

"That is, to one of your books," explained Trentham. "Agnes wouldn't have known where a fool had hidden himself, and wouldn't have rescued him from life-long idiocy, if she hadn't found—accidentally left in a book, you know—"

Miss Gordon implored silence with her forefinger.

"By the way, how's that pretty Katrina?" she asked.

"Oh, she is well," said Ellser. "I shall tell her that you are here again, Mr. Trentham, and she will be glad."

Edward Boltwood.

Cousin Louisa's Box.

I.

"If the box will only come in time!" exclaimed Laura. "Cousin Louisa wrote 'I am sending' three days ago, Ellen. Do you think it could have gone astray?"

"Oh, it is probably waiting in the hall till Cousin Louisa can remember to telephone for the expressman," said Ellen, laying the rug she had just been shaking. "We could wear our old muslins—"

"Oh, no!" Laura's answer was a wail of distress. "With two silk gowns coming! I wish I could see them!"

An outsider would not have known that Laura was blind until he discovered the lack of direction in the gentle blue eyes. She was very pretty, far prettier than her twin, though the two were curiously alike, having the same heavy auburn hair and delicate skins.

"Wasn't it sweet of Mrs. Warren to invite us?" Laura went on presently.

"Oh, I don't know. If she was going to ask her old neighbors at all, why not us?" Ellen was apt to ruffle up at her sister's gentle gratitude. "They always had us in the old days—and they're only a little richer."

"Well, but we are seven years older," Laura insisted, "and we're more than a little poorer, and I've become—well, I don't see how I can add much to the gaiety of a garden party!"

"That is absurd! Any one as pretty as you adds to anything," said Ellen impatiently.

"I am truly pretty still, Ellen?" The question had evidently been at Laura's lips for a long time, waiting for courage. "You don't say that to—comfort me?"

"Why, Laura, you are the prettiest woman I know! Your lovely red hair—and your eyes are so blue and nice: and you haven't any lines. I've got lots."

Laura drew a deep breath of relief.

"I am so glad! Giles said so, but then, of course, he felt sorry." Her twin winced, but she went on unconsciously: "I do hope Cousin Louisa has gone in for quiet things this year—we must be a credit to Giles. We'll keep our grandeur for a surprise. If the box would only come!"

Cousin Louisa's box was an institution that became yearly more exciting as her prosperity increased. Cotton linings had given place to silk, lace was no longer cut off, the coats were of a newer vintage, the blouses scarcely worn at all from the standpoint of the twins. The things fitted with almost no alterations; the only drawback was that with prosperity Cousin Louisa's taste showed a tendency to rashness. Big, splashing patterns sometimes brought dismay at the opening of the box, and last year a strawberry satin blouse had proved impossible in the same room with the two auburn heads.

The click of the gate made them both start, then a whistled call preceded heavy steps on the porch.

"Oh, it's only Giles," said Laura.

Ellen impulsively lifted her hands to the duster that bound her head, but dropped them again and went on rubbing up the furniture with frowning energy as Giles Warren pushed open the door. The seven years during which the old Warren place had stood closed seemed to have made little or no change in Giles. He was perhaps somewhat intensified—bulkier, handsomer, more emphatically masculine, his jokes a little worse, his kind heart even more thoughtful; but prosperity and experience had not modified the effect of simplicity and strength that Ellen called his "Newfoundland quality." Since he had come back, he had fallen into the old way of dropping in daily; only, instead of lumbering about after Ellen, he devoted himself to amusing Laura. At least, so it seemed to Ellen, and she abruptly effaced herself as often as possible.

Laura found her twin's temper somewhat uncertain these days, but bore with it very mildly and sweetly. People noticed that Laura's blindness had aged her twin more than it had herself. Perhaps Giles noticed it, too, for his greeting was a protest.

"Why do you wear that thing on your head, Ellen?"

"To keep the dust out," she answered, with a serenity that was really defiance.

