

Myrtle, to whom the old woman went in final appeal, scoffed at the notion of Larry's attempting to return in the evening.

'He wouldn't be such a fool!' she said conclusively.

'Fool!' cried his grandmother in anguish and exasperation. 'Tis us that knows the bridge is broke, not him. All was safe an' well whin he went over this mornin'. Why wouldn't he be comin' home to-night? He'll start, all in the dark an' the wind, an' he'll drive, an' there'll be no seein' the end, an'—are ye going to do nothin' at all, at all?'

'What could I do?' demanded Myrtle, suddenly, but sufficiently reasonable.

'If it was the man I was goin' to marry,' declared the old woman, with red spots in the wrinkled hollows of her cheeks, and glittering points in her eyes, 'I'd crawl along the broken wood, over the pillars there, till I could reach the boarded part of the bridge. An' then I'd walk an' run, an' run an' walk, till I came to Falmouth Town, and there I'd stand to wait an' warn him!'

'La, Mrs. Doherty, you certainly do make me tired,' retorted Myrtle. 'I ain't so dead set on keepin' a beau as you'd be, if you had one!'

Something in the brutal egotism which she had uncovered silenced Mrs. Doherty. She started and shook her head in dumb incomprehension, then turned and walked back to the cabin. From the height on which it stood she could see the bay, here lashed white, there curving in splendid devouring waves of glistening black.

'Maybe I was meant for the bay, afther all,' she said, as she moved about putting the cabin to rights. Then she went out, a quaint and sturdy figure with her tight, white cap, her short, quilted skirt, and her red shawl crossed on her bosom, and tied at her waist in the back. Down to the place where the bridge had been she trudged. Later, one of the Cape children came home screaming that old Mrs. Doherty was crawling along the girders that remained on the demolished section of the bridge—he had seen her red shawl.

III.

'A nice notion of lovin' you've got,' stormed Myrtle, angry tears in her eyes. 'Throwin' me over for an old woman—an old scarecrow. Some girls wouldn't put up with it! They'd make you suffer, you an' her, too. But I won't. I don't believe I could have brought myself to marry you, any way. Don't talk to me! I don't want to hear any more about the wind an' the blackness an' the water, an' how the voice was like a ghost or a banshee's! She's been savin' your life ever since you were a baby, an' you're goin' to make her happy as long as she lives. Well, she'll live for ever, an' get more an' more unreasonable every minute, an' I hope—'

She broke off. Down the road a cheerful old laugh was sounding in the spring sunshine. Larry turned from her to listen to it, his eyes alight. A mellow old voice spoke:

'Ah, there was small danger afther all, ma'am! Thim that's born for hangin' ye can't drown, ye know! Sure I was safe enough; but Larry—he mightn't have been!'—Exchange.

HER ONE ACCOMPLISHMENT

Old Brown stood in his private office, with his back to the fire and his coat tails balanced in either hand. He was a bald-headed old gentleman with a ruddy complexion, keen black eyes, and leg-of-mutton whiskers, which were white as snow. And Miss Nelly Torrance sat looking at him timidly from the depths of the big armchair in which he had beckoned her to seat herself.

'So you are my Cousin Adrian's daughter?' said he, after a long pause.

'Yes,' said Nelly, wondering what was in all those mysterious tin boxes, and whether the monster iron safe was full of gold and silver pieces.

'And you want something to do?'

'Yes, please.'

'Humph!' said Mr. Brown.

Nelly glanced shyly up into his face.

'But,' she added with some spirit, 'I am not asking for charity. I am willing to work.'

'You mean you would like to daub canvas, or sew yellow sunflowers on green plush screens,' satirically observed the old gentleman. 'I don't call that work.'

'Nor I, either,' retorted Nelly.

'Then what do you mean?' said Mr. Brown.

'I mean that I shall be glad to do any sort of honest work by means of which I can earn my own living.'

'Humph!' again interjected Mr. Brown. 'Can you cook?'

'Yes,' Nelly answered.

'I don't believe it.'

'But I can.'

'Very well,' said Mr. Brown, releasing his coat tails and sitting down at his desk, as if the question was definitely disposed of. 'My cook went away this morning. I haven't engaged anyone in her place. You may come this afternoon and see what you can do for me.'

Mr. Brown fully expected that his young cousin would recoil indignantly from his proposal, but she did nothing of the sort. She simply said, 'Yes, Cousin John,' and asked for his private address.

'Mind you're punctual,' said he, as he handed her the pencilled card.

'I am always punctual,' calmly responded Nelly.

Mr. Brown watched her out of the office with a quizzical twinkle in the corner of his eye.

'She won't come,' he said to himself. 'I've seen the last of my fine relation.'

Nelly Torrance went home to a little second-floor room, the cheapest which the widow and her daughters could find.

Mrs. Adrian Torrance was dressed in black. She was a fair, delicate piece of human china, who had been like the lilies of the field; in that she toiled not neither did she spin. Lucetta, the oldest daughter, was trying, unsuccessfully enough, to trim a black crepe bonnet by the window.

They had come up from the country at Lucetta's suggestion, to appeal, in their poverty, to this rich cousin of the dead father and husband, but none of them anticipated any very satisfactory results from the experiment.

'These rich people are always miserly,' said Miss Lucetta.

'And I've understood,' sighed the gentle little widow, 'that he was not pleased when poor dear Adrian married me.'

'Well?' cried Mrs. Torrance, eagerly, as Nelly entered.

'What does he say?' questioned Lucetta, dropping the folds of crepe which she was vainly endeavoring to fashion into what the fashion-plate called an 'oblong bow.'

'I have seen him,' said Nelly, untying her bonnet strings, 'and I'm going to his house in Grandover Park this afternoon.'

'You don't mean,' cried Mrs. Torrance, with a spasmodic catching of her breath, 'that he is going to adopt you?'

'Not in the least,' said Nelly. 'I am to be his cook.'

'And you?' gasped Mrs. Torrance.

'I said yes, of course.'

'Eleanor,' cried Lucetta, 'I am scandalised by your conduct! Yes, perfectly scandalised! You will do nothing of the sort!'

'Certainly not,' said Mrs. Torrance, developing hysterical symptoms. 'If your cousin Brown intends to insult us—'

'But he doesn't,' pleaded Nelly. 'He intended the offer in good faith, and I accepted it in the same spirit.'

'You surely do not mean to degrade yourself,' cried Lucetta, 'by turning cook—for any man living?'

'I don't see,' argued Nelly, 'that it is any more degrading to cook for Cousin John than it would be to embroider slippers for him, or to read the newspapers aloud to him of an evening.'

'Eleanor never had any proper pride,' said Mrs. Torrance, wringing her hands.

'Never!' echoed Lucetta.

'And,' added Nelly, 'my cousin would have every reason to believe me an impostor if I told him I wanted work and then refused the offer he made.'

It was six o'clock exactly when Mr. Brown let himself into his house with the latchkey which always depended from his watch chain. The gas jet burned softly in the hall; the fire clicked merrily in the grate of the parlor.

'Humph!' he muttered; she hasn't come. Thought so. There's no such thing as a practical woman nowadays.'

At the same moment a light, white-aproned little figure came out of the dining-room beyond, and Nelly Torrance's voice uttered the words:

'Dinner is ready, Cousin John.'

The old man smiled. He had a pleasant expression on his face when he smiled, and Nelly wondered that she had not noticed what a handsome man he was.

'Oh,' said he, 'you did come, then?'

'I always keep my engagements,' said Nelly. 'Punctuality is the soul of business, isn't it, Cousin John? At least that's what I used to write in my copybooks.'