

TODAY'S PATH.

The path I've trod today is not for me again; The morn will bring new scenes, new visions to my eyes; Each leaf and twig, each tiny blade of tender grass...

FOUR RIDE THROUGH THE RAIN.

Summer rain is more disconcerting than the rain of winter. Perhaps because it is so much more unexpected!

It has a way of rising up, ghost-like, out of the blue and gold of a late, glowing afternoon. It has a way of turning a contented, sunny city into a place of wrath and chaos.

Berta, standing in the doorway of the office building, shaded her eyes with her hand. So that she could more successfully locate an empty taxi in the tumult of the rain...

And then, suddenly, it arrived! A bright maroon car—with the flag triumphantly high. A cab so beautiful, seen through the rain, that it challenged belief!

"Oh, taxi, taxi!" she called, as she splashed through a puddle and tripped against the curb. "Oh, taxi!"

The maroon car stopped. The driver, leaning from his high place, snapped open the door. Everything was perfect until a burly figure stepped in front of Berta and laid his hand upon the door's handle...

"Oh," she exclaimed indignantly, "that's my taxi. I saw it first." "I called you first—didn't I, driver?"

"It's a dollar tip for you," he said quickly to the driver. "It's more'n you'll get from her."

There by the curb with her hat already dripping, with her shoes already sodden, Berta stood. In anger as inarticulate as it was acute.

"Oh, you're mean," she managed. "Oh—"

It was just then that another figure shot out, across the street, from the doorway of the office building. A man figure—but slimmer, less burly, than the one that wore the raincoat.

"The lady's right," said a familiar voice. "It's her cab. See! You—" the voice was suddenly gentle, "you get in, Miss Robinson. I'll take care of this fellow—"

But the fellow, despite his bulk, was turning away. Muttering something unpleasant, albeit beneath his breath. While the taxi driver laughed.

"Wotta bum! sympathized the taxi driver, before he questioned, "Where to, Miss?"

"Where to, Miss?" Berta was climbing into the maroon cab. With the consciousness of David Blackwell's hand beneath her elbow. He—oh, she told herself fiercely, he was so sweet. What if he were engaged to fifteen debutantes. Here he was standing in the rain, ready to fight for her!

"You're awfully kind, Mr. Blackwell," she said swiftly. "You—probably want a cab yourself, too. Can't we—" it took all her courage, after the past noon's rebuff to say it—"can't we share this one?"

With a smile—the nicest sort of smile—Dave was swinging in beside her. No hesitation here. "Turn over toward the avenue," he told the driver joyously, "and I'll tell you where to go from there!"

ped itself around her, like a cloak, whenever she felt Dave's eyes upon her. Oh, it had made such a difference that she had been rude to him when at last his luncheon invitations had materialized—as she had always known that it would.

"Miss Robinson," he had said, pausing on his way past the green steel cabinet. "I wish you'd let me take you to Shafford's, this noon." (Why, she wondered, had he chosen the most public, and smartest, tea-room in the neighborhood?) "I think," there was something boyish and appealing in his voice, "that you'd be an awful peach to go with me."

But she had answered—with Miss Potter's chill, remembered accents drowning out the appeal. "No, Mr. Blackwell, I don't want to." She spoke desperately to hide the tremble in her voice. "I don't think you've any right to ask me!" That had been at noontime. And the filing had gone badly all through the whole of the summer afternoon—perhaps because of the hurt that she had seen leaping into his eyes. Perhaps because of the flush that had stained his lean, sun-browned face.

The filing had gone badly all afternoon. And then, at closing time, the light had been drained from the world and the very sky had fallen! And it had rained so suddenly, so viciously, that the streets were rivers and the sky was a tormented blot of darkness.

And there weren't any taxis left—no empty ones! Not, apparently, in the whole of the city.

The doorway of the office building was crowded with jostling, talking people. From somewhere, back of Berta, a girl laughed shrilly. While two other girls, their hats spread out newspapers, started bravely into the downpour. Men, intent on making the five-fifteen to some suburban place, turned up their coat collars and defied the weather, darting like wet sparrows along the sides of the shops. Here and there some one walked forth brazenly, fortified by the armor of umbrella and rubbers—there are people who always, no matter how unexpected the storm, have rubbers and umbrellas!

But for the most part the crowd in the doorway—pushing against each other in an impersonal eagerness—waited, as did Berta, for any sort of rescue that might come. Waited, straining their eyes through the rain and the tangle of traffic, for the ultimate taxi. Waited because to them, as to Berta, the summer rain spelled disaster to clothing.

