

"K."

[Continued from page 6, Col. 4.]

ney was still her baby. She had given up her dolls, but she still made clothes for them out of scraps from Harriet's sewing room. In the parlance of the Street, Harriet "sewed"—and sewed well.

She had taken Anna into business with her, but the burden of the partnership had always been on Harriet. To give her credit, she had not complained. She was past forty by that time, and her youth had slipped by in that back room with its dingy wall paper covered with paper patterns.

On the day after the arrival of the roomer, Harriet Kennedy came down to breakfast a little late. Katie, the general-housework girl, was serving breakfast. Mrs. Page, who had taken advantage of Harriet's tardiness to read the obituary column in the morning paper, dropped it.

But Harriet did not sit down. "Sidney,"

"Yes, Aunt Harriet." "Sidney, when your father died, I promised to look after both you and your mother until you were able to take care of yourself. That was five years ago. Of course, even before that I had helped to support you."

"If you would only have your coffee, Harriet!"

Mrs. Page sat with her hand on the handle of the old silver-plated coffee-pot. Harriet ignored her.

"You are a young woman now. You have health and energy, and you have youth, which I haven't. I'm past forty in the next twenty years, at the outside, I've got not only to support myself but to save something to keep me after that, if I live."

Sidney returned her gaze steadily. "I see. Well, Aunt Harriet, you're quite right. You've been a saint to us, but if you want to go away—"

"Harriet!" wailed Mrs. Page, "you're not thinking—"

"Please, mother." Harriet's eyes softened as she looked at the girl.

"We can manage," said Sidney quietly. "We'll miss you, but it's time we learned to depend on ourselves."

After that, in a torrent, came Harriet's declaration of independence. And, mixed with its pathetic jumble of reminiscences, hostility to her sister's dead husband, and resentment for her lost years, came poor Harriet's hopes and ambitions, the tragic plea of a woman who must substitute for the optimism and energy of youth the grim determination of middle age.

"I can do good work," she finished. "I'm full of ideas, if I could get a chance to work them out. But there's no chance here. There isn't a woman on the Street who knows real clothes when she sees them."

Mrs. Page could not get back of Harriet's revolt to its cause. To her, Harriet was not an artist pleading for her art; she was a sister and a bread-winner deserting her trust.

"I'm sure," she said stiffly, "we paid you back every cent we borrowed. If you stayed here after George died, it was because you offered to."

Her chin worked. She fumbled for the handkerchief at her belt. But Sidney went around the table and flung a young arm over her aunt's shoulders.

"Why didn't you say all that a year ago? We've been selfish, but we're not as bad as you think. And if anyone in this world is entitled to success you are. Of course we'll manage."

Harriet's iron repression almost gave way. She covered her emotion with details: "Mrs. Lorenz is going to let me make Christine some things, and if they're all right, I may make her trousseau."

"Trousseau—for Christine!"

"She's not engaged, but her mother says it's only a matter of a short time. I'm going to take two rooms in the business part of town, and put a couch in the back room to sleep on."

She came in at three o'clock, and Katie gave her a cup of tea. At the news of her sister's condition, she merely shrugged her shoulders.

"She'll not die, Katie," she said calmly. "But see that Miss Sidney eats something, and if she is worried tell her I said to get Doctor Ed."

Very significant of Harriet's altered outlook was this casual summoning of the Street's family doctor. She was already dealing in larger figures. The recklessness of pure adventure was in her blood. She had taken rooms at a rental that she determinedly put out of her mind, and she was on her way to buy furniture. No pirate, fitting out a ship for the highways of the sea ever experienced more guilty and delightful excitement.

The afternoon dragged away. Doctor Ed was "out on a case" and might not be in until evening. Sidney sat in the darkened room and waved a fan over her mother's rigid form. At half past five Johnny Rosenfeld, from the alley, who worked for a florist after school, brought a box of roses, and departed grinning impishly. He knew Joe, had seen him in the store. Soon the alley knew that Sidney had received a dozen Killarney roses at three dollars and a half, and was probably engaged to Joe Drummond.

"Doctor Ed," said Sidney, as he followed her down the stairs, "can you spare the time to talk to me a little while?"

Perhaps the elder Wilson had a quick vision of the crowded office waiting across the Street; but his reply was prompt:

"Any amount of time."

Sidney led the way into the small parlor, where Joe's roses, refused by the petulant invalid upstairs, bloomed alone.

"First of all," said Sidney, "did you mean what you said upstairs?"

Doctor Ed thought quickly. "Of course; but what?"

"You said I was a born nurse."

