

Dr. Chalmers' mother, Alicia de Ville, was the girl whom his aunt had wished him to marry.

'I cannot use Aunt Caroline's cheque for clothes,' she told her father. 'But, if you don't mind, I will spend part of it for a new hat.'

'Do what you please with it,' Mr. Linville was beginning, when Dinah entered, curtesying.

'A gen'leman to see yo', Marse Dick,' she said, with a quick glance from one face to the other.

II.

Later in the day, Peggy was standing before the window of Miss Gear's fashionable emporium, gazing admiringly at a large picture hat of pale blue chiffon, with tiny forget-me-nots peeping out from under the brim, when a woman's piercing scream caused her to turn quickly. A little child, escaping from its mother's hand, had darted into the street just as a car swept around the corner. The driver did not see the child until the machine was almost upon her. He tried to stop, but it was too late.

It was Peggy who lifted the apparently lifeless form; while the mother, a poor working-woman, too numbed by horror and grief to utter a sound after that one scream, stood near, a picture of despair.

'She is not dead!' an authoritative voice exclaimed. 'Quick! To Mercy Hospital, Peters!'

Before Peggy knew just what was happening, she found herself, the child still in her arms, in the tonneau of the car, the half-crazed mother beside her; while the owner of the voice, a dark young man, whom she had never seen before, occupied the seat beside the driver.

In a very few minutes they were at Mercy Hospital. Taking the child from Peggy's arms, the young man hurried up the broad steps.

'She is not dead,' he said over his shoulder. 'Try to comfort the mother.'

It seemed a long time—a very long time—that they waited. But at last a sweet-faced Sister entered the room.

'She has regained consciousness,' she said, glancing from one to the other. 'It seems almost miraculous; but, aside from a few bruises, the child is not really injured.'

'Oh, thank God!—thank God!' the mother sobbed convulsively, in sudden relief, the tears streaming down her cheeks.

'You may come with me now to see her,' the Sister said kindly.

The woman started toward the door, then stopped suddenly.

'My hand-bag!' she murmured faintly. 'All the money I had in the world was in it, and—it is gone!'

They searched the room: Peggy even ran out to look in the automobile; but to no avail.

'I—I must have dropped it in the crowd,' the woman said disconsolately.

Peggy drew out her purse. She had had Aunt Caroline's cheque cashed; and the purse contained also the price of the hat she intended purchasing.

'Take this,' she said hurriedly, thrusting it into the woman's hand. 'It—it is for the little one.'

The car was still waiting. And as she hurried down the broad steps, and out into the warm, scented early June air, Peggy carried with her a pleasant, if rather confused, recollection of a strong, dark face, and an authoritative voice.

III.

Mrs. Caroline de Ville lived alone with her servants, in the fine old colonial mansion, 'The Maples,' which had been her home for nearly half a century. On this particular afternoon, when the spring flowers made gay the well-kept beds, and the birds, in the safe shelter of the century-old maples, were pouring out their little hearts in sheerest joy, the doors of the old house were thrown wide in hospitable welcome; and the still handsome mistress received her guests with that exquisite graciousness of manner which seemed so

thoroughly a part of herself, and which had served to keep her a social favorite all these years.

Into this exclusive gathering came Dick Linville and his daughter Peggy. Mrs. de Ville's attention was attracted to them by hearing a rather stout, overdressed matron say to her neighbor:

'Who are those people just entering—the rather shabby but distinguished-looking man, and the pretty girl with the unfashionable hat?'

The hostess glanced quickly toward the door. Her nephew was being greeted by an old acquaintance; and she noted, with a little tightening of the throat, that his thick brown hair was generously sprinkled with silver, and that his still handsome face showed unmistakable lines of care. She noted, too, in that first glance that his coat, though unfashionable in cut, was worn with an air that distinguished him even in that crowd of well-dressed people. 'And the girl looks a thoroughbred!' she thought, with a thrill of pride.

'That,' she said, turning to the young matron—'that is my nephew, Mr. Richard Linville, with his daughter.'

The young matron flushed crimson, murmuring some apology, which the older woman did not wait to hear.

'My dear Dick,' she cried, going forward at once to greet the newcomers, 'I am indeed glad to see you! I had begun to fear you were not coming.'

Dick Linville's hand closed tightly, for an instant, over the smaller one. That was all. There was no outward show of emotion; yet each knew that the other was glad to be forgiven.

'And this is your daughter? I am glad to know you my dear!'

'Come, my dear!' she said to Peggy. 'We will leave your father to renew his acquaintance with these gentlemen, all of whom, I think, are old friends.'

In the next room, separated from this one by massive pillars, were two pretty girls dispensing punch. The crowd of young people surrounding them gave way deferentially as Mrs. de Ville and her companion approached. The former glanced quickly around the room; but, evidently, the person she sought was not there.

'He is as perverse as—a woman!' she thought, recalling his words when, a few days before, she had, inadvertently, betrayed something of the plan which had been forming in her mind since catching that glimpse of her great-niece's face framed in the street-car window.

'If I ever marry,' he had once said, with a fine light in his handsome eyes, 'it will not be through any mercenary motive, Aunt Caroline; so don't, I beg of you, make any such plans for me, as they can not but end in disappointment. I would spare you that if I could. Let the girl have the estate; she has as much right to it as I have,' he had added, with rare unselfishness. 'I have my profession, and' (with a boyish smile) 'I have sufficient confidence in my own ability to feel that I shall win out.'

But Mrs. de Ville had always found it difficult to give up a cherished hope. If she could succeed in bringing about a meeting between these two perverse young people—for she detected in Peggy's clear, steady glance a perversity equal to that of the young man in question—she felt sure they must see the wisdom of her plan.

'I expected to find my nephew here,' she said. 'Peggy's quick ear detected the disappointment in her tone.' 'He was called to the hospital this morning, but promised to return.'

She might have added that she had with difficulty exacted this promise from him.

'Virginia,' she said, addressing one of the pretty dispensers of the iced beverage, 'I want you to meet my great-niece, Miss Linville. Margaret, my dear, this is Miss Dayton. Your grandmothers were girlhood friends.'

Peggy soon found herself quite at home with the merry group of young people, who received her with easy courtesy.