

hour, to have this story haunting him as he knew it must do, however long he might live. How long he had sat there, suffering thus, he never knew—for weeks and months it seemed to him,—before he heard a footstep in the hall, close to the door of the library. Hastily he turned the page and forced himself to read the editorials on which his eye alighted. The first, something about the tariff question, was to him but a jumble of meaningless words; the next was so, too, until a phrase caught his attention, sent a new thrill of horror to his heart and impelled him to re-read it from the beginning. No name was mentioned: it might as well have been, however, so pointed were the references to a prominent citizen, a member of the Catholic Church which claims to follow more closely than any other in the footsteps of the Man Who so tenderly loved the poor; a multi-millionaire, professedly a philanthropist, whose cruelty and insatiate greed were worthy of pagan Rome. 'A man of stone.' Each word burned itself into Mr. Blair's mind and heart. Through all the weary days of all the years that followed he was never able to forget them.

Mrs. Blair flitted into the library, complaining that she had mislaid her gloves, and flitted out again, singing snatches of a popular song. A few seconds later a maid entered the room, and went away, leaving Mr. Blair at the mercy of his own thoughts. In desperation he glanced over the paper in search of something to read,—something that would help him to forget, if only for a minute. The account of a murder served but to remind him that somewhere, not far away, a little rigid form was lying that night. He turned nervously to the report of a Socialistic speech. It, at least, was safe ground. He forced himself to read the trite preamble, the usual tirades against Capital, and was about to pass wearily to something else when, far down in the column, these sentences caught his eye: 'He is one of our most respected citizens. Will this injure his prestige?' Not at all, though there is one child less in the world to-day and one more heart-broken mother!

A quarter of an hour later Mrs. Blair re-entered the library, her arms full of magazines. She thought at first that her husband had fallen asleep: but he stirred slightly as she passed him, and she began to sing again, softly, to herself. She went to the piano and tried two or three new marches which she had bought that morning; then, without turning around, she said happily:

'John, to-morrow evening we are going to the dinner-dance at the University Club. Had you forgotten?'

Mr. Blair made no reply.

'It will be lovely, won't it? I have a new gown for the occasion.'

Still Mr. Blair said nothing. Her words he hardly heard. Other words were ringing in his ears, aching in his heart, agonising in his soul.

At noon, through a crowded business street in one of our great cities, a man walked alone,—a thin, sad-faced man, not old but bent, not feeble but slow of gait, as if he were weary, weary all the time. About some people, even in the midst of a throng, there clings a certain solitariness: they are never one of the crowd but always distinct from it: and so it was with him. He seemed to be hardly conscious of the people about him, uninterested in them,—one who would be lonely always and everywhere, isolated from his fellows by superior talent, or marked peculiarities, or more than ordinary sorrow.

After he had walked for some time he stopped on a corner, there to take a street car. The minutes passed. A number of people gathered, and waited and grew restless, but no car came. Evidently there was trouble somewhere on the line, which causes annoyance at any hour, but is peculiarly aggravating at the busiest time of the day. Two women railed against the company: their companion laughingly insisted that there was no hurry: their luncheon would but taste the better if their appetites were keener. Some young boys joked

boisterously about the delay, claiming to be disturbed lest they should be late for their Latin class; such a calamity would break their hearts, they said. Several business men paced back and forth in a fever of impatience, aggravated by the frequency with which they consulted their watches. Only the thin, sad-looking man appeared unaware of the delay, or at least indifferent to it. Quietly and patiently he waited, listening unsmiling to the sallies of the boys, and mildly observing the others as they waxed loud in the expression of their wrath.

Presently a worn woman, poorly but neatly dressed, came down the street toward the restless group stationed on the corner. She walked very slowly: for beside her limped a little boy whose pallid face told a long story of much suffering crowded into a few years. He was holding fast to his mother's hand, listening to what she said with a smile, boyish, and yet so sad and patient that it was painful to see on the face of a young child. As they drew near all watched them, silent for the moment. The women, ashamed, ceased complaining: the men, irritable over a trifling delay, envied the child his placid slowness: the young boys stopped their joking to look reverently at the little cripple, and were silent long after he had passed. The thin man did not take his eyes off the pair from the moment they came in sight: and when they had gone half a square beyond him, just when at last a car was approaching, he obeyed a sudden impulse and hurried after them. Easily overtaking them, he raised his hat, and said to the mother, not without a trace of embarrassment:

'Pardon me! My name is Blair. I should like to speak to you for a few minutes.'

The woman was surprised,—this was evident: but she said nothing, only waited quietly for him to explain himself. In the instant that he paused Mr. Blair saw that, shabbily as she was dressed, there was an unmistakable air of refinement about her, and later when she spoke it was as one gently born and reared. The child smiled up into his face in the friendliest possible way.

'It is about your little boy,' Mr. Blair began bluntly. 'He does not seem to be strong, and—and I am interested in children, in delicate children especially. I might say that there is nothing else that interests me very much. I wonder if anything could be done for this boy. Perhaps a specialist could do something for him. You must not mind my asking: and you would let me help, wouldn't you?'

'You are very kind,' the woman said a little stiffly, surprised, touched by his interest in her child, and offended by his offer, all at the same time. 'I have never taken assistance from any one, though I've been a widow for five years and poor,—very poor. But somehow I—I don't think I should much mind your helping me in this. It would be for Jimmie, and you are fond of children, I see that. But, Mr. Blair, I fear nothing can be done. The doctors have tried. They say there is only one man in the whole world who could do him the least good and he lives in Germany—in Berlin. Even he might not succeed, and it would cost a fortune to go to him. There would be travelling expenses and board to pay, as well as the doctor's bill! But thank you, Mr. Blair, thank you very much. Jimmie, thank the gentleman for his kindness.'

Jimmie did so by slipping his small hand into Mr. Blair's, and saying brightly, though not without a trace of wistfulness:

'You mustn't mind about me. I don't mind much myself, except when mamma feels badly about me and when the other fellows play baseball or skate on the pond near our house. It's a dandy pond; big, with lots of pollywogs in it in summer.'

Mr. Blair was silent for some moments, gazing into the little upturned face for an instant; then he quickly looked away as if the sight pained him.

'If you will permit me,' he said, turning to the mother, 'I should be glad to send you and Jimmie to this German specialist. It doesn't matter what the cost may be: and there is a chance, you say.'

The woman hesitated. Her pride revolted at the idea of accepting help from this stranger, kind as he