

'It was kind of you to take so much trouble on behalf of a stranger,' said Austin Craven; he was anxious to prolong the conversation.

'I only did what I could,' she replied, and bade him good-evening. He was too well-bred to force himself upon her, so he bowed and retired, making his way to a friend's house; whilst Agnes went on with a light heart to the relief of the garrison, as she expressed it.

Meanwhile Mrs. Craven returned to the examination of her presents. She was displaying them to her sister, with a running fire of comment.

'Fancy Mrs. Hughes sending me a box of chocolate, as if I were a child! Where is the lace scarf Clara sent? That is a present worth having. Dear me, where is it—the Brussels lace scarf I was showing you, Laura?'

'You had it with you when you went to see that dressmaker's girl,' said Laura, after shaking her skirts, and peering under the table. 'I remember now—you had it in your hand.'

'Oh, so I had! Very likely I have left it on the hall table,' And she rustled from the room.

But only the card-tray was on the table; and the lace was not on the floor, nor under the rug, nor entangled with her train. It had disappeared, and she grew angry. It was the most valuable of her presents, and the one she liked best. Laura came to her assistance, then the maid, but the scarf could not be found.

'That girl must have taken it,' asserted Mrs. Craven angrily. 'Something told me she was not honest.'

'You should have her arrested before she has time to dispose of it,' advised Laura, settling her boa preparatory to departure; and, without further reflection, Mrs. Craven telephoned for a cab, deciding to drive to Miss Pace's, and surprise the guilty couple. For she concluded that Miss Pace was an accomplice.

Cabs were rare in the neighborhood where the seamstress lived; and when the vehicle stopped, Mrs. Craven felt rather nervous, and wished that she had waited until her son could accompany her to the den of thieves. Summoning her courage, she knocked at the door with the brass plate, small and 'skimped' as Miss Pace herself. It was Agnes who answered, and the sight of her added fuel to the fire of Mrs. Craven's wrath. She pushed her aside, Agnes offering no opposition—thinking indeed that the wealthy dame had come to play the part of Lady Bountiful.

The fire had burned up brightly, and the kettle had begun a merry tune. The deal table was strewn with packages—household necessities bought by Agnes, Miss Pace being too worn out to do her own shopping. She was sitting in a hard, stiff-backed chair, eyeing a plate of bread and butter, restrained from devouring it at once only by the reflection that such a proceeding would not be genteel. She looked wonderingly at the indignant visitor.

'You know what I have come for,' said Mrs. Craven to Agnes. 'You had better return that scarf at once!'

'I really don't understand you,' replied the girl. 'Oh, I think you do! If you will return it, I will say no more about the matter; if you don't, I shall call in the police.'

'The scarf?' puzzled Agnes, with raised brows.

'You are very innocent, I am sure,' observed Mrs. Craven contemptuously. 'May I ask, Miss Pace, if you sent this young person to my house for the money. I told you should be paid next week?'

Miss Pace had been looking from one to the other in amazement.

'This young lady very kindly volunteered to go and ask you for it, ma'am,' she said. 'I wanted it very much, and I am thankful to you for letting me have it.'

'Don't attempt sarcasm, my good woman. I shall not pay you a farthing until the scarf has been returned,' declared Mrs. Craven.

At which Miss Pace looked bewildered. Agnes had simply told her that she had received the money, suppressing the preceding unpleasantness; now the girl, after a slight pause, related exactly how the account had been settled.

'A likely story!' exclaimed Mrs. Craven. 'As if my son would trouble himself! Miss Pace, this girl has stolen a valuable lace scarf from my house, and probably has sold it. That is where the money has come from. I certainly did not send it. If by to-morrow morning the scarf is not returned to me, I will put the matter in the hands of the police.'

With which ultimatum she flounced from the room, and Agnes turned with a faint smile to the old dressmaker.

'You don't believe that of me, do you?' she said.