And then, suddenly, it arrived! A bright maroon car—with the flag triumphantly high. A cab so beautiful, seen through the rain, that it challenged belief! Berta, glimpsing it first, as it cruised along, gave one little gasp and darted toward it, across the wet of the street.

"Oh, taxi, taxi!" she called, as she splashed through a puddle and tripped against the curb. "Oh, taxi!"

The maroon car stopped. The driver, leaning from his high place, snapped open the door. Everything was perfect until a burly figure stepped in front of Berta and laid his hand upon the door's handle, and started in no uncertain accents to give an address. Berta noticed with sudden anger that the burly figure was wearing a raincoat. No danger of his suit being ruined!

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With a smile—the nicest sort of smile—Dave was swinging in beside her. No hesitation here. "Turn over toward the avenue," he told the driver joyously, "and I'll tell you where to go from there!"

And then, to Berta, "You're the one that's being kind. Say I thought," he leaned toward her, "I thought—" But Berta already was regretting her impulse. Already she was moving away from her rescuer to the farthest corner of the seat.

"You were very kind," she said again, "to help me. But I'm going only as far as the subway. I live very near the uptown station, you see. Only across a narrow street. It's the four blocks, at this end—"

"I'd have been wrecked if I'd had to walk them! So you'll drop me at the nearest entrance, won't you? And I'm going—" her purse was open in her hand, "to pay the fare, that far—"

wanted to talk to you for weeks, for months. Ever since I first saw you. I'm going to take you to the door of your house and I hope you live ten miles from here! And then I'm coming in to meet you people—"

Somberly Berta surveyed him. Even more somberly she spoke. "I live 'way uptown," she said slowly. "It might just as well be ten miles! And—you can't meet my people, Mr. Blackwell. I'm—I'm quite alone in the world. I live in a girls' boarding house. And I'd rather—really, much, much rather—that you'd leave me at the subway!"

It was a long speech for Berta. But it wasn't the length of it that made her so breathless. It was the way—David Blackwell's eyes were looking at her. It was the sudden thrill that sounded in his voice.

"Say," he questioned, "what do you think I am, anyway? Even if you hated me, I'd take you home on an evening like this, and—"

He added to Berta, in a voice that was lower, but still set— "Let's get this straight. Why on earth have you acted so different, the bravado was going out of his tone, now, "in the last few days? You've been as cold as a little iceberg. And this noon! Whew! Well, you certainly put me in my place, this noon. Now, tell me something. Why hadn't I, he was frowning, "a right to ask you to have lunch with me? I think it's only fair."

Berta, conscious that her hat was dripping, conscious that her brave printed dress was shapeless with rain, conscious that, from damp shoes to damp curls she was looking her worst—spoke nervously. "You're one to talk about being fair!" she exclaimed, "and if you don't know why some things aren't right, it's," she fought with a rising sense of hysteria, "it's just about time you learned!"

The frown was growing on David Blackwell's face. During the following moments of silence—while police whistles blared on the avenue and whips of rain beat against the taxi windows—Berta felt that his very eyes were losing their boyishness; that he was growing older, more stern. She clenched her hands together tightly in the damp lap of her printed silk dress. She waited, with a curious sense of fear in her heart, for him to speak. Waited, while his pulse beats kept time to the tattoo of the rain. Waited until she was afraid that the rising lump in her throat would choke her. Until finally Dave's voice sounded. A voice so strangely grave—grave and yet tremulous—that it frightened her.

"If," said this new voice, which she had never heard, "if he can't ask her to go to lunch with him, then," with a swift movement David Blackwell's hand had settled down over Berta's tightly clenched hands— "if a man can't get a girl away from a whole office force, so he can let her know that he's falling in love with her! Why, Dave's face was very near, suddenly, to Berta's face. "Why, I'd like—"

But Berta's hands were jerking themselves away from that swift, hard clasp of his fingers. And her head had jerked back, too, into the farthest corner of dim cab. And it was the message of Miss Potter that rang through her tone, when she spoke.

"Oh," she half-sobbed, "oh, I think you're horrid. Just—horrid! What," her voice was childishly shrill, "what do you know about love? To—to act this way!"

They had left the bright, gallant part of the avenue. They had gone through the shopping district, past the great houses that spoke so sturdily of wealth. They were coming to the place where the fringes of prosperity lay against the hem of shabbiness. But neither Berta, nor the boy beside her, was noticing. The whole world for them bounded by the four walls of a taxicab. It was such a breathless, heated, worried young world!

