Explorers of the Dawn

By MAZO DE LA ROCHE.

III.

My brother was looking over my shoulder now. We were filled with conjecture.

"Lucy," said Angel, "owned all this stuff, and Charles was her lover, of course. But who was she? Mrs. Handsomebody never had a daughter, I know; and if she had, she'd never have allowed her to wear these things. Look how she jaws when Mary Ellen spends her wages on finery. I'll bet Lucy was a beauty. And she's dead too, you can bet; and Charles was her lover, and likely he's dead too. 'Bide the time,' eh? You see, they're waitin' around yet—somewheres. Isn't it queer?"

The Seraph's voice came from the window in a sort of chant,—

"The little white star has fallen down the cobbler's chimney!"

"It has fallen down, and the cobbler is sewing it into a shoe!"

"A milkman in wunning down the stweet!"

"Tell you what," whispered Angel; "I'll show you what Lucy was like—just a little. I'll make a picture of her."

The space between two tall chests of drawers formed a sort of alcove, in which stood a pier-glass, whose tarnished frame was draped in white net. Before it Angel drew (without much caution) a high-backed chair, and on it he began his picture.

Over the seat and almost touching the floor, he draped a frilled petticoat, and against the back of the chair—with a foundation of formidable stays for support—he hung a garment which, even then, he seemed to know for a camisole. Over all he laid a charming lilac-silk gown, and under the hem, in the most natural attitude, peeped the little party slippers. A small lace and velvet bonnet, with streamers, was hung at the apex of the creation; and in her lap—for the time has come to use the feminine pronoun—he spread the gauzy fan. He hung over her tenderly, as an artist over his subject,—each fold must be in place,—the empty sleeves curved just so; one fancied a rounded chin beneath the velvet streamers, so artfully was it adjusted. Her reflection in the pier-glass was superb!

"It is here!" chanted The Seraph. "Evwy bit of evwyfing is shinin'. Oh, Angel an' John, please look!"

We flew to the window and leaned across the sill.

It was a happy world that morning, glowing in the sweetest dawn that ever broke over roofs and chimney-pots. The earth sang as she danced her dewy way among the paling stars. The little gray clouds blushed pink against the azure sky. Blossoming boughs of peach and apricot hung over the gates of heaven, and rosy spirals curled upward from two chimneys. Pink-footed pigeons strutted, rooketty-cooing along the roofs. They nodded their heads, as if to affirm the consummation of a miracle. "It is so," they seemed to say; "it is indeed so." One of them hopped up on the cobbler's chimney, peering earnestly into its depths.

"It sees the star!" shouted The Seraph. "It sees the star and nods to it. 'I am higher now than you,' it says!"

Something—was it a breath? a sigh?—made me look back into the attic, where Lucy's clothes clung to the high-backed chair, like flower-petals blown against a wall. The pier-glass had caught all the glory of the morning, and was releasing it in quivering spears of light that dazzled me for a moment.

I rubbed my eyes and stared, and shook a little, for in the midst of all this splendor I saw Lucy! No pallid, rigid ghost, but something warm, eager with life, spreading the folds of the lilac gown like a butterfly warming its new wings in the strength of the sun.

Her bosom rose and fell quickly, her eyes were fixed on me with a beseeching look, it seemed. I drew nearer,—near enough to smell the faint perfume of her,—and I saw then that she was not looking at me, but at the fat little book, The Mysteries of Udolpho, which I still held in my hands. The book that Charles had given her! "Bide the time!" he had written, but she could bide the time no longer.

Proud as any knight before his lady, I strode forward, and pressed the book into her hands,—saw her slender fingers curl around it,—heard her little gasp of joy. I should not have been at all surprised had the door opened and Charles walked in.

As a matter of fact, the door did open and—Mrs. Handsomebody walked in.

She gave a sort of gurgling cry, as if she were being strangled. Angel and The Seraph faced about to look at her, in consternation, their hair wild in the wind, and the rising sun making an aureole about them. The four of us stared at each other in silence for a space, while the attic-room, with its cobwebs, reeled, the sun rose and sank, like a foundering ship, and Mrs. Handsomebody—resembling in my fancy a hungry spider in curl-papers—considered which victim was ripest for slaughter.

"You—and you—and you!" she gobbled. "Oh, to think of it! No place safe! What you need is a strong man. We shall see! The very windows—burst from their bolts!"

She slammed the casement and secured it, Angel and The Seraph darting from her path.

"Even a dead woman's clothes—to make a scarecrow of!"

She pounced upon them. I hid my face while she did it, but I heard a sinister rustling and the snap of a trunk-lid. It was over. "Bide the time."

Ignominiously she herded us down the stairs. The Seraph, making only one step at a time, led the way. Far down the drab vista of the back stairs that ended in the scullery, Mary Ellen's red round face was seen for a moment, like a rising sun; but vanished as suddenly as it had appeared, at a shout from Mrs. Handsomebody.

