

The Free Press Short Story

SEALED LIPS

ALICE DYAR RUSSELL

KATE WORTHING had been very sure of herself all her life. When as a child she had been wont to thrust out a small, determined chin and pursue confidently her own way, she was always sure her way was the only right one.

"You will never be a perfect character, my dear," Justin Harper had told her in a prophetic voice, "until you have been terribly silly or dead wrong once or twice."

She had been wise in choosing a career. As public health nurse she earned a good salary and the work made use of all her fine capabilities. She had been wise, or so everyone thought, in engaging herself to Justin Harper, the promising young doctor.

"Did you hear that when Hills Beem had appendicitis, Mrs. Beem called in Doctor Whalley? She won't have Harper any more."

"They say the young doctor had taken a little too much the time he set the Willing boy's leg. Didn't the Willings have to go to Chicago and have it reset by a specialist?"

"Anyhow the Willings and the Beems and the Toppes have all gone back to Doctor Whalley. There must be a reason."

"Yes, indeed. No smoke without some fire." The end of it was that the practice which Justin Harper had acquired trembled in the balance, slackened, dwindled, became nil. One morning the doctor's name plate was gone from the office door and Justin and his belongings from the house where he boarded.

undernourished children in the slum districts. Ursula related stories of adventurous trips she had made into remote regions and the ignorance and superstition she continually had to combat.

"We've done wonders in our part of the country this year toward educating the public; but most of the credit belongs to the doctor. You can't realize," she continued earnestly, "how much depends on the type of doctor a country section is lucky, or unlucky enough, to draw. The fine old general practitioner is passing, as you know. Few young medical men are willing to bury their talents in small towns. They'll spend a year or two there, if they have to, for experience; but they always have an eye on the city; you'll rarely find one whose real purpose is to 'stick' down where half his work will be on country roads. Young doctors want hospitals and a big city practice, or a specialist's work in a large clinic."

"Yes, I know one like that," Kate spoke out sharply, her hand going to her heart as if she felt an unendurable pain there. "It wasn't for the good he could do that he entered the profession; he wasn't interested in service—I found that out—but to make a name for himself, and big money. He neglected a call once from a poor family in order to attend a rich woman who didn't really need him—and a little baby, did I—I couldn't forgive him—ever!"

"Oh, but, my dear! Never's a long time. Life battles us about, you know. We have to learn. I leave it to the Almighty to do the judging—I'd rather not. How can we tell what's going on in a man's heart? It's natural enough to be ambitious when you're starting out. I don't blame the spruce, up-and-coming, young city doctor—he'll learn. But I thank my stars when sometimes happens the other sort, where he's needed—like the one we've got: humble, hard-working, never sparing himself. I don't know what he lives on; he forgets to send out his bills; he's on the road night and day; uses a horse when the roads are blocked. Oh, I take off my hat to him," she concluded, laughing. "I used to be the whole cheese up there, but I tell you I have to take a back seat now. Everybody adores the doctor! Why, I could tell you more stories—" she began to tell them while Kate listened, absently. Incidents assumed a dramatic importance, names slipped out.

"Look here," the older woman interrupted her narrative abruptly, her keen eyes studying Kate's face. "You look sick, girl—you're white, do you know it? You're working too hard, that's it: You have been carrying this whole convention on your own shoulders; besides doing the work of three women regularly. Can't abuse your health and expect old Mother Nature not to take revenge. Since when have you had a vacation? Just as I thought! How'd you like to come up in the country with me for a week? Fine air in the world if it does 'til 'em below zero most of the time? Be a change anyhow. What'd'ya say?"

Kate's eyes shone through the tears her friends attributed to nerves. "I'd like it of all things!"

Three days later, in the hallway of a comfortable home in a small northern town, Kate was allowing Ursula to draw her own fur coat up close around her ears in preparation for an assault upon the wintry streets.

"You will do it your own way," she scolded Kate affectionately. "I think you're crazy."

"You used to want me to be dead wrong at least once, Justin. Well, he said—I was, when I sent you away!"

"Tread to disillusion you, darling, but that was the rightest thing you ever did."

"Oh, but I've suffered so!"

"For me, I mean, and in the end, for you. I took this job because it was the toughest one in sight—for spite, I suppose; I was made clear through—and now, you couldn't tear me away!"

Kate gave a fleeting touch to his hair. "Perfectly happy, are you? Nothing more needed?"

He held out his plate; his eyes sought hers. "You to cook my steak, Kate."

LEGION HELPING FORCES DEVELOP SENSE OF HUMOR By F. H. Wooding

If the British fulfill their promise to hang their washing on the Siegfried Line, it's an even bet that among the "wollies" to dangle in the Nazi breeze will be many bearing the trade-made, "Made in Canada." This whimsical determination is shared by every member of the C.A.S.P. and it is all because they are developing a sense of humor that bids fair to outdo even that of their British comrades.

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The problem of producing clean milk and first class dairy products is demanding more and more attention from the dairy farmer. The question of buildings also merits consideration. A modern dairy barn is airy, well ventilated, and is free from dampness. It has steel stanchions or adjustable cattle ties, and the length of the stall and the width of the gutter are constructed so that cows of different size can be placed accordingly.

Another problem, C. D. MacKenzie, Animal Husbandry Division, Central Experimental Farm, Ottawa, points out, is that of keeping the stable clean. It should be remembered that clean milk production requires dust free air at milking time. Therefore the throwing down of hay, the cleaning out of the stable, or the cleaning of cows stir up dust and odors some of which may contaminate the milk. If stables cannot be cleaned out at least one-half hour before milking it is better to delay this operation till after milking has taken place. However, manure should be scraped carefully into the gutter and the bedding re-arranged without causing any more dust than possible.

The cleanliness of the coat bodies is one of the chief factors relating to the contamination of milk. If the cows are allowed to become filthy through standing or lying in the gutter, defective milk is likely to result. In addition, to keep cows clean and to avoid contamination, the thorough grooming of the cows daily

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The output of 3,500,000 silkworms which spin their silk in the stately rooms of a 15th century Kentish castle is being investigated by officials of the Supply Ministry and Air Ministry who are responsible for the provision of parachute cloth.

The only place in Britain where silk is produced, Lullingstone Castle, is the ancestral home of the Hart Dyke family, but Sir Oliver, the 8th baronet, and his lady live in a small cottage on the estate and the silkworms "go into residence" in the Castle itself for 30 days in each season while they spin their silk.

King James I and King George I both unsuccessfully tried to create a home-produced silk industry, but success has attended Lady Hart Dyke's efforts, which started in 1932 and supplied the raw silk for the Queen's Coronation dress and the Coronation robes of the Princesses and the Royal Duchesses.

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