

yours when I am gone,' Aunt Marion sobbed over her niece's golden head.

As Aunt Marion possessed only a poodle and a few trinkets, the bequest was not likely to prove of use to any one. But Liliias was touched by her aunt's kindness. She was drawn on to tell the whole tale of her grievances.

At first she was simply shocked at Aunt Marion's suggestion that she should leave Jack even temporarily. But the idea recurred to her as things became more difficult. The last straw was when Jack dismissed Phyllis, the soft-spoken, middle-aged woman who had been recommended to Liliias as a perfect treasure, and had made things much more easy for her in the matter of efficient service.

Jack had dismissed her at a moment's notice, had spoken sharply to Liliias about the way in which Phyllis had plundered them; finally had departed, leaving Liliias in tears, to return a little while later with the news that his mother's old cook Howell, who had served her some thirty years, was coming to take charge of their disordered affairs.

'Wasn't the mater no end of a brick to give us Howell?' he said, looking more cheerful than he had looked for a long time back. 'She'll straighten us out. Leave everything to her, Liliias, for the present, till you know better. There'll be no more thieving, I promise you. And the mater won't miss her. Amelia will take care of that. I wish you'd take lessons in housekeeping from Amelia, Liliias.'

It was too bad, for Liliias had really been improving of late. How could she have suspected that Phyllis was running them in debt all over the place? Jack never seemed to understand how she was trying to do what he wanted—how she was really learning to be prudent and to deny herself.

And Howell! Howell was perfectly respectful, but she treated Liliias as though she were a person of no account. She took the entire direction of the house. Worse, Liliias had fancied once or twice that there was an accusation in Howell's cold glance as it rested on her. The woman was devoted to Jack. She knew all his fancies, all his preferences. The weekly bills shrank magically with her coming. But it was lonely in the little home, with Jack away all day, and nothing to do in the house, since the unfriendly Howell took all the doings out of her hands.

It came to her running away to Holmedale to the friendly, warm, plentiful house, to the comfort Aunt Marion shed upon her so lavishly. They would be all only too glad if she came back on a long visit. Jack was so unsociable these days! What was the good of Liliias's being at home in the evenings when Jack would retire into his own little den and scribble, scribble, till the small hours? It came to her spending many of her days and evenings and nights at Holmedale. While she did it she was bitterly hurt. Jack never seemed to miss her, to want her back. He had returned to the writing for the magazines which had augmented his income before his marriage; and he was late now at the office; there were some important changes being made, and he worked overtime. He had barely time to snatch his dinner, when he came home, before retiring into the little room, where he did not ask her to follow him.

She was bitterly hurt. No one wanted her here in her own little house, and they all wanted her at Holmedale. She was sulky with Jack for several days, but he barely seemed to notice it. Her comings and goings could matter little to him. Perhaps if she went away for a while he would come to miss her. There had been a time when he could hardly bear her out of his sight; then it would be 'Liliias! Liliias!' all over the little house the minute he came home. Alas that it had been so fleeting! Liliias was bitterly grieved over the change in Jack; but her grief took the outward form of ill-temper, as often happens.

Then one morning at the breakfast table Jack suddenly asked her to accompany him to town.

'Could you drop me at the office,' he asked, 'and pick me up again about half-past 5? You could lunch in town and go to see some of your friends. Perhaps you might induce Amelia to go with you to look at the shops, and fetch her back to dinner.'

It was the unfortunate mention of Amelia! Liliias had softened at Jack's invitation; at the hated name, she froze again.

'I am going to Holmedale,' she said icily. 'Perhaps, if you don't mind, I'll stay over Sunday, as they wish me to.'

He covered his face with his hands for a second and sighed wearily. Then he answered her.

'Of course, you will do exactly as you please.' He went out into the hall then, walking as though he were tired. While he put on his hat and found his gloves and stick, she asked him somewhat ostentatiously if he would order a cab from the station to fetch herself and her luggage at 12 o'clock. He answered that he would, and went out, closing the door behind him.

Liliias turned to go into her little drawing-room. As she did she encountered the gaze, more than ever unfriendly, of the old servant. Howell seemed about to speak, but the latch-key sounded in the door. Jack had come back; he had forgotten something.

He came in without speaking, and handed something to his wife—an open envelope and the contents. The expression of his eyes as he did it, the pallor of his face, gave Liliias a shock. She felt like a guilty woman whose guilt had been discovered.

'Why, Jack—' she began, in a scared way; but he was gone.

