

IN THE DARK

ANONYMOUS.

It was a blazing day—glorious summer, but it seemed to be robbing Ethel of everything—of hope, of energy and of the life of her child—just as last summer had robbed her of Jack.

Nothing had been heard of him. No news had come to her, and bad luck had dogged her all the time. She had had to move lodgings again and again, every time a little poorer, every time taking rooms a little cheaper; and the only work she seemed to have even a chance of getting was in the office of a private detective agency.

She had applied there on an impulse and had been told that work was sometimes given to outsiders, and that if she cared to call every morning at nine o'clock there might some day be a chance for her.

So she had called—day after day, week after week, and no chance had ever come; and day after day her money dwindled, and she went from bad to worse until now Dickie was ill and she had reached her last penny.

She would make one more effort—she would try once again before she gave up. She hurried through the streets to the office that had become so familiar to her now. She pushed open the swing doors.

"Is there anything for me this morning?" she asked.

On the answer depended the life of her little child.

A clerk, busy over some letters, looked up and began to shake his head. At that moment someone came out from an inner office. He was talking to another man.

"A woman?" he said. "It's a woman we want for this job. Who's that yonder?"

"She's a Mrs. Mayce," the other answered, "but she's never had any work from us yet."

"Send her in to me. I'll see what she is made of." He stepped back, and Ethel turned with a beating heart. Work at last!

The man who had spoken, whom she knew as the manager, looked at her sharply.

"You're Mrs. Mayce?" he said. "Well, sit down. We've a little thing here that you may be able to undertake for us. Anyhow, you can try. Here are the facts: A client of ours, Geoffrey Horner, a merchant in the city, has lost a diamond ring valued at \$125. He left it lying on his desk and while it was there it was stolen. The only person who had access to his room was a young man, son of a friend of his, whose name he will not give and whom he refuses to believe guilty. The young man leaves the house nightly at about six o'clock. We want you to get his name and address and any information you can about him. Here is his description, furnished by our detective. You will have to follow him, of course. You can get your day's expenses from the cashier; here's a memo for \$5, for which you will account to us later—and, of course, any reliable information you bring we'll pay for."

She went out treading on air. Five dollars in her pocket meant food and medicine for her little Dickie.

At five o'clock she put on a black skirt and blouse, which had been too shabby to pawn, and over an old black hat she put a thick veil.

Ten minutes later she was on her way to Geoffrey Horner's house.

Just as she rounded the corner to the door of the house opened and someone came down the steps. She followed him breathlessly, waiting an instant as he stood at the bottom of the steps to take out his latch-key and then followed boldly.

In a moment she was standing level with him upon the top step, and eagerly she looked at his face.

It was thin and white; it looked drawn and sad—it—good heavens! He turned, and the key dropped from his fingers and rang sharply, springing from step to step to the pavement beneath them.

He uttered one word brokenly: "Ethel!"

She put out her hand wildly and then reeled into his arms.

It was Jack—Jack returned from the sea—alive—and a thief!

In his room they faced each other. "Jack, they say you are a thief. I've been set to watch you. I followed you tonight and that is why I am here—to watch you."

He looked startled for an instant. Then he gave a laugh.

"Darling, the thief confessed and returned it tonight just before I came away. It was one of his servants."

He took her in his arms, and looked down into her face.

"I've had a ghastly time," he said, "and you, too. Darling, you look thin and ill. I tried to find you when I got back—but—it was months after the wreck. We had drifted for weeks—we were half mad and half dead when we were picked up, and then I was helpless."

"It was weeks after that before I came to my senses and remembered. I went straight to my father's old friend, Geoffrey Horner, and he has been helping me. First I tried to find you and failed. Then my mother's old housekeeper—she was a fraud. She got all the goods by false pretences and had humbugged my poor old mother, and the lawyer thinks we shan't get much of it; but I shan't care for that, now that I have got you. Ethel! Ethel! Is it really you? It is like a dream!"—Cassell's Saturday Journal.

Price of a Fur Coat.

Dr. Anna Howard Shaw, the suffragist, said at a dinner in Philadelphia:

"I'd rather see a woman wrapped up in politics than wrapped up in dress. It's less expensive, too."

"They talk a lot about these antis, these home bodies; but I was visiting such a woman once. It was about this time of the year, and the little daughter of the house began to read from one of her school books."

"In winter," she read, "every animal puts on a new fur coat which—"

"But the little girl's father turned pale, shuddered and snatched away the book."

"Alice, be still," he murmured hoarsely. "Don't you know your mother is lying down in the next room?"—Washington Star.

Conscience Fund Grows.

The United States treasury conscience fund is growing. It now exceeds \$500,000, received from smugglers, tax dodgers and others.

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CASTORIA.

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