reached the girl's heart, and the tears sprang to her eyes.

"Good-by," she said hurriedly. "Good-by," and was gone.

A little way down the street she met Brown.

"Well?"

"Well, it is all over. I am thankful, too. Yes, so thankful."

"Well, I'll be—" Brown left his sentence unfinished and turned away from her impatiently.

He found Shock still sitting at the table, unspeakable misery showing in his eyes.

"Well, old chap," Brown said kindly, putting his hand upon his friend's shoulder.

"That is over, thank God!" said Shock. "I was afraid of it, but it is over now."

"It is, eh?" said Brown crossly. "Well, let's go. You're two of a kind. Come on. You'll have to get at your speech now."

"My speech?" said Shock, rising wearily. "No speech for me."

"I tell you what, Shock," said Brown, with a touch of impatience, "you think too much of yourself."

"Do I, Brown? Well, perhaps so," said Shock, humbly.

"Oh, confound your old carcass!" cried Brown, throwing his arm round Shock's neck. "You'll be my death yet. At the same time, you ought to speak, and I believe you will. If I know your conscience it won't let you rest."

It turned out that Brown was right, for when the Superintendent wrote a note to Shock asking him formally on behalf of the Committee to address the Assembly on Home Mission night, the last sentence in his letter determined Shock to accept.

"I know what this will cost you," the Superintendent wrote, "but the cause is not yours nor mine. It is His. And for His sake I believe you will do this."

"I knew you would, old chap," said Brown exultantly. "If a fellow could get the combination of your conscience he could do what he liked with you."

"Well, I suppose if they wish me to make an exhibition of myself I should not refuse, and after all, what matter how I speak? I will fail, I know, but I will do my best."

"Never a fail," cried Brown. "Don't preach at them. Tell them yarns. That's what your chief does. Now you hear me."

This proved to be good advice, for when the chairman introduced Shock as the Prospector from Loon Lake, Shock simply began, as Brown said, to "yarn."

"That is what Perault and Ike called me," were his first words, and from that moment till the close of his speech he had his audience leaning forward and

listening with ears and eyes and heart. He made no attempt at fine speaking, but simply told them of his friends in the West, of the men he had come to love as brothers, and who had come to love him.

As they came down the steps of the Park Church, where the meeting was held, Brown could hardly keep pace with Helen as she danced along beside him.

"Oh, wasn't he splendid!" she cried, "wasn't he splendid!"

"Splendid?" said Brown. "There's not a word big enough left."

"Oh, I am so happy," sang Helen.

"Why, what's the matter with you?" cried Brown.

"Oh, nothing, nothing," and she bubbled over with happy laughter until Brown grew gloomy and cross. But Helen deigned him no further explanation of her overflowing joy, and left him, still sullen and somewhat indignant, at her door.

Her radiant face caught her mother's eye as she entered the room.

"Well, my child, you are looking very happy. I have not seen you look so bright for months. You are very beautiful, my daughter," said her mother, putting her arm around her daughter as Helen stooped to kiss her.

"Oh, mother," cried Helen, "I am very happy."

"Well, darling, it makes me happy to hear you say so. Has—has Mr. Lloyd spoken to you?"

"Mr. Lloyd?" Helen laughed gleefully. "No, mother, he knows better than that. Oh, mother, Shock loves me."

"What! Has he dared to speak—after promising—?"

"No, mother, he has not spoken, not with his lips. But I know it, I know it, and oh, I am so glad."

"What of his plain declaration to me that he had given you up?"

"Oh, I don't care, mother. He has not changed," cried the happy girl. "He loves me just the same as ever."

"And what of the girl Mr. Ambberg told us of?"

"No, mother, there is no other girl," cried Helen. "I don't care who told you."

"Helen, I am ashamed of you," exclaimed her mother, angrily.

"Dear mother," said Helen, falling on her knees and putting her arms about her mother, "I cannot help loving him, and I cannot help being happy. Oh, mother, he is splendid. You ought to have heard him to-night, and you ought to have seen the people. Why, the ministers almost hugged him. And oh, mother, mother, as he came down and passed my seat, he turned and looked at me. He did not expect to see me, and he was off his guard, and then I knew, oh, I knew. He is just the same. Oh, mother, be happy with me."

Her mother burst into tears.

"Oh," she sobbed, "I thought I was to have one child left. I am indeed bereaved."

"Hush, mother," cried Helen. "I will not leave you."

"But you love him?"

"Yes, yes. With all my heart."

"He will not give up his work in that awful country?"

"No," said the girl proudly, "he will not, not even for me. But he will love me always and I will love him, and that is enough just now."

"Helen, listen to me. You will never marry him with my consent," said Mrs. Fairbanks, determinedly.

"And he would never marry me without," replied Helen.

"What, then, is your future to be?"

"Oh, I will stay with you, mother darling."

"And he?" inquired Mrs. Fairbanks.

"He? Oh, I don't know, but he will always love me, mother."

In desperation Mrs. Fairbanks sent next day for Shock. Her one hope lay in his fine sense of honour, and in his generosity.

"Mr. Macgregor," she said, when Shock stood before her, "I want to appeal to your generosity. You will not stand in the way of my daughter's happiness?"

"Mrs. Fairbanks, I thought I had made myself clear. What more can I say or do?"

"She fancies you still love her. Could not you disabuse her of her foolish fancy?"

"Tell her I do not love her?" asked Shock. "That I cannot do. It would be false."

"Oh, Mr. Macgregor," cried Mrs. Fairbanks, weeping, "if you force my child from me I will die."

Shock was greatly disturbed at her tears.

"Mrs. Fairbanks, I could never force your daughter away from you, but I shall always love her. Can I say more?"

"I have told her," said Mrs. Fairbanks between her sobs, "I will never consent to her marriage with you."

Shock's heart gave a leap.

"And what did she say?" he inquired in an unsteady voice.

"She said you would not marry her without my consent."

"And that is true," said Shock.

"And what, then, will you do?" inquired Mrs. Fairbanks.

Shock threw up his head, with joy illumining his face.

"I—we—" changing the pronoun with a sudden ecstasy of rapture, "we can wait."

"And how long, pray?" inquired Mrs. Fairbanks, scornfully.

"How long?" He paused as if pondering the question. "Forever!"

"Shock!"

He turned quickly. There at the door, in all her glorious beauty, her eyes luminous with the light of love, stood Helen.

"Helen!" he cried aloud, in his surprise. "You heard! Can you? Can we?"

With a movement of ineffable grace she was at his side. He put his strong arms about her. She looked into his eyes.

"Yes, Shock, we can wait—now."

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