

[COMPLETE STORY.]

FOR VALUE RECEIVED

By George Darnell

... across the long hall, with its tiled floor and its marble wainscoting; the light from an open doorway fell. The man who had just alighted from the elevator and was slowly strolling along paused by this doorway and looked in. It was not alone curiosity that held him there; a sudden slight faintness had attacked him, and he was glad of the support of the door frame. He clutched at this as his eyes searched the interior of the room. It was an office of some sort, with several desks and numerous chairs, but its only occupant was a girl at a type-writer table near the centre of the room.

The man in the doorway looked hard at this girl; she was quite unconscious of his presence—and he liked the poise of her head and the way her hair was dressed, and the dainty collar about her white throat. And there was something fascinating about the play of her white fingers above the keys. And then all at once the white fingers seemed to blend together, and he found his clutch on the door frame growing tighter.

Perhaps the girl heard him as he strove to hold himself up. Anyway, she suddenly looked around and saw him. In a moment she had risen and pushed her chair back, and was coming toward him.

"I beg pardon," she rapidly said, "but you are ill." He tried to mutter something in return, but the words refused to take shape.

"Come to the window," she said. "I'm sure you need air."

She took this arm and half led, half supported him across the room and put him in an easy chair by the window and raised the sash a little higher. Then she turned and ran to a corner and returned with a glass of water. When she returned his head drooped back. He had fainted.

When he came back to consciousness a soft hand was moistening his brow, and two sympathetic eyes were looking down into his. He let his own eyes fall shut again and took a long breath of satisfaction.

"Are you better now?" It was a delightful voice.

"Much better, thank you." He opened his eyes again. She had drawn back, and her hand no longer rested on his forehead.

"Here is a glass of water." She sipped a little.

"Thank you," he said again. "So sorry to have troubled you."

"The trouble is nothing. You are sure you are getting stronger?"

"Yes, I would like to rest here for a few minutes, if you don't object. I will go just as soon as my strength comes back."

"You are welcome to stay as long as you like."

"Thank you once more. It was foolish of me to collapse in this fashion. But I have been ill."

"Yes, I see you have."

"It was a fever, and I am not myself yet. The sun affects me so quickly. But I am drawing you from your work."

"No, I want to know that you are all right again before I go back to it."

"I'll be all right in a few minutes."

"Do you wish me to call anybody?"

"No, no. All I want is a little rest and the fresh air."

She looked at him keenly. His clothes were plain, and they were not new.

"Have you had any breakfast?"

"Very little," he answered.

"Perhaps that is one reason why you grew faint. When she returned she had something wrapped in tissue paper. It was a toothsome-looking sandwich.

"Eat that," she commanded. "You need not be afraid of being observed. The desk hides you from the doorway, and Mr. Miliken will not be back before noon." And she put the sandwich in his hand.

"But I am robbing you of your lunch-
oon."

"I am sure you need it more than I do. Eat it please."

She spoke as if he were an obstinate child. And he obeyed her.

She watched him for a brief moment, then turned back to her typewriting. When she came back a little later every crumb had vanished.

"It was awfully good," he said. "But that goes without saying. You see, I haven't left even a crumb for a souvenir."

She looked at him keenly again.

"I'm afraid," she said, "that you are not as good to yourself as you should be. Why don't you eat when you need the food, and why do you walk in the street when the sun affects you? But there," she hastily added, "it is no affair of mine."

"I am glad to have your sympathy," he said. "It is a novelty to have any one show a kindly interest in my welfare."

"Have you a home?"

"No."

"No relatives?"

"No."

"Are you looking for work?"

"Yes," he answered.

"But you are not well enough. I must work."

The look of sympathy in her clear eyes despond.

"And have you had any success in your search?"

"No."

She frowned a little.

"How does it happen," she asked, "that you are in these unpleasant straits? You look like a gentleman. You spoke like an educated person. Why are you so unsuccessful?"

"Circumstances, perhaps," he answered; "lack of ambition, maybe."

She frowned again.

"You must have had some experience. You are not a young man."

"I am 35."

"Isn't there some employment you are specially fitted for?"

He shook his head.

"I'm afraid not. And he sighed. Then he came and faced her. "I will not bother you any longer," he said.

