

The morning was very pleasant, but so far all the mornings had been pleasant at this delightful out of the way resort.

"Where to, Mildred?" she asked. The little girl who was skipping along by her side looked up brightly.

"The plaza, of course, mamma. You can read, and I will play. This afternoon we'll go down on the beach."

The street was very quiet—an occasional dray with its load of trunks and baggage and here and there a group of pleasure seekers on their way to the plaza or the beach; overhead a few buzzards circled about, and from the direction of the plaza came a slight breeze which was laden with perfume of orange blossoms and the saltness of the bay which glistened beyond the trees.

As they reached the corner a keen newsboy darted across the street, and his shrewd face broadened into a grin when his customer smilingly refused the change he offered.

Through the openings in the trees they could see the white sails of pleasure boats on the bay and beyond these the green shore of Promontory point.

Near the extreme end of the point rose the tall white buildings of the state penitentiary. Mrs. Bradford shivered a little as she saw them. The grim buildings seemed out of place in this quiet winter resort.

It was not far to the plaza, but when they reached it they found that most of the settees were already occupied. They walked down one of the side paths and came back by the fountain. As they did so Mildred turned suddenly.

"There's a seat that's most all empty," she whispered eagerly.

It was a little off the path and half hidden by the low branches of a live oak. As they approached Mrs. Bradford noticed that its only occupant was a tall young man whose face looked strangely white and eager.

He watched them curiously as they sat down, and his lips parted in a friendly smile. Then, as though conscious of impropriety, he got up and began to walk back and forth uneasily. For a time Mrs. Bradford scarcely noticed him, then something peculiar about his step caused her to raise her eyes from the book she was reading.

The young man seemed to have forgotten their presence and was walking back and forth with bowed head. Every few seconds he wheeled sharply and retraced his steps.

Mrs. Bradford noticed with curious wonder that he always wheeled at exactly the same points. Then she saw that his left foot dragged behind the other as though it carried a heavy weight. At first she thought he was lame, but even while she was compassionateating him he raised his head with a quick, startled movement, and for a moment the lameness disappeared and the walk was extended to the end of the path.

Then his head once more sank upon his breast, the short turns were resumed, and the left foot again began its weary, dragging motion. Apparently he was conscious of his weakness, for several times she saw him recover himself impatiently and glance sharply around.

Overhead the mocking birds were calling to each other, and something in their notes seemed to arouse him from his reverie. Presently he stopped beneath the tree and glanced up with a rapt expression on his face. Mrs. Bradford saw it, and her eyes softened.

"You like the birds?" she said pleasantly.

"I used to," he replied hesitatingly. Then, noticing the surprise in her face, he added apologetically: "I haven't seen any before for most ten years. They seem sort of strange."

He stood still for a moment with the color deepening on his sallow cheeks, then he slouched forward and threw himself on the grass at the foot of the tree. Mrs. Bradford gazed at him curiously for a moment and then returned to her book.

Out in the path Mildred was playing with her ball. At length it struck a limb and bounded toward the young man. He picked it up eagerly and half rose to his feet; but, seeing the frightened look on her face, he tossed it back and resumed his slouching position on the grass.

After awhile the ball again rolled to his feet. This time he did not offer to return it. As Mildred approached he looked up, with a smile.

Some time I may need advice, and this little package will be able to tell me a great many things—a great many sad things which you will never understand, little one," he added gently.

Mildred gazed at him wonderingly, but as she saw the skilled fingers draw the leather over the ball and fasten it securely in place her look of wonder changed to one of pleasure.

"I'm ever so much obliged," she said gratefully. "I'd hate awfully to lose the ball. Grandpa gave it to me."

"I'm going home, too," he said gravely as he handed her the ball. "I'm waiting for the train now."

"And have you got a mamma?" she asked, with sudden interest.

"Yes, and she has been waiting for me a long, long time. Poor little mother!" the last too low for her to hear. As the little girl was moving away he called her with a sudden gesture.

"I wish you would take this," he said earnestly as he gave her a tiny box of exquisite workmanship. "I made it from a piece of ivory which was found on a battlefield and intended to give it to my sister. You make me think of her."

"But won't she want it?" Mildred objected.

"She is dead," was the grave answer.

The little girl's face grew sympathetic.

"I'm sorry," she said gently, "and I'd like to have the box ever so much. But I must ask mamma."

Mildred ran off to her mother. The young man occasionally looked that way and saw that the child was telling her mother about him. He knew that the mother was regarding him with suspicion. For some time a dialogue that he could not hear was going on between mother and child. Mildred was evidently arguing for her new friend, and her mother was quietly opposing her. But the mother stood firm, and at last the child returned with a disappointed air.

"Mamma says I mustn't take gifts from strangers," she said regretfully, "but I'm ever so much obliged, just the same."

The sun spots moved slowly across the grass and disappeared one by one in the thicker shadows of the trees. The young man watched them listlessly. At length a clock began to strike in the distance, and he counted the strokes carefully. When it ceased he once more got up and began to walk back and forth. But now his head was erect and his left foot had lost its dragging motion and on his face was a tender, expectant smile.

Mildred had grown tired of her ball and was watching the water as it fell splashing into the broad basin of the fountain. As the young man approached she looked up timidly.

"Are you going now?" she asked.

"Not for another half hour," he replied. "I would rather wait here than down at the depot." For some moments he stood gazing at her. Evidently her face brought up some memory of the past, for he sighed as he turned away.

A little later Mrs. Bradford was aroused by excited voices. Several figures rushed past her. For a moment she gazed around wonderingly; then she rose and followed. Near the fountain was a group of excited people. In the open space beyond she recognized Mildred playing with her ball. What was the matter?

But even as she wondered came the wild rush of a pair of frightened horses into the open space. What followed happened so quickly that she could not realize it until it was over. Mildred was placed, sobbing, in her arms, and a hushed group closed about the silent figure on the ground.

"It was the bravest thing I ever saw," said one man in a low voice.

"But a sad thing for the poor chap and his people, if he had any," said another compassionately.

"What was it? What struck him?" asked one who came up and joined the crowd.

"The child was playing near the fountain. A runaway team came down the road, making for the place where the child was, all unconscious of the danger. He," pointing to the figure on the ground, "jumped in, threw her from under, and the whole thing passed over him."

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