

JUST FOLKS.

It does not matter much that I This day have failed to gain renown. This, to my credit, I reply: "I have not crushed another down. I have not prospered by a lie Nor over trifles worn a frown.

"SUSAN AND THE DOCTOR."

Susan started going with the boys early. Too early. Her mother had died, and there was no one to look after her. Her father had affairs of his own on his hands. Susan's escapades, from the time she was 13, had been a source of talk in the town where she lived. But they seemed all to have happened in a past that was not incredible. People had almost forgotten that she had once gone with Buddie Merton and Carl Flannigan and Chuck Myers and Pat Dougherty—her affair had been going on for so many years with the doctor.

drug store the animated chatter about dances, she wondered if she could actually be Susan—the one whom the boys used to fall over one another to ask to dances, who chose this one or that with imperious freedom, who was the most popular girl of her day. But when she went home after work—home? well, back to Mrs. Calverton's—at half past five through smoky twilight of fall or the welled tenderness of spring, resentful wonder would come over her again. She went up the same gray-painted steps of the large, neat porch. She put her hand on the same bronze knob of the door. Inside, the house odor, orderly and slightly aging and remote, never quite that of home, enveloped her in dreariness. She could not stand the board that creaked on the stairs and the hot-water faucet that ran a meager and maddening trickle.

the evening. "You've never been in love. That's what's the trouble." "I!" Susan exclaimed. "This is about the first time I've been out of it." "You think so," Mrs. Calverton said. Susan laughed gleefully again. But when she went back upstairs to her room, that she had taken such delight in arranging and keeping just as she wanted it, she felt restless and lonely. She began to look at men with a different eye, although she was scarcely aware of it. One day she happened to pass the doctor on the street. She had never really thought, before, of how handsome he was—and interesting, too, and mysterious! Living in that big old brick house on the great lawn that was dark with trees, and with the dimly romantic legend of the "not quite right" aunt and invalid mother. She hadn't really thought of his good looks or noticed them because she hadn't considered the doctor within the realms of possibility. He had never gone with a woman in this town. He never appeared at dances. Susan began to amuse herself by wondering about him and speculating half idly about him. When she hurt her arm, in a fall from the ark at a picnic she wouldn't let Ross Crabtree take her to Dr. Bradley's office when they got to town; but the next day, with a spirit of mischief and daring, and she didn't know what else, Susan went to the doctor's office. She hadn't exactly meant anything at first—nothing that could be put into words. She hadn't thought when she began it that it would be essentially different from her other wild and yet carefully controlled affairs that never went too far—O had she meant something more? Had she been restless, weary, impatient, tired of her cold and narrow hardness, wishing to be forced somehow into change?—At any rate, she hadn't meant nothing like this. She hadn't dreamed, seeing that handsome face upon the street one day and wondering what the doctor would be like if she knew him, how the sullen humors, the regal gloom, and lordly gaiety, the insistent warmth of his intimate presence could break into her shining hardness; and how at last her strength, at the appeal of his sudden childishness, could diffuse into a passion of tenderness. She had no idea when she started, deftly, and with a subtly cool speculation, to draw him to her, that the thing could ever be real—that he would want more of her, and that she would give it, with the future—always so clear to Susan—lost in haze.

