

'There's a charge of failure to collect a fare standing against you, Bently,' he said; 'that of a feeble woman with a sick child on your last trip in yesterday afternoon.'

'The charge is false, sir. I paid that fare myself and rung it in rather than put her off the car to die in the street, as she said she must. The register and cash will show the fare was paid and rung in, sir.'

'You'll have a chance to prove that to her, Ben. She's the spotter' (opening the private office door). 'Step in here, please, Miss Dascomb.'

Bently's start, as the rather comely girl with the soft brown eyes came in, was the next moment quieted, and had no special meaning for Ferris, who, in the depth of his sympathy for his friend, scarcely noticed it. Nor did he note the quick, significant glance of her eyes into Bently's.

'You are quite sure Mr. Bently didn't collect your fare on his last trip in last night, Miss Dascomb?' Ferris questioned, motioning her to a seat.

'Sure as one can be of anything, sir,' was her prompt answer, as she sat down.

'I was away in the forward end of the car where she couldn't see me when I paid and rung in her fare, sir. I wasn't showin' up my business to her. I had a sort of half-presentiment she was a spotter, and took the precaution of having witness to my paying in her fare.'

Ferris looked bewildered. 'Rather a mixed-up affair this—a mistake somewhere. We've got implicit confidence in Miss Dascomb, Bently.'

'Yes, but you'll give a man a chance to defend himself. You may fire me from the company, of course, but I shall insist upon my right to prove my innocence of this thing, if it takes the last cent I've got, Mr. Ferris.'

Mr. Goodwin, who had been listening in his private office, now stepped in in season to see Miss Dascomb wiping the tell-tale moisture from her eyes.

'You'd better let this go over till to-morrow, Ferris,' he said, with a sharp glance from Miss Dascomb to Bently. Then he invited the girl into his private office. What passed between them during that half-hour Ferris never knew. But he did know that there had come a marked change over Goodwin as he came out with her into the front office again. 'Give Miss Dascomb Bently's address, Ferris,' he ordered softly.

'Here you are, Miss Dascomb,' Ferris said, noting down the address on a slip—'972 Poplar street. The Nuestro Heights car goes right by it.'

Bently's mother, who answered Miss Dascomb's ring at the small four-roomed flat door, looked askance first at the card which Miss Dascomb handed her, and then at the girl herself. Tom had gone on an errand for her to the grocer's just down the street. He would be back in ten minutes, if she would step into the parlor and wait.

'It seems hardly possible that you could have forgotten me in seven years, Mrs. Bently,' the girl said, looking wistfully up into the wrinkled pale face.

A glow of recognition presently lit up the wrinkles as she gazed. 'Sakes alive, you ain't the Pauline Dascomb that went way off from Lakeville soon after graduating from the high school, to make a career for yourself?'

'The same Pauline, Mrs. Bently.' She stood up to receive and return the fervid embrace.

'Oh, you pretty dear, you come within an ace of breaking poor Tom's heart,' the mother went on. 'He never done no good to home after you went, an' dragged me way out West here six months after you'd gone.'

'I ain't quite so ambitious now as I was then, Mrs. Bently, and I—'

Tom, coming in the door lively, broke up the discourse. 'Come in the parlor and see who's here, son,' the mother called to him.

'I knew it was you the minute I got on your car, Tom,' Miss Dascomb explained, after the thrill of meeting was partially over; 'but the poor play had to go on to the finish.'

'Your disguise was complete, Pauline,' he complimented admiringly. 'I doubt if your mother would have recognised you. Yet something in the one brief glance of your eyes which I caught haunted me like the remembrance of a delightful dream. Where did you get that poor sick child?'

'Oh, the company get us those from the Day Nursery for such occasions, Tom.'

They sat and talked of the past late into the night. She was startled at the lateness when she came to a clear sense of time.

He accompanied her home to the three rooms which she occupied with a girl friend who wrote the weekly society page for the great city newspaper.

Bently called around about 9 next morning. He begged her to go with him to the office of the gentleman who had seen him pay in her fare, before they went to the Grand Pacific office.

