

'I'll remember an' tell inamma that, she'll be real pleased. An' how she'll laugh when I tell her you asked what you owed me.'

The old man put his hand deep in his pocket and drew out an ancient leather wallet. From this he extracted a bill and smoothed it on his knee.

'There is a lame boy whose name is Joe,' he slowly said. 'He needs a chair. Do you know anything about the price of these things?'

The child's eyes sparkled as she stared at the bill. 'Yes, yes!' she answered. 'Mamma went and found out. You can get the kind of chair Joe wants for 15 dollars. An' a real substantial chair, too.'

'Here's twenty dollars,' said the old man, an' tell Joe it's a present from you. What's your name?'

'Elsie.'

He watched her with an amused smile as she quickly drew a tiny purse from the pocket in her frock and tucked the bill into it. Then, when the little purse was restored to its place, she looked up at the old man.

'Now,' she said, 'if you please, I'm goin' to give you a kiss. I always give papa a kiss when he's particularly nice.'

The old man flushed a little. 'Just as you please,' he said.

He stooped and she touched the wrinkled cheek with her lips.

'You're a very nice man,' she said. Then she hesitated. 'But didn't you need that money for yourself?'

He shook his head. 'I guess I can spare it,' he answered.

Then came an interruption. 'Elsie,' a voice called from the doorway.

'It's papa,' cried the child.

The old man looked around. 'Well, Fenton?'

'I trust she hasn't bothered you, sir?'

'We haven't bothered each o'her a bit,' cried the child.

The old man shook his head. 'No,' he answered, 'not a bit.' Then he looked back to the man in the doorway. 'Fenton,' he said,

'when your wife comes for the child tell her, please, that I want to have a little business talk with her. I'm thinking of opening up my house.'

The eyes of the man in the doorway couldn't conceal their wonderment.

'I'll tell her, sir.'

'And, Fenton?'

'Yes, sir.'

'You may leave the child here until the mother comes.—Exchange.

ANNETTE'S INVESTIGATION

It was just an American village such as you see in pictures. A background of superb bold mountain, all clothed in blue-green cedars, with a torrent thundering down a deep gorge and falling in billows of foam; a river reflecting the azure of the sky, and a knot of houses, with a church spire at one end and a thicket of factory chimneys at the other, whose black smoke wrote everchanging hieroglyphics against the brilliancy of the sky. This was Dapplevale. And in the rosy sunset of this blossomy June day, the girls were all pouring out of the broad doorway, while Gerald Blake, the foreman, sat behind the desk, a pen behind his ear and his small, beady-black eyes drawn back, as it were, in the shelter of a precipice of shaggy eyebrows.

One by one the girls stopped and received their pay for one week's work, for this was Saturday night. One by one they filed out, with fretful, discontented faces, until the last one passed in front of the high-railed desk.

She was slight and tall, with large-velvety-blue eyes, a complexion as delicately grained and transparent as rose-colored wax, and an abundance of glossy hair of so dark a brown that the casual observer would have pronounced it black; and there was something in the way the ribbon at her throat was tied and the manner in which the simple details of her dress were arranged that bespoke her of foreign birth.

'Well, Mlle. Annette,' said Mr. Blake, 'and how do you like factory life?'

'It is not agreeable,' she answered, a slight accent clinging to her tones, like fragrance to a flower, as she extended her hand for the money the foreman was counting out.

'You have given me but four dollars,' she said. 'It was to be eight dollars by the contract.'

'Humph!' he grunted; 'you ain't much accustomed to our way of doing things, are you mademoiselle? Eight—of course; but we deduct two for a fee—'

'A fee! For what?' Annette demanded, with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes.

'For getting you the situation, mademoiselle, to be sure,' said Mr. Blake, in a superior sort of way. 'Such places don't grow on every bush. And folks naturally expect to pay something for the privilege.'

'I did not!' flashed out Annette Duvelle.

'Oh—well—all right. Because you know, you ain't obliged to stay unless you choose.'

'Do you mean,' hesitated Annette, 'that if I don't pay you this money—'

'You can't expect to stay in the works,' said Mr. Blake, hitching up his collar.

'But the other two dollars?'

'Oh,' said Mr. Blake, 'that's a percentage the girls all pay.'

'But what is it for?'

Mr. Blake laughed. 'Well, it helps out my salary. Of course, you know, the girls all expect to pay something every week for keeping their situations in a place where there's so many anxious to get in.'

'And Mr. Elderslie?'

'Oh, Mr. Elderslie,' repeated Blake. 'He hasn't much to do with it. I am master of the Dapplevale Calico Works.'

'Mr. Elderslie owns it, I believe?'

'Well, yes, he owns it. But he manages everything. Mr. Elderslie reposes the utmost confidence in my capacity, ability, and—and responsibility. Mr. Elderslie is a good business man. And now if you've any more questions to ask—'

'I have none,' said Annette quietly. 'But—I want this money myself. I work hard for it. I earn it righteously. How can I afford, and how can the others among these poor laboring girls afford, to pay it to your greed?'

'Eh?' ejaculated Mr. Blake, jumping from his seat as if some insect had stung him.

'I will not pay it,' calmly concluded Mlle. Annette.

'Very well—very well. Just as you like, mademoiselle,' cried the foreman, turning red in the face. 'Only if you won't conform to the rules of the Dapplevale works—'

'Are these the rules?' scornfully demanded Annette.

'Pray consider your name crossed off the books,' went on Mr. Blake. 'You are no longer in my employ. Good evening, Mademoiselle Whatever-you-may-call-yourself.'

And Mr. Blake slammed down the cover of his desk as if it were a patent guillotine and poor Annette Duvelle's neck were under it.

'You've lost your place, ma'amselle,' whispered Jenny Purton, a pale, dark-eyed little thing who supported a crippled mother and two little sisters out of her meagre earnings.

'And he'll never let you in again,' added Mary Rice.

'It matters not,' said Annette. 'He is a rogue, and rogues sometimes out-general themselves.'

The petals of the June roses had fallen, a pink carpet all along the edge of the woods, and the Dapplevale works wore their holiday guise, even down to Simon Pettengill's newly brightened engine, for Mr. Elderslie and his bride were to visit the works on their wedding tour.

Mr. Gerald Blake, in his best broadcloth suit, and moustache newly dyed, stood smiling in the broad doorway as the carriage drove up to the entrance, and Mr. Elderslie, a handsome, blonde-haired man, sprang out and assisted a young lady in a dove-colored traveling suit to alight.

'Blake, how are you?' he said, with the carelessness of conscious superiority. 'Annette, my love, this is Blake, my foreman.'

'Mademoiselle Annette!'

And Mr. Gerald Blake found himself cringing before the slight French girl whom he had turned from the factory door a month before.

'I must beg to look at the books, Blake,' said Elderslie authoritatively. 'My wife tells me some strange stories about the way things are managed here. It became so notorious that the rumors reached her even at Blythesdale Springs, and she chose to come and see for herself. Annette, my darling, the best wedding gift we can make to these poor working girls is a new foreman. Blake, you may consider yourself dismissed.'

'But, sir—'

'Not another word,' cried Mr. Elderslie, with a lowering brow.

Elderslie turned to his wife.

'You were right, my love,' said he. 'The man's face is sufficient evidence against him.'

And a new reign began for poor Jenny Purton and the working girls, as well as for Simon Pettengill.

Annette never regretted her week's apprenticeship at the Dapplevale Calico Works.—Exchange.