Things irrelevant to that statement were the first that came into Susan's mind: Fred Jefferson's eyes, curious and cold, betraying the tone he had taken, and the calculated shock of his statement (Fred was an old beau of hers, he had always taken a sneering tone about her affair with the doctor); and then a painful thrust of anger because she must hear from other people this news affecting the man who was her hero. The news seemed to have no other significance, although a kind of sickness made her food tasteless to her. It was not until she went out of the drugstore, into the open light of the street, that she stopped still—for the barest second—while the meaning of the event opened up dizziness before her. "The doctor's mother died last night." A wildness of impatience thrilled through her. It was agony to go on with her work at the bank. She walked home through a changed, incredible world—it was June, laws were fresh, roses were out. Susan hadn't noticed that until now. The low sunlight of half-past-five lay across Mrs. Calverton's lawn. The green thick stalks of the peony bush bent over and laid flushed thick blossoms against the cool earth. For the first time in years Susan thought of the woods—in the deep green filter of sunlight, the flush of wild geraniums—Cars sped down the wide bright street. She heard voices of children playing. All the town, all the world, was coming out of the tightness and uncertainty of spring into the open and sunlit freedom of summer. He telephoned the bare news to her—a guarded voice, withdrawn and strange. He could not see her just now. He would manage it tomorrow. But after all these years, on this perfect night, it was terrible to be thrown back again into the old tense suspension of living. She ate a solitary dinner, stood at the window a while, and went to bed. The news made its small uproar in the town. Not because of the doctor's mother herself—she had been, in her own person, almost forgotten—but because of the way her death would affect the doctor and Susan. "What's been the matter with her?" There were very few who could actually say. "She used to be quite a beautiful woman. The old doctor did everything for her." It was rumored, but never quite substantiated, that the old doctor had taken his own life. But they only knew that for years she had absorbed the care and money of her son; and all reminiscence of her ended. "I suppose now the doctor will marry Susan." And Susan, accepted for some time in a role seemingly static, became a heroine of a sort in the eyes of the town again. But the summer went on and the doctor still hung fire. The doctor stayed on in the brick house, Susan went daily to her work at the bank and back to her rooms at Mrs. Calverton's. The roses were gone, the peonies shed their petals on the grass; there were only bitter-smelling yarrow and boneset in the woods. People wondered, laughed cynically, or were indifferent; women who had loved Susan's mother talked angrily about the selfishness of men; and the rest of the force in the bank getting their heads together, declared: "Susan ought to give him a jacking up!" There were so many things to think of, the doctor said. There was the old home. There was Aunt Agnes. She trusted him. After all these years, he could not put her in an institution. And when Susan had and resentful in her balked desire, would not agree, he called her cruel and cold. Susan, with the heat and confidence of her fresh bloom upon her, fought with him, almost in the old arrogant way. "It can't stay as it is. Don't you see? That's all I'm saying." "Almost—but without the old straight and clear direction of her free imperiousness—because beyond that statement she dared not go. She was sobbing and angry, her hands still clutching with weakened passion at the edges of the couch, but a feeling of brokenness lay within her. The doctor sat in the big chair that he claimed as his. His voice was husky. He was almost too tired to speak. "Susan, I'm tired. I've got to have some time to myself. I've had this strain for years. I can't think of anything. I can't do anything now." Then, go, then go, Susan wanted to say. But it was only telling herself to go. She was bound up in him. The old habit of passionate consolation remained; and she could not keep her strength or her anger at the tired appeal of his hands loosely clasping the arms of the chair, and the bright remoteness of pain in his eyes. She went over and put nervous arms about him and laid her wet cheek against his hair. After he had left she lay on the couch; and then tired, more tired than he could be, more tired than anything in the world, she struggled up through a daze of weakness to take off her clothes, fold them neatly, wash her face, brush her hair—as her stern sense of orderliness still commanded—and lie down on her single cot—lie down to the old dissatisfaction turned now into apathy. The next morning the lawn outside the windows was not so bright. The green, still thick and deep along the edges, beside the sunken coolness of the old cement walk, was fading into dry brown at the center. The leaves had a look of dustiness. The doctor came to see Susan as always. But a sense of estrangement, an actual thing, not the old resentment that had made her turn more