"Well, for goodness' sake, take it off," commanded Giles, with the ease of old acquaintance. "What are you knitting,

Laura—something to wear at our garden party?"

"Well, if you think a neat effect in wash-rags would be becoming——"

She laughed, holding up her work for him to see. Ellen left the room with her sweeping sheets and did not come back, though he lingered a long time.

On the morning of the garden party Ellen reluctantly took out the two muslin dresses and put irons to heat.

"But when we might wear silk!" mourned Laura. "I did want to look nice; it's my excuse for going. You can say clever things, but I—oh, listen!"

Her quick ears had caught a sound of rattling wheels. She waited breathlessly, with finger lifted for silence, as they came nearer, her face changing wonderfully from hope to joyous certainty.

Five minutes later Ellen knelt by the box and lifted a layer of tissue.

"Oh, blue, Laura—the loveliest dull blue!" she exclaimed. "And so prettily made! Cousin Laura must have reformed, or else——"

She stopped abruptly. A second layer of tissue had disclosed the other silk gown, and for the moment she had no words for her dismay. No doubt the city called it a new shade and gave it some elaborate name, but to her it was unmitigated and undisguisable magenta, the terrible, discordant color of two decades ago. She glanced from the harsh expanse to her sister's auburn hair; the combination was intolerable. Ellen spread the gown across her lap and looked at it in blank silence.

"I am so glad they are blue," said Laura happily, taking the thing away from her to explore its trimming with her fingers. "I like the way this goes, with the little capes. Is it the same shade?"

"Brighter," answered Ellen after a pause.

"Well, I don't mind that. What dear sleeves! Which one do you like best, Ellen?"

Ellen pressed her hands tightly together and looked away.

"You choose," she said shortly.

"Well, I like this one best;" and Laura held up the bastard red. "But let's try them on before we decide. We must both look as nice as we can. If one is prettier than the other, you've got to take it. You are always so horrid and unselfish!" She chattered happily as she took off her cotton gown and put on the dull blue silk, finding her way deftly among its hooks and bands. She was a picture when she

turned to her sister. "How does it look?" she asked.

"Very well indeed," said Ellen, closing her eyes.

She sat with her face turned defiantly away while Laura put on the other gown, then forced herself to look. The change was cruel. All the tint and delicacy seemed to be drawn out of Laura's face by the brutal color, and her heavy auburn hair had become suddenly hideous.

"It is—very nice," she said.

"Nicer than the other?" Laura insisted.

"Oh, I don't know!" Something in her tone made Laura flush sensitively.

"You see, I have to look pretty, Ellen!" she pleaded. "I'm not vain about it in a silly way, but Giles and his mother have been so kind, and it seems like repaying them. And—and you don't know what a comfort it is to me, Ellen! I couldn't stand going among people if it weren't for that. It's—the only thing I've got left."

Ellen had tried not to listen; but the earnest, half timid voice forced its way in. She rose abruptly and walked over to the window. Presently she turned.

"No, on the whole, Laura, the other is more becoming," she said quietly. "I'd choose that, if I were you."

"And you would just as lief have this?" Laura was already taking it off.

"Just as lief, my dear."

II.

At four o'clock they passed the ancient stone gate-posts, Laura beautiful in dull blue, Ellen caricatured in magenta. She had tried at the last moment to wear her old muslin, but Laura was so distressed that she was forced to wear this or explain. The explanation would have killed the day for Laura; and there was such happiness to the poor girl in her trailing folds of silk! Surely to look like a guy for two hours was not such a tremendous sacrifice. Yet her steps faltered as they came out on the lawn and Giles stepped forward to welcome them.

"Laura, you are the prettiest thing that ever happened," he began; then his eyes turned to Ellen, and clouded frankly.

She warded off the impending comment with a formal smile and hand-shake.

