

unkind or harsh. I felt convinced that both were impossible.

As the weeks passed I became more and more interested in Miss Stannard. I saw her often in the corridors, in the dining-room, and at church, and she was always alone. I asked two or three of the other guests about her, but each one gave me substantially the same answer: that she spent every summer at Spring Lake but made no acquaintances, and that she was those two things so unpardonable in the eyes of the world—queer and 'awfully' religious. Perhaps because I, too, was in the habit of going to daily Mass and suspected that they included me in the latter category, I was annoyed at their unappreciative, unsympathetic attitude toward her. I felt certain that she had a story, a tragic one, more certain that she was well worth knowing.

Twice during all that summer did I see her moved out of her customary sad reserve. Once when I was walking among the hills I heard merry laughing voices, and spied Miss Stannard and two of the poor children of the village in the valley beneath me. They were seated on the grass and had evidently been gathering wild flowers, for three bunches of different sizes lay near by. On the ground before them a dainty luncheon was spread on a napkin. I caught one glimpse of Miss Stannard's smiling face and then stole away, saying to myself: 'She must have looked like that when she was a girl, before—' And I sauntered back to the hotel wondering before what.

Another day, just as I was about to leave the church after the seven o'clock Mass, it began to rain heavily. I stood at the door and looked out disconsolately, for I had no umbrella and the hotel was at least a mile away. I had decided that my best plan would be to run across to Father Burke's house and borrow an umbrella, when Miss Stannard came out into the vestibule. She saw my predicament and offered

to share her umbrella. 'I know that we go the same way,' she said. I assented eagerly, glad of the protection half of her umbrella would afford and delighted to know that she had noticed me.

In all my life I never had a merrier walk. The wind was so high and it rained in such torrents that our one umbrella was almost useless. As we became wetter and wetter and the road more and more muddy, our spirits rose, and all the way home we laughed and talked nonsense like a pair of sixteen-year-old girls. At the door we parted in the most familiar, friendly manner possible and hurried to our rooms for fresh clothing.

After that Miss Stannard spoke to me when we met in passing, but she never gave me an opportunity to say more than 'good morning' or 'good night.' Sometimes I was inclined to think that I must have dreamed that merry and delightfully uncomfortable walk.

It was late in August before I learned anything of her history. Mrs. Baker, an old friend of my mother's, came up to New York to spend the remnant of the season. I had not seen her for several years, and the first day that she was at Spring Lake we sat on the porch all through the heat of the afternoon talking of old friends and old times. Mrs. Baker loved to listen and she loved to talk, so she always knew all the current gossip and was always ready, or rather eager, to impart it.

We chatted cosily for hours and at half-past five were beginning to think of going to our rooms, when Miss Stannard passed us and walked down in the direction of the lake. I turned to watch as I ever felt impelled to do, and Mrs. Baker, anxious to see what was attracting my attention, also looked at her.

Suddenly she gripped my arm convulsively. 'I do believe that that is Miss Stannard!' she exclaimed. 'But how much she has changed!'

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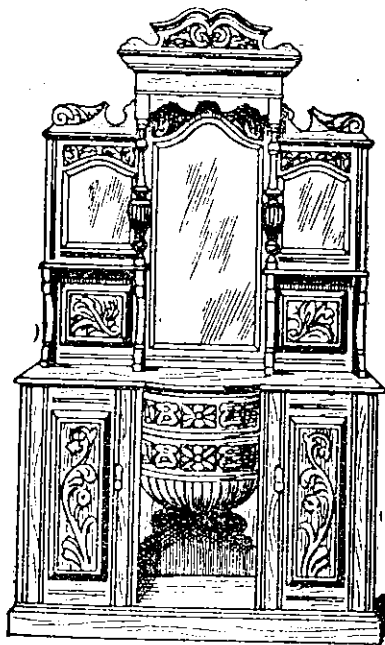
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