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BY LINCOLN STEFFENS.

Mrs. Silvester Dean Levean was polishing her brass knocker. Her long, thin hands rubbed and rubbed till the little white curls on her forehead danced like street children. Yet the labor had no perceptible effect. The metal shone like light, but so it did when she began to clean it. It had shone like that yesterday and the day before, and, indeed, every day for 60 years. There was a smooth circle all around the knocker where her delicate hands had worn into the hard, black wood of the door. Nevertheless the old lady rubbed away just as she had done every morning since the spring of 1838, when she was brought, a bride, into the house. She was the pride of Greenwich village then, and she meant to be still.

On this particular frosty morning Mrs. Levean tarried longer than usual at her task. After the lion's head was satisfactorily even to her sharp eyes, she worked on. But it was evident in the glances she shot across Bank street that her attention was not given wholly to the work of her hands. Neither was it diverted to her customary inspection of the neighbor's knockers. Their glistened like hers, and, besides, every time she looked up her eyes turned to but one door, that of the house in front of which stood two sturdy horses and a truck.

Pretty soon the door opened and a young man in a carter's blouse came out. He saw the old lady across the street, though he pretended not to. He busied himself ostentatiously about the horses' heads for a moment and then turned back to the truck. Mrs. Levean had seen him. She bent herself earnestly to the knocker and in a few strokes finished it off. Then she faced towards the street and fixed the truckman with her eyes till he had to look up.

"Good morning, Aunt Martha," he said, as he doffed his cap.

"Good morning, Percy," she answered pleasantly, as he approached her, cap in hand. "Come in a moment. I wish to speak with you."

The interview he had dreaded for weeks was upon him now. He knew from the first it was inevitable, but day after day he had put it off, omitting his usual calls on his aunt, and avoiding her sight and summons. Now that she had caught him he was glad. As he followed the old lady into her prim, comfortable sitting-room he made a pitiful figure of humility, but in the meekness of his soul there was the cheerfulness of finality.

"Sit down, Percy," she said, in the sweet-toned voice he loved.

He took the chair she indicated, and she seated herself in her old rocker.

"Percy, dear," she began, "is this true that I hear; you mean to marry this girl?"

"Yes, Aunt Martha. I was going to tell you, but knowing as you were agin it—knowing that you would not like to have me do so—I was afraid to come to you about it."

He stuck his cap between his knees.

"I am sorry, Percy, you felt that way. It is my intention always to be kind and sympathetic. You should have been quite sure I would have heard your story through with understanding. Now, tell me everything. She is the daughter, I am told, of a German in Hudson street."

"That's right, aunt. Her father has the biggest corner grocery over there, and he has made his pile—I mean has made money since he's been there."

"How long has he been here?"

"Going on 25 years. He's almost an old Ninth-warder now. He's some in politics, and his family is right in it."

"Percy! I never knew them."

"I know, but you wouldn't. It ain't my fault. I wanted to have them all over to mother's so as you could be introduced to them."

The old lady looked as though she would answer this, but she did not. She was silent for a moment before she proceeded.

"So her father is a grocer?"

"Yes; like Mr. Jamison, who you like well enough."

"Mr. Jamison is a gentleman, my dear. The misfortunes of his family can never alter that. The Jamisons are of the oldest Greenwich families on both sides. He is a grocer by necessity. This person of whom we are speaking is one by choice."

"Well, Aunt Martha, it's as good as being a truckman, and better."

Mrs. Levean winced.

"You might have been a judge, like your father, or a senator, like your grandfather. I wanted you to enter political life."

"Politics is pretty low down these days," Percy remarked. "It ain't what it was. Besides, I tried to get an office from Mike McNamara, but he said I wouldn't do in any where the pay was as much as the trucking pays. And I guess that's about so."

The last sentence was cheerfully spoken. Mrs. Levean looked at her nephew's ruddy cheeks and sighed.

"I do wish, Percy," she said, gently, "that you could have found some one in Greenwich. That part of Hudson street where these people live is way beyond the outskirts of the old village, out where the hog fields were till the immigrants began to settle around us."

"But what's the difference, Aunt Martha? It's all one now. There ain't no Greenwich any more. It's all just New York city, so what's the use of pretending?"

The impatience in the young man's tone amazed this aunt almost as much as the sentiment he uttered. Never before

had he failed to show her respect. The contrary, the humbleness of his demeanor had been a grievance to her; it did not become one of her blood to manifest the same awe before her that an ordinary Ninth-warder did.

The old lady straightened in her chair, the lines about her mouth stiffened and her eyes glistened like her knocker as she answered:—

"Percy Dean! You forget to whom you are speaking. You forget yourself, sir, and your good breeding is evidently suffering from the associations you permit yourself."

Percy was frightened. The last time he had been rebuked in this temper by his aunt was when he was a boy. He meant no offense.

"I beg your pardon, Aunt Martha," he murmured.

Mrs. Levean took her knitting from the table and worked busily at it till she was quite calm. She looked up after every few thrusts of her needle, indignantly at first, then coldly, and finally the habitual expression of kindness returned to her face.

"I dare say you are in a hurry to go to town, Percy, and I shall not detain you

much longer. You may tell me something about this young—this girl. How old is she?"

"She is going on 19, Aunt Martha."

"Is she cultivated, educated? Come, Percy, tell me all about her."

"She went through the grammar school, I think, but she had to work after that? So she can't play the piano or sing, but she is a nice girl and can tend the house and cook, now that her mother is dead."

"That's right; she ought to be able to manage her husband's household. But tell me more about her. Is her voice soft, are her manners gentle, is she modest? Describe her to me, my dear. Is she pretty?"

Percy was encouraged by the few words of approval he had won.

"Aunt, she's a beauty, that's—"

"What do you say, a what?"

"I mean she's a beauty. She's got blue eyes and blond hair and the nicest, biggest, reddest cheeks. She ain't what you would call quiet; she's more lively-like. You ought to hear her laugh when we're down on the docks nights with the rest of the crowd, I'll bet you could hear her across the river in Hoboken. And jolly? If she gets a mug as is too fresh she can jolly him along to beat the band. But she's on the level, too. She does the square thing by her old man every clip. The housework has to be done before she's in for the game. And she slaves for her little sisters and brothers—just slaves for them, and yet she does it as willing. But then she's good to everybody; always ready to help out with work when neighbors are behind or sick or have company, and she sticks up for horses and cats and all like that. You wouldn't believe she was that way, though, to see her at a ball or dancing on excursion boats up the river. She's a good looking and a good dresser, and when she's out in full rig—well, say, she's a sight. The other fellows don't do nothing when we're out."

Percy stopped short. Mrs. Levean had risen suddenly, and she stood erect before him, tall and white and proud.

"Why, Aunt Martha?" he exclaimed.

"That's enough, Percy. Thank you. I see I have been wrong, all wrong, in this matter from the first. You shall have your own way, for it is right. I consent."

"Oh, Aunt Martha!" he cried, springing up and seizing her hand to kiss. "I am so glad. But I know you would after hearing about her. And say, aunt, you ought to see her once. You couldn't help but like her and admire her. Everybody in the ward does. Why, do you know what they call her the men down at the Grapevine? The way you looked then made me think of it. They call her the Pride of Greenwich Village."—N. Y. Post.

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