

'Oh, I understood from the first that you hope to rope me in!' he said.

'There are so many poor,' Mr. Orthwein pleaded in excuse, 'and we aren't rich, most of us who are trying to help. Besides, George, you have too much. Something of this kind would keep you from becoming spoiled,' and he looked anxiously into the bright, winsome, self-satisfied face that smiled down upon him.

Mr. Burton's heart, a big and tender, though self-centred heart, was touched by Mr. Orthwein's solicitude. He was reminded of his father. He laid both his hands on the old man's shoulders, as he said, 'I'll gladly go with you this time, and who can tell what—' He did not finish, being interrupted by a knock at the door. One of his managers entered when he said 'Come in,' and Mr. Orthwein went back to his stool with so broad a smile upon his face that the weary clerk at the next desk leaned towards him and whispered, 'What's up? Did you get a rise?'

It was a little late when George Burton's auto reached the shabby boarding-house which had been Mr. Orthwein's home for many a year. In consequence they were the last to enter the meeting hall, and dropped into seats behind the other men. At first Mr. Burton paid scant attention to the business being transacted: instead, he curiously scanned the bare room and the men assembled there. To his amazement he saw (side by side with a few bright-faced medical students, a shabby German music teacher, and a little man whom he recognised as his grocer) two or three men who stood for all that was best in X—, not only mentally and morally, but socially.

'If these men are interested in this affair, it must be worth while,' he thought, with the deference, only half conscious, which the new-rich feel for those whose grandfathers and great-grandfathers were of some importance, and at once he began to listen with interest to the reports—simple, matter-of-fact echoes of sublime charity. They impressed him deeply. He quickly forgot the social standing of some few of the members. He forgot, too, that his time was absorbed by business and pleasure to the exclusion of all things else, and before the meeting adjourned he gave in his name and was told to make certain visits in company with Mr. Orthwein.

But, deep though it was, the impression made upon Mr. Burton was effaced by the gaieties of the days immediately following the meeting, and he was annoyed when Mr. Orthwein told him one afternoon, that it was time they made one of their visits.

'I want to go to the club this evening. I hope it won't take long,' he said, not very graciously, wondering how he had been so weak and so foolish as to allow himself to be inveigled into the St. Vincent de Paul Society. Evidently it was going to prove a nuisance. But afterwards he was ashamed of his semi-rudeness to Mr. Orthwein, and in an effort to make reparation was most friendly early that evening.

Mr. Orthwein took him to a tenement house and led the way up three flights of steep, narrow, rickety stairs to a door at the rear end of a long corridor. When it was opened in answer to his knock, Mr. Orthwein was welcomed with heartfelt exclamations of joy and affection, while George Burton, standing unobserved behind him, noted the details of the place in a few covert glances.

There were two small rooms, clean but with little and poor furniture, and only a feeble imitation of a fire. In a corner of the one which they had entered a young man lay upon a cot, and even to Mr. Burton's inexperienced eye it was evident that he was seriously ill. A child about three years of age was sitting on the floor, amusing himself with bits of unpainted wood by way of building blocks, and a little girl, a couple of years older, was crouched beside her father, and, from time to time, patted his face with a clapped and grimy hand. The mother gave Mr. Orthwein the one chair and Mr. Burton found himself a seat on a box in the corner. There he sat, unobserved, throughout the visit. Those poor people, face to face with life in its grimmest aspect, had no thought to spare for a stranger; it was evident

that they considered Mr. Orthwein a tried, a true friend.

'Will they hold Tim's place for him?' the little worn wife asked anxiously, before Mr. Orthwein had had time to say a word.

'Yes, Mr. Burton was very kind. He said at once that Tim will find his place waiting whenever he is well enough to come back.'

And George Burton, sitting in the background, blushed fiery red. With a sharp pang he understood that this was the man for whom Mr. Orthwein had interceded a few days before, begging that his position be saved for him no matter how long he might be ill. He had been getting 40 dollars a month, as did many another in the factory, and this, Mr. Burton saw, this was what 40 dollars meant when sickness came.

'And how is Tim to-day—any better?' Mr. Orthwein asked. His voice could not have been more tender if he had been addressing his own sister.

'No better. Can't you see for yourself? It will be a long time before he's fit to go back to the factory. If I could get work I'd send him to the Charity Hospital and put the children in the day nursery each morning, though I'd hate to do it. I'd rather take care of him myself, and he'd miss the children terribly. But what are we going to do? The doctor and druggist have taken all we had saved, and we owe rent and there's almost no coal left.'

'We'll send you coal to-morrow,' Mr. Orthwein promised. 'The society told me to tell you so.'

'Thank God!' she ejaculated with a glance at the handful of small coals in the bucket by the stove—the last of their store.

There was a short silence. The sick man groaned faintly; the little girl left his side for a seat on Mr. Orthwein's knee, and the baby upset his blocks, making a terrible noise. Soon Mrs. Shea turned to Mr. Orthwein and said despairingly, in a low tone, that her husband could not hear:

'I'm at my wit's end! I don't know where to turn! I've tried every way and I can't get work. Three or four different times Mrs. O'Leary stayed here while I went out to answer advertisements. I walked from place to place until I was ready to drop, and everywhere the result was the same. They looked at me and thought I wouldn't be fit for much. But I could work, Mr. Orthwein, if they'd only give me the chance. I'm thin, I know, and little, but I'd work, work hard. I'd do any drudgery for money!'

The child on the floor, a pale, puny boy, began to whimper piteously, and as his mother gathered him in her arms she turned towards George Burton for the first time, and he saw that worn though she was, she was little more than a girl and that her face would have been fair had her life been more so.

'Mamma, I'm hungry. Give me something to eat,' the baby whined.

As she soothed him there was a look of agony in her eyes, and when he begged again she said—and the words burned themselves into Mr. Burton's soul—'Hush, baby dear! I have nothing for you. If I give you the bread we shall have no breakfast,' and the tears poured over her cheeks.

Then the sick man spoke for the first time. 'Those fellows from the Industrial Workers of the World were here again this morning,' he said weakly.

'Again!' Mr. Orthwein exclaimed with indignation, looking anxiously but passionately at Mrs. Shea.

'But Tim wouldn't join them,' Mrs. Shea hastened to say.

'And you never will, Tim!' Mr. Orthwein pleaded.

'No, God help me!' he answered solemnly; 'but it is a temptation, sir, when things go like this. It makes a man angry and bitter to be in my fix and know that, a mile away, people are living in luxury and don't care what becomes of us poor devils!'

'I know, Tim; I know, but there's heaven coming. What would most of us do but for that?'

He rose then, gave Mrs. Shea a little money, divided a few apples between the children, and left the room, followed by Mr. Burton. In silence they groped

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