"You," Dave was stammering, "you haven't any right to tell me that I—" "And you," Berta interrupted, "haven't any right—" And then suddenly the two of them were thrown forward with a jerk that was sickening. Thrown forward so abruptly that they clutched at each other with the instinctive gasp of small, startled children. So abruptly that they didn't realize, for a moment, that the taxi had stopped—that there had been a till, desperate scream. It wasn't until the white-faced chauffeur dragged open the front window that they were conscious of tragedy. It wasn't until he spoke. For—

"Honest to Gawd," groaned the taxi driver, "I didn't touch her! She slipped in front of 'th' cab. I never even touched her coat, let alone—"

He didn't finish. He was climbing down into the street. So, for that matter, was Dave. So was Berta. The three of them hurried around to the front of the taxi (and the pavement was slippery, no wonder she'd fallen!) to the place where the woman lay.

She looked like nothing but a crumpled heap of rusty black garments, lying there under the gray blanket of the rain. Even with the lights of the cab shining full upon her small body, one hardly felt that it was a body. It was so small, so limp, so frail! Only the broken paper bag beside her made the mo-

ment real and poignant. The broken bag from which had spilled such a piteous half-loaf of bread, and two potatoes, and two apples. Though the men hurried, it was Berta who reached her first—before even the police officer from the corner could get there. Before the crowd from the pavements had closed in. It was Berta who sank down in the street, careless of what the puddles might do to a printed silk frock, and lifted a tired head into her lap. A weary, white head from which a shabby bonnet was falling.

"She's so old," breathed Berta. "Such an old lady! I wonder—" But the old woman, herself, answered the half-spoken, half-thought question, by opening faded, blue eyes and speaking.

"I've got," said the old lady, "to get home. He's waiting, you see—I've got to get home. To him."

Dave also was kneeling in the street beside Berta. The rain had plastered a streak of hair across his forehead. The rain dripped from his chin. To Berta he was beautiful. The taxi driver was twisting his hat in his hand. The crowd was muttering, and motor horns, all about, were blaring angrily at the thought of a traffic block.

The policeman arrived, panting. "Knocking down an old woman," he began, "you big—"

But before the taxi driver could speak, the old woman, herself, came to his defense. "It wasn't," she said weakly, "his fault. I was crossing—where I shouldn't. I should've gone to the corner. But I was in such a hurry—"

She paused, fighting for composure. "I slipped," she said at last, confirming the driver's word—"I fell in front of the cab. He stopped—short. He never even—"

He never even— her head dropped, back against Berta, "touched me."

Uncertainly the policeman looked from one to the other. From the huddled heap that was the woman to the obligent, shaking hulk that was the driver. The crowd swayed back a little—after all, a man who has committed no offense can be neither arrested nor mobbed!

It was Dave who settled the matter. "Give me a hand with her," he said to the taxi driver. "We'll lift her into the cab and take her home. Get in first, Berta—" neither of them conscious of the fact that he had not called her "Miss Robinson"—"so that you can steady her. Hand her to the policeman. It's my card. If anything comes up, you can reach me at this address."

In the manner of one who knows relief—on a wet night your sane policeman avoids trouble and the writing of either slip or summons—the officer stepped back. While Berta, climbing into the cab, held out her arms to receive the shabby small figure that the two men hoisted in beside her. And then Dave was back in the taxi and the driver was again on his seat.

Somewhere a whistle sounded, and the traffic was once more in motion.

The address that the old woman whispered, after a moment, was such a mean one! And yet it was only seven blocks from an avenue that swung, like a sparkling necklace, down the length of a city!

Berta, holding the small figure against her shoulder, smoothing back the tumbled white hair, was sharply conscious of the meanness. Just as he was conscious of the utter poverty of the woman's rusty dress and broken shoes.

"There, there," he soothed, "don't worry. Just rest. Just," she smiled, across the white head, to Dave, "just relax. We'll see that you're all right. Don't," for suddenly the thin little body was shaking, "don't hold back the tears. It'll be much better if you cry. Don't—"

But, as if the touch of Berta's hand had released a hidden spring, the woman was speaking. "I don't dare to cry," the woman's thin, broken voice said shakily. "He mustn't know, you see! He'd know if I let myself cry. I mightn't be able to stop. I might not," the shaking increased, "I might not be able to get over crying—if I once let myself start. Then he'd know!"

Wisely, very wisely, Berta asked a question. Knowing that the old woman wanted to talk. That she must talk!

"He?" she questioned. "Who—" The old woman, with an effort almost heart-breaking, tried to control the quivering of her body. "My husband," she said. "That's who I mean. Why, if he knew how close I come to it—" She paused, panting—"If he knew, it'd kill him. He couldn't go on, you see—not without me. I was bringing in—our supper. Oh," with realization came the tears—the tears that could no longer be denied, "oh, where's my parcel? It was—our supper. His supper."