The Street was very fond of Doctor Ed. It did not always approve of him. It said—which was perfectly true—that he had sacrificed himself to his brother's career—that for the sake of that brilliant young surgeon, Doctor Ed had done without wife and children; that to send him abroad he had saved and skimmed; that he still went shabby and drove the old buggy while Max drove about in an automobile coupe. Sidney, not at all of the stuff martyrs are made of, sat in the scented parlor, and, remembering all this, was ashamed of her rebellion.

"I'm going into a hospital," said Sidney.

Doctor Ed waited. He liked to have all the symptoms before he made a diagnosis or ventured an opinion. So Sidney, trying to be cheerful, and quite unconscious of the anxiety in her voice, told her story.

"It's fearfully hard work, of course," he commented, when she had finished.

"So is anything worth while. Look at the way you work!"

Doctor Ed rose and wandered around the room.

"I don't think I like the idea," he said at last. "It's splendid work for



"I Don't Think I Like the Idea," He Said.

an older woman. But it's life, child-life in the raw. It seems such an unnecessary sacrifice."

"Don't you think," said Sidney bravely, "that you are a poor person to talk of sacrifice? Haven't you always, all your life—"

Doctor Ed colored to the roots of his straw-colored hair.

"Certainly not," he said almost irritably. "Max had genius; I had—ability. That's different. One real success is better than two halves. Not," he smiled down at her—"not that I minimize my usefulness. Somebody has to do the hack-work, and, if I do say it myself, I'm a pretty good hack."

"Very well," said Sidney. "Then I shall be a hack, too. Of course I had thought of other things—my father wanted me to go to college—but I'm strong and willing. And one thing I must make up my mind to, Doctor Ed; I shall have to support my mother."

Harriet passed the door on her way in to a belated supper. The man in the parlor had a momentary glimpse of her slender, sagging shoulders, her thin face, her undisguised middle age.

"Yes," he said, when she was out of hearing. "It's hard, but I dare say

it's right enough, too. Your aunt ought to have her chance. Only—I wish it didn't have to be."

Sidney, left alone, stood in the little parlor beside the roses. She touched them tenderly, absently. Life, which the day before had called her with the beckoning finger of dreams, now reached out grim, insistent hands. Life—in the raw.

CHAPTER III.

K. Le Moyné had wakened early that first morning in his new quarters. Because he was young and very strong, he wakened to a certain lightness of spirit. But he grew depressed as he prepared for the office. He told himself savagely, as he put on his shabby clothing, that, having sought for peace and now found it, he was an ass for resenting it. The trouble was, of course, that he came of a fighting stock—soldiers and explorers, even a gentleman adventurer or two, had been his forefathers. He loathed peace with a deadly loathing.

Having given up everything else, K. Le Moyné had also given up the love of woman. That, of course, is figurative. He had been too busy for women, and now he was too idle. A small part of his brain added figures in the office of a gas company daily, for the sum of two dollars and fifty cents per eight-hour working day. But the real K. Le Moyné, that had dreamed dreams, had nothing to do with the figures, but sat somewhere in his head and mocked him as he worked at his task.

He breakfasted at Mrs. McKee's. The food was rather good, certainly plentiful; and even his squeamish morning appetite could find no fault with the self-respecting tidiness of the place. Some of the "mealers"—the Street's name for them—ventured on various small familiarities of speech with Tillie. K. Le Moyné himself was scrupulously polite but reserved. He was determined not to let the Street encroach on his wretchedness. Because he had come to live there was no reason why it should adopt him. But he was very polite. When the deaf-and-lumb book agent wrote something on a pencil pad and pushed it toward him, he replied in kind.

"We are very glad to welcome you to the McKee family," was what was written on the pad.

"Very happy, indeed, to be with you," wrote back Le Moyné—and realized with a sort of shock that he meant it. The kindly greeting had touched him.

The greeting and the breakfast cheered him also, he had evidently made some headway with Tillie.

"Don't you want a toothpick?" she asked, as he went out.

In K's previous walk of life there had been no toothpicks; or, if there were any, they were kept, along with the family scandals, in a closet. But nearly a year of buffeting about had taught him many things. He took one, and placed it nonchalantly in his waistcoat pocket, as he had seen the others do.

Change was in the very air of the Street that June morning. It was in Harriet, asserting her right to live in Sidney, planning with eager eyes a life of service which did not include Joe; in K. Le Moyné, who had built up a wall between himself and the world, and was seeing it demolished by a deaf-and-dumb book agent whose weapon was a lead pencil pad!