passionately to him, had crept between them. Or was he a little more cautious and infrequent, now that the eyes of the town were curiously upon him, and that something else might be expected of him? For imperceptibly the light which shone upon that image of two had shifted and brought out the figure of the doctor into relief. The lifting of the strain was beginning to tell. He looked fresher, freer, more vigorous. The gloom had lifted so that his handsomeness was no longer mysteriously perceptible through his aloofness. Anyone could see it now. He met people with an awkward interest. Nothing held him back from them—nothing but the still secret, unacknowledged pull of his affair with Susan. And they felt a new respect for him, for it was plain that he was his own man at last. "Well, the poor fellow," men of ten said, when women accused him of dealing selfishly with Susan, "he's been tied down ever since he was a kid. Let him stretch himself awhile before he gets tied down again." Women, on the other hand, to men who still admired and stood up for Susan, often said with a hard, small clarity of perception: "I think he could do better than Susan now." So that no one was really surprised when he started going with another girl. Susan knew it long before she consciously knew it as a definite actuality, long before her tortured imagination began to settle and dig its talons into the actual image of now this girl and now that. She could only turn at night in a restless fever of conjecture and rejection of the fact itself. She wanted to know, and at the same time skirted all possibility of discovery, until finally her torture of uncertainty grew more unbearable than knowledge itself, and forced her to say to him—a laughing hint that couldn't possibly be true, "I believe you must be going with some other girl!" He answered her impatiently and without sympathy, "Well, good heavens, Susan, you played around long enough! We can't shut out the whole world forever." That answer, little as it told and incredible as it seemed, was an admission. And now the torture of her imagination was worse than anything she had gone through before. She did not know who it was, people were thoughtful enough to avoid all mention of the name, and even of the doctor's name; but she could see their knowledge in the curious conjecturing glances of their eyes. Her natural swift directness made her crave to go straight to the point and learn the fact. But that long suspension of action seemed to have bound her into itself so that she was unable to move hand or foot out of the new agony of suspense. Now, what had she left? But she could not let him go. Still, outwardly, the affair seemed to go on pretty much as it always had. They had their little dinners together. The warm weather lasted on into the fall; and on Sunday they were to drive as usual to the Four Corners. Susan dragged herself out of her tired inertia and got up in good time on Sunday morning so that she could bathe, wash and wave her hair, and press her white silk sleeveless dress. She looked out of the window and saw the doctor coming up the walk. Her roaster stood out in front. He looked handsome, large, well-dressed. Susan felt even more than the old thrilling leap of pride. She wanted to tell everyone that this man was hers. The time had long passed when it was enough to know this sweetly in secret. The familiarity of going down the walk together and getting into the car made her fear look small and foolish, like a night terror dragged into daylight. "Have a good time!" Mrs. Calverton called. She stood and looked at the couple. All the same, Susan had the feeling that the large, well-kept surgeon's hands upon the wheel were not hers to touch. The profile was strange. She chattered recklessly to keep him from speaking. The doctor seemed, after a little while—and that might have been only because the motor wasn't acting well—to be responding to her. It was just like all of their drives, so that when they came to the top of the One-Mile Hill, turned aside from the main road, and stopped in the midst of the tangle of fall flowers, the silence brought back fear to her with a shock of surprise which blinded her. She sat in incredulous stillness; but her heart was pounding. She tried to say that she would get out and pick some goldenrod. "Susan, look here." Even her breathing was suspended. The world was stopping. "We've had the best out of this. Don't you think so, too?" Silence. He turned toward her, and something like the old pleading broke through the strained huskiness of his voice. It was almost like an accusation. "You must have known this was coming as well as I did." Silence—"My God, I wish you'd say something!" Through her dry throat Susan forced a muttered "What?" "Well, just a response. You make me do it all." "What is there to say?" That was all there was to it. Susan felt it, in a terrible tiredness, as she sat with her slim hands loose in her silken lap. The great autumn landscape of brown fields and tufted trees spread out beyond the hill. She saw it. But she could not even feel pain for the difference between this chance final view and all the other happy ones. The doctor felt it. He did not even try to explain. There was so much to be said that there was nothing