'My dear,—Martha's hands were trembling—it is

all my fault. Your kindness to me, of which I shouldn't have taken advantage, has brought this trouble on you.'

Mrs. Craven drove home in a state of simmering indignation. What a hardened sinner the girl must be! How she had brazened the matter out! Hearing Austin come in, she called to him.

'Well, mother mine, what is it?'

'Is it possible that you went after that dressmaker's girl with the money?'

'Yes, I did,' he replied promptly. 'How did you come to know?'

'I should like to hear, first of all, why you did such a silly thing?'

'Truth to tell, mother, I felt rather ashamed of the delay in paying that small amount to a person who had honestly earned it, and could not afford to wait for it.'

'You had no right to do what you did without consulting me, Austin.'

'I am sorry to have annoyed you, mother. I acted on impulse, I admit. However, retribution was swift; for Morrison has been chaffing me unmercifully about this,—a consequence of my haste.'

'This' was the missing scarf, which he drew from the pocket of his dust-coat.

'I rushed out in a desperate hurry,' he explained, 'snatching up the white thing I saw lying on the hall table, thinking it was my handkerchief and crammed it into my pocket as I tore off. At Morrison's, the children were exploring me for toffee, and unearthed what their father professed to think was evidence of my "wanity." When he had accused me of a secret desire to sport ostrich feathers in my hat, rings on my fingers, and bells on my toes—why, mother, what's the matter?'

Mrs. Craven had grown crimson. She was not a bad-hearted woman, and she repented of her harsh judgment, faltering out an admission of it, qualified by the plea that, under the circumstances, her suspicion had been natural enough.

'We owe the young lady an apology,' he said. 'I shall lose no time in offering mine.'

'I don't see that you are to blame, Austin,' replied his mother, a vague uneasiness in her mind—a vague desire that he should not meet that girl again.

'Well, not directly or deliberately, perhaps,' he answered. 'Nevertheless, some reparation is due.'

It is certain that Agnes did not refuse forgiveness when the young man presented himself at Miss Pace's humble dwelling to ask for it. At a later date he was pleading for something more, a dearer, more priceless gift; and still later the little seamstress was putting her neatest stitches and daintiest work into a certain wedding outfit.

For at length maternal opposition to Austin Craven's choice of a wife was overcome by the sunny sweetness of the heart he had won, and Mrs. Craven found that her new daughter would be very dear to her.—Ave Maria.

The tenth report on the liabilities of the Archdiocese of Adelaide has just been issued by his Grace the Archbishop, who says:—As is well understood by this time, my usual annual report refers to such moneys only as are raised for purposes of building and for purposes of charity. My present report furnishes no exception to the rule. From March 31, 1895, to March 31, 1906—a comparatively brief term of eleven years—the total received for the two purposes in question amounted to £238,840 0s 2d. Of this total, the sum of a little over £7000 was received from the State Children's Department for the support of uncontrollable wards—boys—and girls—committed to our charge by the State. Some few thousands, too, came from non-Catholic friends, who wished to help us in the furtherance of our charities and in the erection of our churches and presbyteries and schools. The report then deals with the old liabilities. It states that of the original 28 accounts only four now remain in debt. The figure at which the old liabilities started was not the sole measure of the burden, as in various ways the old liabilities necessitated a further expenditure of £43,110. During the eleven years under review the bills to be met in connection with those old accounts amounted to £100,078. The receipts for the term mentioned aggregated £88,802. The sum of £11,276 has still to be paid. Respecting the remnants of the old debts, the Archbishop says:—'The liquidation of the Centralised Liabilities is a matter affecting all the congregations of the Archdiocese. What progress the process of liquidation has made all will be interested in knowing. In March, 1895, those liabilities stood at £37,149 19s 11d. At the end of March of the present year they had fallen to £8109 15s 10d. Since March last, though only five months have elapsed, there has been a further reduction to the extent of some £1300.'