And yet, for a week nothing happened. Joe came in the evenings and sat on the steps with Sidney, his honest heart in his eyes. Anna, no longer sulky, accepted with childlike faith Sidney's statement that "they'd get

along; she had a splendid scheme," and took to helping Harriet in her preparations for leaving. And K. Le Moyné, finding his little room hot in the evenings and not wishing to intrude on the two on the doorstep, took to reading his paper in the park, and after twilight to long, rapid walks out into the country. The walks satisfied the craving of his active body for exercise, and tired him so he could sleep.

When K. was sure that the boy had gone, he would turn back toward the Street. Some of the heaviness of his spirit always left him at sight of the little house. Its kindly atmosphere seemed to reach out and envelop. Within was order and quiet, the freshness of his turned-down bed, the tidiness of his ordered garments.

Life, that had seemed so simple, had grown very complicated for Sidney. There was her mother to break the news to, and Joe. Harriet would approve, she felt; but these others! To assure Anna that she must manage alone for three years, in order to be happy and comfortable afterward—that was hard enough. But to tell Joe that she was planning a future without him, to destroy the light in his blue eyes—that hurt.

[Continued next week.]

AN OVERWORKED WORD.

This Writer Suggests That "Very" Be Given a Long Rest.

There is a word that once possessed a vigor and a power that is altogether lost. "Verily, verily"—"in truth, in truth." Now it is "very," and, though it still means "in truth," it has become so weakened by usage that it conveys no force whatever.

You meet men on the street and say, "It is a very fine day." What do you mean? Probably you mean, "How do you do?" What you have said is simply a salutation. But if you should say to me, "It is a fine day," you probably mean it is a fine day. That little word "very" has been so weakened, so frayed at the edges, that it harms rather than helps its companions.

So, gentle reader, I would say to you if I had arbitrary power over your speech, "This week I will allow you only two 'veries,'" and, though for a time such restraint may make you self-conscious, yet it will force you to grope about for musty treasures in the storehouse of your memory and furnish up old adjectives and adverbs, even drive you now and again to a careful appraisal of your best slang, and when this temporary self-consciousness shall pass not only your vigor of speech, but your exactitude and clarity of thought will be the better for it. That is a gain that will be worth all the sacrifice.—Burgess Johnson in Century.

Do You Like Horehound?

Your grandfather did in the bygone days, when he was a little boy and his father did not mind how much he had, for it was considered "good for his system."

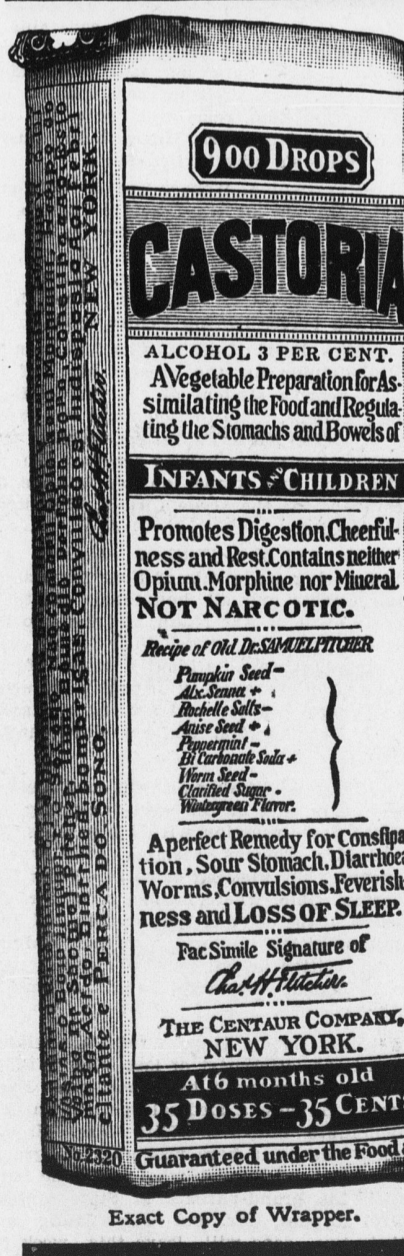
In Egypt the plant was called "bull's blood" and "eye of a star" and was one of those many plants that in those days were eaten to protect the person from poison.

Horehound, horehound, corlander, lettuce and nettle are the five bitter herbs ordered to be eaten by the Jews at the feast of the Passover, and the first has had long service, as you can guess, for it is the seed of Horus—horehound—which the Egyptian priests dedicated to the god of that name, though nobody knows how it came to get the ending "hound."—Exchange.

—Subscribe for the "Watchman."

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