ing to be said. And yet there was little after all. The thing had come to an end. He sat hunched loosely over the steering wheel and stared at the autumn landscape, too. Nevertheless, Susan did not die when the affair was over. In fact, she was aware of other powers in her that had never been brought to fullness. In spite of the bleak dreariness in which she moved, she resented the finality of her aspect in the eyes of the town. For a while she looked at the men who came into the bank with a faintly re-awakened interest. She would have to work now to get one of them; but that would be all the more reason for doing it. There was old Tommy Rumsey. His wife was dead. He had always liked Susan, if he was not quite so apt, now, to pat her cheek and squeeze her hand. To him, however, she was young. He was a rich old codger. The town would have to yield her, involuntarily, a place among the matrons if she married him; and sometimes it amused one side of her mind—an earlier side, belonging to the old Susan, having nothing to do with the doctor—to conjecture what she could make him do. Could she force him out of that big house in the country and into a new one in town? Susan thought she might. Now, when she was walking home at night, she made long, interminable plans about what she would do if she married Tommy Rumsey—only to lose them abstractedly, if her eye caught sight of a new car or a strange person or just anything. And the other men—the bank examiner, whom she knew to be a bachelor; a certain pleasant traveling man; Sid Bartley, who had started out as a mechanic, but now with a garage of his own, was a new possibility—they were not worth thinking of. In fact, Susan felt with an amazement about which she could do nothing that she didn't want to marry any one. She resented the patronage in the tone of her old beau—she wasn't done yet!—and the pitying tone of the older women, the way in which the town took it for granted that she was still thinking of the doctor. In the bleak clarity of her vision, she had admitted the truth when he had said that it was ended. Sometimes she wondered—she had told him this or that at such and such a time—but she had waited too long until expectation had frayed out into nothing. His need and demand had crushed out of her more tenderness and passion than perhaps she had possessed. Why should she, Susan the most unlikely one, have been sacrificed to that need? But she understood Mrs. Calverton in that, too. She could not really wish it had never been. She might be happier, but she would not be what she was now, not this Susan. Her love for him had gone too long barked, half fed, unsatisfied. All that had really left was her practical capability. She took refuge in the shelter of that away from feeling. It grew restlessly. She was no longer contented in her work in the bank. She began to talk about going West and finding something else to do. Nothing seemed interesting now, but she could foresee—at the end of a long, dim vista of change—how an interest might open up. She was not finished. But it was finished—her affair with the doctor—her heart; yes, her life after all—"The doctor was marrying Marjorie Pratt. He was building a new house and sending off the old aunt to an institution. His practice was enlarging. People took him as he was. But as long as she lived in this town, they would never look at Susan without thinking of the doctor." (Harper's Magazine.)

RATTLERS, COPPERHEADS ON WAY TO WATER

Doctor J. Bruce McCreary, deputy secretary of health, says that the hazard of bites from rattlesnakes and copperheads has increased because of the extreme hot spells. "These snakes which usually remain in the depths of the forests and mountains are coming to lower levels because of the drying up of local water supplies in their immediate locality," said Dr. McCreary. "While there is no desire to convey the impression that it is hazardous for this reason to be in the woods or near streams, it is suggested that tourists and hikers be on the alert for a possible meeting with a venomous reptile. While even with the present dry weather such a meeting is not very probable, it is nevertheless wise to be on one's guard."

REAL ESTATE TRANSFERS.

Harmon Bowes, et ux, to Clarence Buck, tract in Liberty Twp.; \$1. George E. Young, et ux, to Ralph I. Struble, et ux, tract in Bellefonte; \$1. Anna Bilger to Clarence Ripka, et ux, tract in Spring Twp.; \$150. Dennis Quigg, et ux, to Arthur E. May, et ux, tract in Benner Twp.; \$2,400. Sarah M. Lemon, et al, to Walter S. Mandore, tract in State College; \$1. William Freeman, et ux, to Samuel Finberg, et al, tract in Phillipsburg; \$14,000. Annie H. Krebs to James P. Aikens, tract in College Twp.; \$100. William D. Custard, et ux, to Vera Crawford, tract in State College; \$1. Thomazine Lane, et al, to John S. Walker, tract in Bellefonte; \$1. Clarence Ripka, et ux, to Edward C. Whitner, tract in Spring Twp.; \$2,500. Lizzie A. Weaver, Exec., to John W. Meese, et ux, tract in Spring Twp.; \$1. —Read the Watchman and get all the news.