We were in the schoolroom now, placed before her in a row, as was her wont in times of retribution. Seated behind her desk, she wore her purple dressing-gown with magisterial dignity; the wart upon her chin quivered as she prepared to speak.

"Now, David," she said, addressing Angel by his proper name as usual, "can you say anything in explanation of this outrage upon my property? Hold your head up and toe out, please."

Angel looked at his hands. "Nuffin' to explain," he said sulkily. "Just went an' did it."

"Oh, I thought so," said our governness. "It was just one of those seemingly irresistible impulses that have so often proved disastrous for all concerned. If your father knew"— She bit off the words as if they had a pleasant, if acrid taste—"If your poor father in South America knew your criminal proclivities, he would be a crushed man—a crushed man!"

The Seraph was staring at her chin. Then, "I have one too," he said gently.

"One what?" Her tone should have warned him.

"One wart," he went on, with easy modesty. "It's just a little one. It can't wiggle—like yours—but it's gwowing nicely. Would you care to see it?"

Mrs. Handsomebody affected not to hear him. He stared sombrely at Angel and me, but I believe The Seraph sealed our fate, for, after a moment's deliberation, she said curtly, "I shall have to beat you for this."

She gave us six apiece, and I could not help noticing that, though The Seraph was the youngest and tenderest, his six were the most stinging.

When we had been sent to our bedroom to say our prayers, and change our pitifully inadequate night clothes for day things, I put the question that was burning in my mind.

"Did either of you see her?"

"Who?"

"Lucy, sitting there in the chair."

Angel's brown eyes were blank.

"I saw her clothes. What sickens me is that the dragon took that spy-glass. You see if I don't get it yet." (Mrs. Handsomebody was "the dragon" in our vernacular.)

"Did you see her, Seraph?"

The Seraph was sitting on the floor, his head on his knees. He raised a tear-flushed face.

"I'm 'most too cwushed to wemember," he said huskily. "But I fink Lucy was fat. It's a vewy bad fing to be fat, 'cos the cane hurts worser."

I turned from such infantile imbecility to the exhilarating reflection that I was the only one to whom Lucy had shown herself—her chosen knight!

I was burning to do her service, yet the passage that led to the attic stronghold was well guarded. Two days had passed before I made the attempt. I had been sent upstairs from the teatable to wash my hands,—although they were only comfortably soiled,—and after I had dipped them in a basin of water that had done service for both Angel and The Seraph, I gave them a good rub on my trouser-legs, as I tip-toed to the foot of the attic stairs.

Cautiously, with fast-beating heart, I mounted, and tried the door. It was locked fast. I pressed my eye against the keyhole, and made out in the gloom the dark shape of the trunk, sinister, forbidding, inaccessible. No rustle of lilac silk, no faintest perfume, no appealing sigh from the gentle Lucy greeted me. All was dark and quiet. "Bide the time!" Who knew but that some day I might set her free again?

Yet my throat ached as I slowly made my way back to the table, presented my hands for a rather skeptical inspection by Mrs. Handsomebody, and dropped languidly into my seat.

The Seraph gave me a look of sympathy—even understanding. Perhaps he had heard me mount the distant attic stairs; his hearing was wonderfully acute. He chewed in silence for a moment, and then he made one of those seemingly irrelevant remarks of his which, somehow, always set our little world a-rocking.

"One fing about Lucy," he said, "she was always sweet-tempud."

"Who?" snapped Mrs. Handsomebody.

"Lucy," repeated The Seraph. "Such a sweet-tempud gell!"

Mrs. Handsomebody leaned over him, and gobbled and threatened. The Seraph preserved a remarkable calm, considering that he was the storm-centre. He even raised his small forefinger before his face and looked at it thoughtfully. His speculative gaze traveled from it to Mrs. Handsomebody's chin. I perceived then that he was comparing warts!

(The End.)

Minard's Liniment Cures Diphtheria.

England Wages War on Race Suicide

England is waging a resolute war against race suicide and infant mortality. Unless she can educate her people in the expediency of increasing the British population by British births and of conserving the lives and health of children already born she knows that Germany in twenty years will be able to wage against her a war that Germany will win, then.

Medical statistics confound the average Englishman, who has not been given until the present time to thinking seriously of the death rate and the birth rate per se. A recent publication of these medical statistics has given him food for diquieting thought.

Between 1910 and 1919 a yearly average of 100,000 babies died at birth or were still-born. The yearly birth rate averaged 700,000, exclusive of those babies that had died within twenty-four hours of birth.