'Don't, please, Tom,' she pleaded, with that girlish sweetness which she knew to have such power over him. 'I'd as soon go hunting for proof of—where you were born.'

'Then I shall have to go alone, Pauline,' he almost murmured, 'and bring Mr. Goodwin indubitable proof that I paid it. I must not let such a charge stand against me; whether I am fired or not.'

'It is quite needless to go to all that trouble, Tom. I can convince him of my mistake fully enough. We'd best be going; I am due at the office at half-past 9.'

Ferris almost laughed out loud at sight of the late accuser and accused walking into the office arm in arm, like a pair of sweethearts. 'Mr. Goodwin's waiting for you in his private office, Miss Dascomb. Just take a seat, Bently,' he said demurely as he could under the circumstances.

In a fever of distrust and anxiety, Bently wondered what possible thing could be keeping the girl so long occupied in Goodwin's private office.

'Morning paper is over there on that other desk, Bently,' Ferris said, on looking up from the pile of papers in which he had been buried.

'Tell Bently to come in here a minute, Ferris,' Goodwin ordered, opening the door a crack.

'I'm very sorry this thing has happened, Bently,' Goodwin said apologetically, 'but I couldn't see how Miss Dascomb could have been mistaken till she explained matters herself. You know as well as we do that we have to be on the look-out for grafts, and we must have iron-clad rules to protect the company against them.'

'Of course, Mr. Goodwin,' Bently assented, 'I'd be the last man to kick against the enforcement of any rule which I had bound myself by on entering the employ of your company.'

'It's all right now, Bently. We'll consider it a decided gain to the company to have you continue with us as if the thing had never happened. There will be a change all around at the end of the year. I am going up to vice-president, Ferris takes my place, and we expect you to take his.'

This unexpected turn in his favor for the moment put words past Bently's utterance.

'Let me thank you very much for this, Mr. Goodwin,' Miss Dascomb said, getting on her feet, her face glowing with pleasure. 'We came very near doing an irreparable injustice to an honest man.'

'Don't mention it. Seems to have been my own fault mostly. Call in to-morrow, Miss Dascomb; you and Mr. Bently will have old times to talk over.'

'Thank you very much, sir,' Bently managed to say huskily as he went out after Miss Dascomb.

Ferris sat bolt upright, eyeing them capriciously. 'Don't forget us when the cards are out, Bently,' he bantered under his breath, so that Goodwin might not hear.

'You'll be first on my invitation list, Ferris,' Bently rejoined, going out of the door.

Miss Dascomb flung him back a significant look over her shoulder as she took Bently's arm.—*The Monitor*.

The Office of Holy Week, according to the Roman Missal and Breviary, with an explanation of the ceremonies and observances, can be procured from the Catholic Book Depot, Christchurch. Mr. O'Connor also informs patrons that he has just received a select and varied collection of Easter cards....

The New Zealand Insurance Company, Limited, has a subscribed capital of £1,500,000, with a paid-up capital of £300,000. The reserve fund now amounts to £185,000, and the reinsurance fund to a quarter of a million sterling. The net revenue for last year amounted to £647,300. During the fifty years that it has been in existence the company has paid in losses £7,098,471....

If you want a parcel sent anywhere, just notify us, and we will collect it from you and deliver it wherever required, either in New Zealand or abroad. We do carting work of all kinds, remove furniture (for this work we have special vans and experienced men), transport tourists' baggage from place to place, and provide sample rooms and storage accommodation. N.Z. EXPRESS CO. Branches and agencies everywhere....

## HOW TO PAINT A HOUSE CHEAP

### Carrara Paint

White and Colors. Mixed Ready for Inside and Outside Use. CARRARA retains its Gloss and Lustre for at least five years, and will look better in eight years than lead and oil paints do in two. USE CARRARA, the first cost of which is no greater than lead and oil paints, and your paint bills will be reduced by over 50 per cent. A beautifully-illustrated booklet, entitled 'How to Paint a House Cheap,' will be forwarded free on application.

K. RAMSAY & CO., 19 Vogel street, Dunedin.