She went into the little drawing-room and shut the door behind her, with a sense of calamity. She looked at the paper in her hand. It was a bill from Tregunter's, the drapers. She turned to the total and read it with a feeling as though she were going mad. 'Fifty-four pounds, sixteen shillings, and eight pence,' stared at her from the yellow slip, following a long list of feminine fripperies, household linen, and the like.

She dropped the paper and took her head between her hands, feeling as though it would burst with the whirl of her thoughts. True, she had an account at Tregunter's—a little account; at least she thought it was a little account. Perhaps she had gone on piling up purchases without realising it. Fifty-four pounds, sixteen shillings, and eight pence! Had she been buying things in her sleep? Had Phyllis bought things in her name? No wonder Jack looked at her like that. Why, they had as much chance of paying fifty-four pounds, sixteen shillings, and eight pence as they had of paying the national debt!

She took up the yellow paper and stared at it as though it were her doom. One or two items stood out. 'Silk blouse, £1 19s 6d.' Why, she had bought a blouse at Christmas for Aunt Marion, after she had exhausted the money Jack had given her for her Christmas presents. But it had been only eight and six. She was quite sure of it. 'Mink collar and muff, £11 11s.' She was sure she had never had a mink collar and muff.

She turned the bill over with the odd, numbed feeling of stupefaction and fear. 'Mrs. Barry, the Lindens, in account with Tregunter and Co.' Yes, that was herself, sure enough. She disengaged the first page, and looked at the next.

With an incredible relief she read the name at the top: 'Mrs. Crawford, Ludlow Towers, in account with Tregunter and Co.' Then back at the other page. Yes, that was her own total—£1 18s 4d. The stupid people had put two bills into the same envelope—hers and that of the wealthy woman who lived up on the hill. In the first relief she could have cried with joy. And to think that Jack, poor fellow, had gone off believing that of her!

There was an accusing face in the doorway.

'Begging your pardon, ma'am!' said Howell, stiffly. 'I won't be a party to keeping it from you. If you don't know, you ought to know; and he ought to see a doctor at once. He's a-killing of himself with the anxiety and the worry and the overwork, Master Jack is. Took with dizzinesses in the streets he has been many times; and him having to cross them wildernesses of streets, with as like as not one of them there nasty 'busses a-bearing down on him. He looked mortal bad this morning. I heard him ask you to go along with him, and you refused. I hope he comes home alive.'

Liliias stared at the woman with wide eyes of horror. Her Jack in danger! And he had appealed to her and she had not answered him. How foolish, how contemptible, all those divergences, those grievances, seemed now! And he had had a shock over that abominable bill. Her thoughts ran before to all possible calamities. He had been injured, he was in hospital, he was dead! And to think that through her own wicked fault he had not told her!

She stood up unsteadily and made for the door. She was going to him. She had never done anything so tremendous as going to Jack's office, which was guarded by soldiers, and had policemen in its corridors, as well as magnificent gentlemen in livery, looking more important than the chief of the office himself. But she was going to run the gauntlet of them all, to make sure that Jack was safe, to tell him that it was a mistake about that wretched bill, to let him know that she loved him—only him in all the world. What hope was there for her if she were too late to tell him!

She went off, in spite of Howell's efforts to detain her. At the station she discovered that she had barely enough money to pay her fare to London; and it was a long way to Jack's office after she had arrived at the London terminus. No matter; she must walk.

She did walk, in a glaring sun, in a dazed state, which made it a special providence that she was not run over. When she got to the office Jack was out, 'with Sir Michael,' one of the magnificent functionaries added; and his voice had a note of awe. It was uncertain at what time Mr. Barry would be back.

In front of the office, with the wide roadway intervening, was a space of grass and trees, with a seat or two. Liliias was glad to sit down on one of these. She felt tired; and after a time, with the strain and the want of food—she remembered now that she had eaten nothing at breakfast—she felt faint. But she was sure she could not have eaten, if she had the food before her. She felt so cast-away, so forlorn. If she were to miss Jack—her eyes were tired watching for him across the wide roadway, where so often things intercepted her view—she had no money to get home. There was no friend anywhere near. She would have to walk. Supposing she fainted and were taken to a hospital!

The hours passed like a painful dream, beset with all the terrors possible. At last, about 5 o'clock, a carriage drove up to the office and Jack got out, with a grey-haired gentleman, whom the policeman saluted. They went into the building. Dreading to lose Jack again, Liliias crossed over, and once more applied to the magnificent hall porter.