But of the 700,000 given to the country 90,000 died each year before they had attained their first twelvemonth's birthday. Those who survived display an alarming health condition. One in every four children in the working classes is mentally deficient, ten in one hundred suffer from malnutrition, thirty in each hundred have defective eyes, twenty-five have adenoids and eighty out of every hundred need the dentist badly.

The poor baby, of course, suffers more than the infant whose parents are well to do. The death rate of children below one month in professional classes averages twenty-one in one thousand, but in the working classes 46.3 per thousand is the rate.

Now, the large percentage of working class children who grew into adults below par was not so appalling a circumstance before the war came to England. I do not mean that their number was less then or that the condition was unknown. These statistics cover a period of nine years. But before the war England still had that population of healthy, wholesome young manhood now lying out in Flanders fields, and the status of the working class was such that their health did not constitute a grave material menace to the future of the Empire.

Such a contestion applies even to the mentally deficient. Whoever arrived a traveller in England prior to August, 1914, and remembers the tattered touts who hung about steamboat piers and especially London railway terminals and ran panting miles after a cab for the sole purpose of unloading its bags and trunks for a penny or two will find no trouble in believing that the figures relative to mental deficiency among slum peoples there are not exaggerated.

But it did not matter so signally while the working classes of England were content. Their women scrubbed and slaved as servants or underpaid factory hands; their men were quite frankly underdogs and the writer often suspected that they were proud of being just that. An exceptional member of a lower class family rose above his station because he was not hampered by stupidity and bad health, and the others were never done marveling at him.

To-day the great majority of these men and women have made up their minds that they are, or must be, the exceptional members of the working class family. They would not accept a penny now for a service! They would not run a block after a cab for a pound sterling! They propose to rule in England, but if they are not uplifted, mentally and physically, they will wreck the British Empire. Farseeing Englishmen know this and have accepted it. Because of their knowledge, they are urging politic legislation and reform anent the underdog of five years ago.

Welfare centres, the first step in all infant saving, are multiplying in every English town and city. It is estimated that $5 a year will save one baby's life at a British welfare centre. Half this sum is furnished by the government and half by voluntary contribution. At the present writing there are 235 British towns that have these welfare houses.

The largest one in London had 700 entries in the year ending June 30, 1919. Fifty babies and forty-two mothers came there every day for care and instruction. To us, this is no great innovation, but it marks the passing of an old order in England.

Woman's Sphere

"As the Twig is Bent."

A sad case came to light in school last week. For some time numerous things had been missed. A book, a half dozen pencils, a child's lunch, a cap, a pair of rubbers, apples, and numerous other small things. Ten days ago someone obtained the key to the teacher's desk, opened it and stole two dollars out of her purse. The teacher said nothing, but watched. A twelve-year-old boy from one of the best homes, but who had never had spending money, suddenly began treating everyone in school. A little judicious questioning brought out the truth; this boy had taken not only the teacher's money but everything else that had been missing.

The entire neighborhood was upset by the incident. How could it be that this boy, the son of parents of absolute honesty, could be a thief? He had been brought up in the Sunday School, told the difference between right and wrong, had all sorts of advantages, and yet had gone wrong. Now if it had been young Peterkins whose family hadn't much, and who probably never was taught anything at home, you could understand it. But this boy's mother was so good and the soul of honesty.

It did seem queer to the ones who didn't go below the surface. But those who had watched the boy grow up rather felt that they could explain it. Two or three mothers got together and exchanged confidences. There was the time when the boy was two and he carried home Jackie Smith's automobile. Of course, it only came from the ten-cent store, but it was dear to Jackie's heart. The lad's mother explained that he was too young to know it was naughty, and it was such a little thing and her son wanted it so badly, it seemed a shame to make a fuss about it and have him return it, so she kept it.

A year or so later it was a sack of pop corn he took away from Jenny Jones. Jennie cried and told his mother, but it was silly to cry over a little sack of pop corn. She did give Jennie a nickle, however, to buy another. All sorts of incidents came up. One told of half a dozen fresh cookies disappearing off the table while the boy and his mother were calling; another had her early roses picked by the boy, who, his mother explained, was so fond of flowers.

The conversation narrowed down to the mother. Was she exactly honest? She never went by a candy counter without picking up one or two pieces, and fruit vendors knew her afar off and hastily covered their choice peaches and plums when she approached. Two or three books with tell-tale library tags were on her book shelves and had been for months. And she prided herself on seeing how many times a week she could get the better of the grocer or butcher in making change. Her argument always was that they always charged her too much and she had the right to get even.

The mother would not deliberately go out and put her hand in someone's pocket to rob them. But was she honest? Had she taught the boy honesty? She had told him it was wrong to steal, but had she taught him that? Suppose when he took the auto, away back in his baby days, she had explained to him the rights of others and made him return the toy. Would he have deliberately stolen money when he was twelve years old?

