

she missed. We saw the poet sitting by the fire; we heard the wife chatting on, sweetly, winsomely. We heard the music of the competing bards; we saw the chirping cricket win the prize. And then, for encore—and she earned her encore—Miss Carmichael showed her astonishing versatility by giving one of Tom Daly's dialect poems. For the time being she was an Italian peanut vendor, deliciously true to life. Oh, that girl is an artist!

The moment she left the stage, I got up and made for the door. In the hallway Miss Nolan, the mistress of nurses, overtook me. Miss Nolan is all angles and antiseptics and starch and imperialism. How dare I leave so soon—I simply must stay for supper. I fear Miss Nolan considered me rude.

'I have no intention of leaving,' I said. 'But I want information. Who is that girl, and what on earth does she want to take up nursing for?'

Miss Nolan's black eyes, behind her bulging glasses, pierced my immortal soul. But I didn't wince; I had nothing to wince for. I merely wanted to know.

'Miss Carmichael is a girl we are all very proud of, Dr. Farraday. She is just bubbling over with talent. And she will make a splendid nurse.'

'Yes, yes; I know. But why? That girl is an exceptional girl—I can see that at a glance. She would be a leader in any profession; her artistic endowment amounts to genius—positively genius. Why the mischief does she waste her time in a sanatorium? She's too good for nursing.'

That shocked Miss Nolan, of course. As though anybody could be too good for nursing! The mistress pulled her mouth into a thin, straight line and glared at me politely; that is Miss Nolan's way.

'I am glad, Dr. Farraday, that you are so interested in Miss Carmichael. She is much engrossed in her profession. In fact—and I think I may tell you this without any breach of confidence—she intends to make it her lifework.'

'Oh, bosh! That's what they all say. The rank and file of our graduate nurses is made up of a mob of mobile maidens meditating matrimony. They live on twenty-five dollars a week, pretending they like the work, until they get hold of an ailing millionaire in a sentimental mood. But Miss Carmichael strikes me as—well, as not that kind of a girl.'

'Miss Carmichael is not that kind of a girl. I should have been more explicit. She intends to enter the Sisters of Charity, and in that way make nursing her lifework. And I presume,' Miss Nolan continued acidly, 'with that fact in mind, you need have no fear for your millionaire in a sentimental mood.'

The irony was lost on me for the time. A Sister of Charity! What the deuce!

'Look here,' I said brusquely, gripping Miss Nolan's arm. 'I want to get this thing right. Do you mean to tell me that that girl, that genuine artist, that—that—oh, hang it, that everything that's wonderful—is going to shut herself up in a nunnery?'

'I should hardly put it in just those words,' replied Miss Nolan, frigidly, 'but you appear to have grasped the essential idea.'

'Why, the girl must be crazy!'

'She is quite sane, I assure you, Dr. Farraday. But some of her friends are convinced that she is injudicious.'

'She's old enough to have more sense,' I declared hotly.

'She's twenty-two; cast her first vote last year—and, so far as I am aware, did not vote the Prohibition ticket straight.'

With that parting shot, Miss Nolan glided away; and for something like twenty minutes I paced the corridor and wondered. A Sister of Charity!

I know something of Sisters' hospitals, in a general way. Last fall the offer came to me to act as resident surgeon at St. Vincent's, but I declined. My motive? Frankly a latent, unmeaning prejudice against things and persons and institutions Catholic.

I had heard of Sisters of Charity, of course. I've read poetry, and I've gripped facts. One of my most matter-of-fact colleagues—that old bear, Grayson, who

perfected the typhoid serum—speaks habitually of them as angels on earth. Maybe they are; I don't know, and I don't care. But, any how, what do angels want on earth? And why in the name of everything worth while should a girl like Miss Carmichael want to be an angel? Isn't womanhood good enough for any woman?

I became thoroughly and unreasonably indignant over it all, as I invariably do when I see something going wrong and I am forced to stand by and watch for the crash. And this looked like a crash, all right—the crash of a wrecked life. Worse than a wrecked life—a wrecked career! The girl is simply impossible!

Down the corridor from the auditorium came the long string of guests, their voices high pitched, their faces shining. It was hot in that room. I let most of them sweep by me, nodding now and then to a perspiring colleague trying to look human in a claw-hammer, bowing awkwardly to the women I knew—not so many!—in dinner gowns of startling hues and terrifying shapes.

'They're going to feed the animals,' Garrity whispered in my ear. 'And we have you down for an after dinner talk.'

'I don't want to talk and I don't want to eat. But—and the idea came to me in a flash—'I want to get a seat next to one of the graduates; her name's Carmichael, I think. Manage it, will you?'

I could have bitten the stubby finger that Garrity shook under my nose.

'You hoary old reprobate, Farraday! Carmichael, eh? Well, you certainly show taste. All right, I'll try to fix it.'

And the fool did. Ten minutes later, winking so knowingly that I longed to floor him on the spot, he led me to the head of one of the long tables. We all sat down. On my right were a motley collection of guests—most of them former patients at the sanatorium who looked as though they needed further treatment; and on my left, all in a prim, immaculate row, sat the graduates. And—I thrilled like a schoolboy, as I thrill again at the memory of it—nearest to me was Miss Carmichael.

Ordinarily I'm a death's-head at a banquet. Eating is eating and talking is talking, and I don't believe in mixing the two necessary evils. But to-night I spread myself. I went out of my way to dominate that table. And before we had finished our oysters I had dominated it. The little college professor on my right, after telling some fool joke about a bricklayer and an air-gun, lapsed into academic language; and I had things to myself. Here was a row of young fowls on my left that had to be impressed; and I was old enough to know how to go about it. The girls laughed and talked back and egged me on; and I more than met them half way.

At the supper—that's what they call it at the Krodin Sanatorium—went gaily on. And all the time, at the back of my mind, I was fussing over the case of that tall, golden-haired girl whose hand I could have touched as it rested daintily on the white cloth or toyed delicately with fork and spoon. Toyed? Well, yes; but Miss Carmichael didn't precisely toy with the eatables. Like all nurses I have ever met, she displayed an ample appetite. This candidate for the Sisters of Charity didn't intend to specialise on religious starvation.

A Sister of Charity! I didn't believe it, really. Why, the girl was a wonder. She could keep up her end of the conversation, no matter what topic was broached—and I made it a point of introducing more topics than the average graduate nurse usually hears about. Miss Nolan was right. Miss Carmichael was indeed bubbling over with talent.

With the coffee came the speeches, and that brought about a slight change at our table. The college professor excused himself and left early—for which may he be pleased to accept my thanks. Then the girl sitting next to Miss Carmichael got a telephone call and didn't come back—bless her little heart. The result was that Miss Carmichael and I were isolated from the other diners, and in the rather lengthy in-