The parcel. A broken bag that had contained a half-loaf of bread, two apples, and two potatoes! Swiftly Dave leaned forward, was tapping on the window.

"Stop," he called to the driver, "at the next food store you come to."

To the old woman he was gentle. "Never you mind!" he told her. "We'll get some more supper for him. For both of you."

But the old woman was right. Once she had started crying, she couldn't seem to stop.

"I haven't any more money," she sobbed pitifully. "I haven't—" But Berta's arms were holding her suddenly tighter, and Berta's smoothing hand upon the white hair was all at once more firm.

"There, dear," said Berta, "don't trouble about that! We'll see that everything is all right. We'll," her voice held the crooning mother sound that is latent in every woman's voice, no matter how young she is, "we'll see that everything's lovely!"

She didn't tell the broken old soul in her arms to stop crying. Perhaps she knew that the sobs would die away while the cab waited in front of a delicatessen store and Dave went inside. It was only

after he had come back, a huge bundle in his arms, that she spoke again.

"Everything will be all right!" she repeated then. "You'll be home in a few minutes, with him!"

But, though the old woman had gained control of her crying by the time they drew up in front of the tenement, everything wasn't all right—quite. For the two men had to carry her gently up the four flights of rickety stairs, while Berta followed with the bag of food.

"Not that anything's hurt about me," the old woman said bravely, "only I'm sort of shaky."

Yet, when they reached the landing at the top of the fourth flight, too she made them set her down. And while they stood, waiting, she set her shabby bonnet upon her head and smoothed her sodden, wrinkled skirt. She was not even limping, as she pushed open the door and led the way into a bar little room—a room lit by the merest flicker from a gas jet. And as she entered that room, her voice called out. Called out so brightly that Berta fought to keep back a swift flood of tears.

"Here I am, Father," she called. "It was raining hard, so some friends brought me home. I'm sorry—" "Oh, he began, "you big—"

From an armchair in the corner—such a dilapidated armchair—rose a man. Older, if possible, than the woman. More white of hair, more fragile. With both hands stretched out before him, he came through the flickering light toward the sound of that bright voice.

"Dearest, dearest," he said. Just that! Then, after a moment, "I was beginning to worry about what had happened to my girl."

Slowly, haltingly, he came across the room. His old face crumpled up into a smile, his hands feeling the air in front of him—his eyes focused beyond the little group in the doorway. It was the movement of those hands, the far look in the eyes, that made Berta lean suddenly back against Dave; that made her fingers search wildly for his fingers.

"He couldn't go on, not without me—" so the old woman had said, "He mustn't guess that anything's happened. He'll know" (not "he'll see") "that I've been crying!"

All at once Berta, remembering the unnecessary preening, there on the fourth floor landing—remembering the little business of a hat being straightened, a garment smoothed, choked back an exclamation of real pain. For the old man, coming toward them, was blind—

They were back again in the taxi, after the food had been unpacked (such reckless food—roast chicken, cream and salads, and tins of coffee and pounds of butter), and a bill had been pressed into a wrinkled hand. After a woman from across the fourth landing had been called in to take overnight charge, a woman had told them the sorry story of an aged couple, stranded and penniless and alone. They were in the taxi. Shut in together, with the rain beating its ceaseless tattoo against the cab windows. Only (somehow) that tattoo had taken on the sound of friendly tapping fingers!

They were back again in the cab. The gray maroon-colored cab. And with something of an effort Dave was speaking. With an assumption of lightness that neither he, nor Berta, felt!

"Dad," he said, "has a place in the country. Tomorrow I'll see that they're taken to it—the two of them. I'll see about it the first thing in the morning. And now," he laughed shakily, "what is your address? So that I can take you home at last."

Berta gave a street number. Her voice faltered over the giving of that number. The wall between them had been down—and now, impassively high, it was building up again. In desperation she spoke.

"Dave," she said (and neither of them realized that it had always been "Mr. Blackwell" before) "I want to apologize to you. For what I told you."

With a weary gesture the man was brushing his hand across his forehead. "Perhaps," he said, "perhaps, after all, you were right. Seeing them, back there, has made me wonder whether either of us knows, anything—about love! And yet," suddenly his voice was vehement again, "I'd like to know one thing! Tell me this! Why wouldn't you go to lunch with me? Tell me."