"What a fortunate day you have for your party," she said. "It couldn't be pleasanter. Oh, there is Dr. Mann—the very person I want to see!"

She hurried on. Giles looked bewil-

dered, and even hurt, but she was too much absorbed in her own misery to notice.

Laura was established in a garden chair and the party revolved about her, touched by her beauty and her affliction. Ellen, looking plain and conspicuous, stood at one side, watching her happiness, and trying to feel that it was enough. She saw a hundred glances that passed from her gown to her hair, clearly expressing the "Why on earth?" that could not be put into words. Giles came back to her at intervals, but she snubbed him sorely. When Dr. Mann, whose admiration was beyond the influence of colors, suggested that they explore the garden, she went with him at once, humbly grateful—a mood that took his breath away. When he began to recover it, Ellen found herself on the verge of trouble, and dragged him hastily back to the lawn. Giles would not look at her now, and her cup was full. She made her way to Laura, who turned smiling at her voice.

"I was just telling them about Cousin Louisa's box and the anguish we were in lest it shouldn't come," she said. It never would have occurred to Laura to hide the source of her finery. "Some years, you know, it's terrible," she went on, "for Cousin Louisa's hair is black, and she can wear any color. But this year, when we found two blue silk gowns, it seemed too good to be true."

A flush swept over her twin's face, adding a third red, the most unbecoming of all. She stood helplessly under the quick glances. Mrs. Warren moved over to her and put a gentle hand on the magenta sleeve.

"So these are the two blue silk gowns!" she said, with a smile so full of warmth and understanding that quick tears came into Ellen's eyes.

"Oh, it's not worth talking about," she muttered, and turned hastily away from the group. "Come, Laura, we must go."

Giles walked to the gate with them, guiding Laura, while Ellen obstinately kept to the other side of the road. Something in his eyes made her hands suddenly cold.

"Oh, I have had such a good time!" exclaimed Laura, when they paused to say good night. "Didn't you?"

"No," said Giles.

"Oh, but why not?"

"Because Ellen was so mean to me. She doesn't like me any more, Laura."

"Nonsense!" said Ellen sharply from across the road.

"I know she likes you, Giles," said Laura earnestly. "When she bullies people, that is just a sign she's fond of them."

"And the more she bullies, the fonder she is?" Giles suggested. Ellen tried hard to ignore the conversation, but her color betrayed her.

"Exactly!" said Laura innocently. "Well, good-by, Giles. It was such fun! And you really think we looked nice in our grand blue silks?"

"You looked as pretty as a dream," said Giles, "but Ellen was as beautiful as an angel!"

He held out his hand to her, and there was both pleading and mastery in the gesture; the Newfoundland quality was very strong for the moment. Ellen came slowly across the road.

Laura gathered up her skirts with anxious care, preparing for the dust of the highway. Then she lifted her head sharply.

"What are you two doing?" she demanded.

"Waiting for you," said Ellen breathlessly.

Marian West.

After Fifty Years.

I.

AUNT EMILY sat by the window. She was knitting a wash-cloth, and rocking very slowly to and fro. A breeze which came through the orchard, and which seemed to have been filtered by the apple-blossoms, stirred the little white, soft curls about her temples and the delicate lace of her cap. Her dress of nun-like hue and of equally nun-like simplicity caught a pretty air of brocade from the dancing shadow of the vines that arched her window.

Upon the third finger of her left hand she wore a quaint old cameo ring. The ruffles on her bosom were pinned with a brooch containing a curl of bright brown hair. Around her waist was a long loop of silvery ribbon, and to it was attached—as a rosary bears its crucifix—a large brass key. These were all the ornaments that Aunt Emily had worn for many, many years.

Della sat opposite, hemming a sheet. Della was very young and very pretty, and her lips were curled in a half smile as she thought pleasant thoughts.

"Do you know what this day is to me, Della?" Aunt Emily asked.

Della put down her work.

"No, Nannie," she said. "Nannie"