"You have been kind. I am grateful for your sympathy, and I am glad you consider me a gentleman. Good-morning," and he turned away.

"One moment," she said. "Take care of yourself. I wish you good luck." And she put out her slim hand.

"Good-bye."

He took her hand, and when she withdrew her fingers he found a silver dollar in his palm.

He looked at it after he reached the hallway, and a sudden smile crossed his face. He was still holding it when the elevator took him to the upper regions of the huge skyscraper.

Miss Nellie Blanchard was alone in the office of Miliken and Co., manufacturers' agents, the next morning when she became conscious of a form in the doorway. She looked up with a little start. It was the stranger of the day before. He seemed brighter and better.

"Good morning," he said. "May I come in a moment?"

She pleasantly nodded.

"You look much better."

"I am better. I'm taking your advice and treating myself with more consideration. I enjoyed a good breakfast this morning and I've kept out of the sun."

"That's good. Won't you sit down?"

"Thank you. I will for just a moment. I was passing by and saw that you were alone."

He paused, and then suddenly added: "But I haven't brought that dollar back."

"Never mind that," and the girl laughed. His tone was so serious. "I'm glad you had a good breakfast. And how about the chances for employment?"

"They are brightening."

"How is that?"

"I've got an opportunity to do something in the real estate line."

The girl shook her head.

"Too many in that business now," she said, with a little sigh. "That was my father's business. He was considered a successful operator. But he went in too deep at a time when he should have been slow and careful. A certain allotment swamped him financially. It broke his heart, too, and no doubt hastened his death. I have little cause to think well of real estate."

"Evidently not," said the stranger. "But it seems just now as if it were the one easy thing for me to get into."

"Well," said the girl, "I wish you success in it."

"And may I report progress to you occasionally?"

The girl hesitated.

"I don't think there can be any harm in that," she said. "Of course, it must be progress."

"Of course."

"Very well."

"One thing more. You mustn't think I'm going to forget that dollar."

"I don't expect you to pay it before you receive the means," said the girl with another little laugh.

"Thank you," he said. "And perhaps I'd better tell you my name. It seems more businesslike. It's Rhodes."

The girl smiled.

"I shan't forget it, Mr. Rhodes. It will be easy to remember. It's the name of the owner of this very skyscraper."

"You mustn't get us mixed," said the stranger, with a sudden laugh.

The girl looked the man over in her quick way.

"I'll promise not to do that," she said.

The stranger arose.

"I hope I'll have something definite to report soon," he said.

"I hope you will."

"Good-bye, Miss Blanchard."

"Good-bye, Mr. Rhodes."

And it was not until after he had gone that she wondered how he had learned her name.

It was two days later before he again appeared. He looked still better. There was a spruce about his attire that appealed to the girl's critical glance. He

seemed to have gained in manliness, too.

"Congratulate me, Miss Blanchard," he said. "I have a situation at last!"

"I am glad to hear it," she said. "And I hope you will keep it."

"Oh, you must have confidence in me. You know, you encouraged me to look for it, and you mustn't cloud my gratification."

"I don't mean to do so," said the girl. "Is it a good place?"

"It will keep the wolf from the door," he answered, cheerily. "That's a good deal to me just now, you know. Places are scarce and the pay is only moderate."

"But it's a place."

"It's a place."

"And it means daily toil, and useful discipline, and manly independence."

"Yes."

The girl looked at him with a little nod.

"Good," she said. "You are an apt scholar. I think I'm going to be proud of you." A soft flush stole into her cheeks.

"If you are in need of a little money before your salary is due I think I could help you."

"No, no," and he shook his head vigorously. "I owe you a dollar now. No more until I pay that."

"I hope you'll require no more after you pay that," she said.

They were getting on good terms now, and the more she saw of the stranger the better she liked him. He didn't seem to presume on his acquaintance, never losing his deferential manner, never getting that he was a gentleman. And as they became better acquainted she told him about her own struggles. How her father's death had left her mother and herself penniless, and how it was necessary for her to find employment. She told him how she had hunted for work and finally found it. And what a struggle it was at first. And how, after a time, she had won her way and was in receipt of a fair salary, and could support herself and mother in comfortable circumstances.

And the stranger had listened with much interest, and had said some pleasant things about her perseverance and her energy. But he had said little about himself. He deserved no credit for any-

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