Berta's gesture of withdrawal was also weary. She seemed to shrink back into her place. "I'd heard of your engagement," she said simply. "Miss Potter had just told me. That was why—"

But David Blackwell was leaning forward. "Miss Potter?" he questioned. And then—"But I'm not engaged! It must have been—" All at once his mirth was filling the cab. "I get it now," he chuckled. "She came into dad's room—Miss Potter. On a morning when dad was just finishing one of his long tirades. Saying that when I was married, he'd maybe give me a partnership. She missed the first half of what he said—he'd been telling me that it was time I settled down, that I ought to find the right girl pretty soon. Of course, he should have phrased it, "if I got married." The 'when' threw the Potter woman off. I guess. Why, you little—"

All at once Dave's arms were kissing her!

"I've wanted to do this," he told her fiercely, "ever since I first saw you—Oh, I don't know a darned thing about love! But darling—" the desperate note was again in his voice, "you'll teach me, won't you? So that perhaps when we're old, we'll be—" they were back again, swiftly, in the dimly lighted, shabby room, "like them—"

A maroon colored taxicab drew up in front of a brownstone house. The sort of brownstone house that could be only a boarding place for business girls. It drew up and stood

for a while. And then the chauffeur tapped meaningfully upon the window.

"You're here!" he said, and grinned as he watched a bedraggled young man help an even more bedraggled girl to alight.

The young man grinned in answer and reached toward the pocket in which he kept his bill fold. "What's the damage?" he asked, and his voice sang anthems as he spoke.

The grin died away from the chauffeur's face. He surveyed the meter ruefully. And then he spoke. "Say, buddy," he said, "the damage—it's fierce! And those old folks were swell. And I like your girl, too. Say—" it was the chauffeur's moment—let's go fifty-fifty on this. You just gimme half what the meter says—"—Hearst's International Cosmopolitan.

YOU CAN'T AFFORD TO DISPLAY BAD MANNERS.

In the old days kings and nobles could afford to be had mannered and usually were.

Today the heads of big industries can afford bad manners, but most of them have learned that they are costly luxuries.

Young men and women, with their futures to look out for cannot afford to be had mannered at all.

That many of them are so, nevertheless, is an indication that their observation is bad and their education imperfect.

As a school child I often heard teachers insist that the pupils be polite to them and to parents.

But I never heard any of them put enough emphasis on the value of good manners generally.

I do not need to say that most people like civility, and are far more likely to take an interest in civil people than they do in loutish ones.

Yet loutishness is by no means confined to "muckers." You meet with it everywhere, on the street, in shops, in offices, and even among policemen, who would be far more useful in enforcing the law if they did their work without assuming that they are the lords of creation and every body else is a crook or a moron.

The kind of politeness that is servile is just as much bad manners as rude speech and sullen looks.

But ordinary civility which springs from a desire to treat others as they have a right to be treated is an invaluable asset, that it cannot be cultivated, if you don't happen to come by it naturally.

Never say to yourself that you are as you are, and that others must take you that way or leave you alone.

If you are mortal you are capable of improvement, and doubtless need it. Begin with your manners.

Use consideration in your treatment of others, employ ordinary politeness in speech with them, and go out of your way to do favors if the chance to do them comes.

If you are young, and poor, as most young people are, you cannot afford to do otherwise.

Every sullen answer or ugly look you give another person is full of danger, but the danger is to yourself.

People have troubles of their own to think about, and they don't want to add to them by having to think up retorts to unkind remarks.

Every well-mannered person finds it difficult to get happily through the early years of life.

Ill-mannered people find it impossible.—John Carlyle.

NEW POLICY TO RULE PLANTING FISH IN WATERS

Under a new policy adopted by the Board of Fish Commissioners and announced today applications for the distribution of fish will no longer be accepted. All distribution will be entirely in the hands of the board and will be limited to those streams in which careful investigation has shown that the species to be distributed can thrive.

The action of the board followed the results of a survey made of smaller streams in all sections of the State. The survey showed conclusively, board members said, that many streams for which applications frequently were received were dried up entirely or so low as to be unfit for fish life.

The new policy of the board is in keeping with recent practices except that it will assume sole responsibility for the fitness of the waters in which fish are distributed. In recent years the board has limited the distribution of trout to the major streams in the various counties. Applicants had to designate the stream in which they desired to plant fish and the records of the board showed the proposed water undesirable the applications were refused.

Much of the same policy was followed in the distribution of young bass. Bass were planted only in the larger streams and all applications for small lakes and ponds were rejected.

Although sunfish, yellow perch and catfish can live under conditions unsuitable for other species the board limited the distribution of each to what were known as suitable waters. In the future fish will be distributed according to the same policies but will be done with the board's own equipment and under direction of a trained personnel.