It seemed hardly probable to the mothers who discussed the case. No age is too young to begin to teach the property rights of others, they all decided. If you begin with the littlest things and insist on absolute honesty regardless of what the other fellow does, the big things will take care of themselves.

Parents, Attention!

The astounding discovery that approximately five hundred thousand school children in Canada to-day are under weight has naturally and properly led to concerted action to the end that this appalling condition of affairs may be rectified as soon as possible. Draft statistics show that seventy per cent. of the men were rejected for defects that could have been prevented or cured by care in childhood. Weight and rate of gain form one of the best tests of health in children.

Home Decoration.

Henry Van Dyke calls the pictures on his walls the windows of his home. Through them he gets glimpses of the beauty which lies beyond the section of living space bounded by the stone walls of his home. Through one such window gave him a view of the mountains, with all of the uplift of a daily climb, in thought, to their summits.

The influence of such silent teachers in the home can hardly be estimated, but in nothing else is the average home so poorly furnished. Good taste may be displayed in the choice of carpets and easy chairs. Wall paper may be selected in quiet restful tints, but the decorations may be family portraits framed in objectionable ornate mouldings, cromos, representations of Indians in gaudy war paint, or so-called oil paintings, purchased perhaps of some itinerant vendor and suggestive of nothing in the heavens above or the earth beneath.

Seasonable Recipes.

Mock Bisque Soup.—Simmer one quart of tomatoes until they will go through the strainer, adding one-fourth teaspoon of soda just before removing from the fire. Strain, and add to a white sauce made with one quart of milk, two tablespoons of butter and a half cup of flour. Season to suit with salt and pepper, and two tablespoons of sugar. Pour in hot soup dishes and place one tablespoon of whipped cream on each service. Then sprinkle minced parsley on the cream.

Pear and Cheese Salad.—Select halves of large canned Bartlet pears. Place on lettuce leaf on serving plate, fill hollow in pear with cottage cheese, and cover with sweetened whipped cream or boiled salad dressing.

Sailor's Duff.—One egg, two tablespoons of sugar, two tablespoons of butter, one-half cup of molasses, one teaspoon of soda dissolved in one-half cup of hot water, one and one-half cups flour. Mix in order named and steam one hour in buttered pudding dish.

Burnt Cream Sauce.—Melt one-half cup granulated sugar in enameled saucepan, add one pint of thin cream and set over hot water until the sugar melts again.

Raspberry and Currant Ice.—Boil four cups of water and one and one-third cups of sugar twenty minutes. Put two cups of canned raspberries and two of canned currants through ricer and strain through double cheese-cloth to remove seeds. When the syrup is cool, add fruit juice and freeze.

Lemon Ice Cream.—Scald one pint of rich milk and stir into it one level tablespoonful of cornstarch. Add one-half cup of sugar and cook in double boiler ten minutes, stirring frequently. Then add the yolks of two eggs, beaten with a half cup of sugar, stir until well blended, add one pint of cream and strain. When cold add one tablespoon of lemon extract and freeze.

Hot Maple Sauce.—Boil two cups of maple syrup with a half cup of cream or butter until it threads. While still hot, pour over the serving of ice cream.

Creole Chicken.—Cut in pieces for serving, season with salt and pepper and brown in four tablespoons of butter melted, to which has been added one-fourth cup of finely chopped onion. When the chicken is browned remove from frying pan, thicken mixture in pan with four tablespoons of flour, add two cups of stock or boiling water, two cups canned tomato, one finely chopped red pepper, one-half cup of chopped celery, and salt to taste. Replace chicken and simmer until tender. Serve on platter surrounded with sauce, and garnished with parsley.

Minard's Liniment Cures Colds, &c.

In this world it is not what we take up, but what we give up that makes us rich.—Henry Ward Beecher.

In Scandinavia wood is the usual fuel, while the towns and villages are electrically lighted by waterpower. Norway has no coal, but Sweden has lately discovered that she has good supplies.

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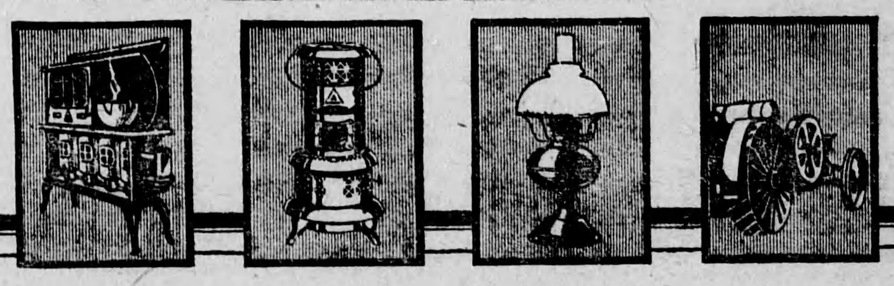

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