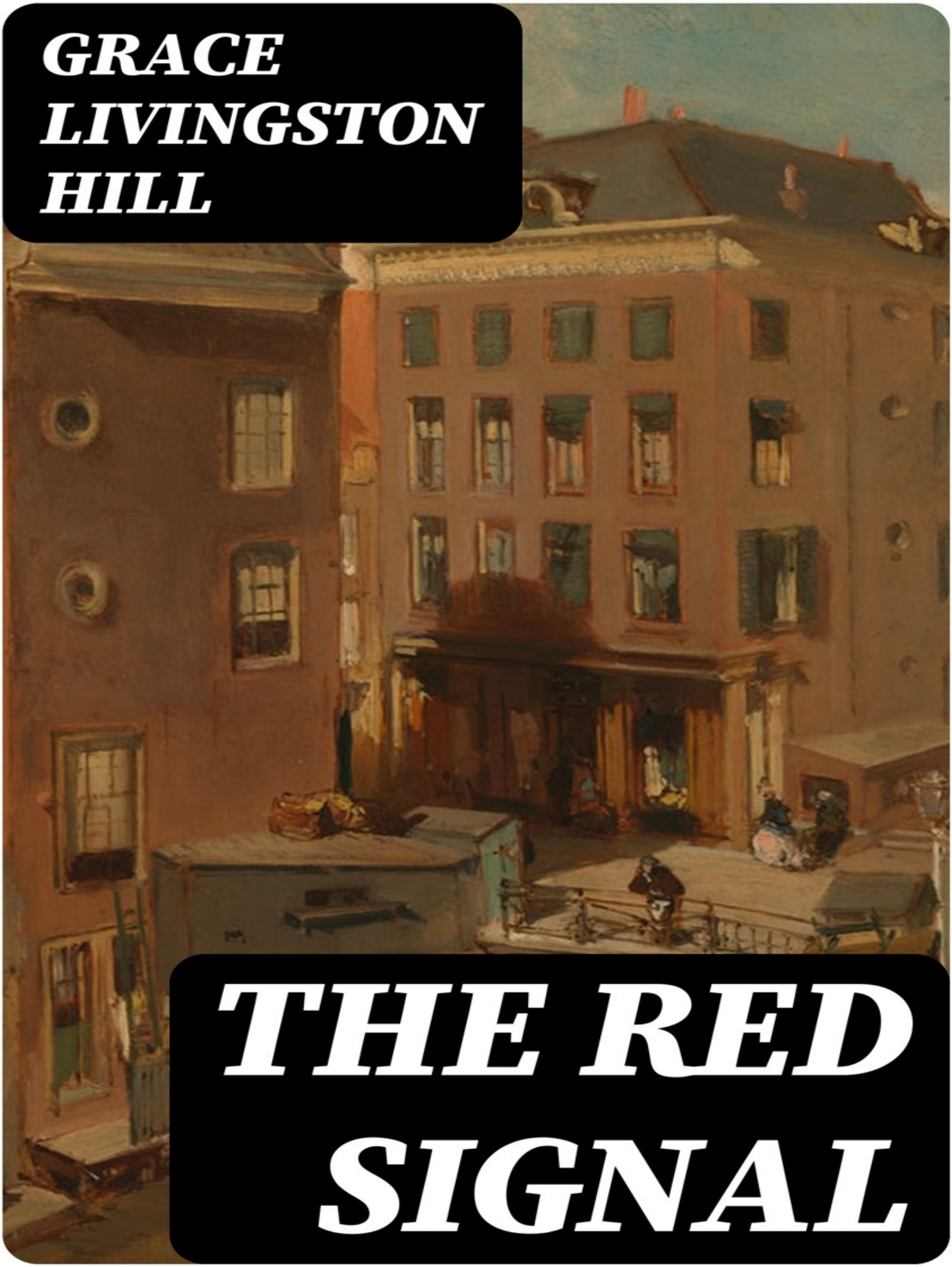
GRACE LIVINGSTON HILL



THE RED SIGNAL

Grace Livingston Hill

The Red Signal

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CHAPTER I

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Hilda Lessing stood hesitating fearfully before the wide expanse of railroad tracks that seemed to be fairly bristling with menacing engines, some moving, some standing still. In her bewilderment she could not be sure which were moving and which were standing still. They all seemed alive; waiting to pounce upon her if she stirred.

The conductor had told her, when he put her off the express, that the other train made good connection, and she had no time to waste. He had pointed across all those tracks, and across them she must go. She made a wild dash, accomplished half the distance, and suddenly found herself snatched from the very teeth of a flying express that had appeared like a comet out of the mêlée, and held in strong arms against a bit of rail fence that traversed the space between the tracks for a little distance.

It seemed ages that she clung with trembling arms to a big rough shoulder, her body pressed against the fence, one hand still gripping the suitcase jammed between her and the fence, while an interminable train rushed, car after car, past her reeling brain, the hot breath of its going blasting her cheeks. To add to the horror, another train dashed into sight on the other side of the frail fence and tore along in the opposite direction. She felt like a leaf in a crevice with a great roaring avalanche on either side. If she should let go her feeble hold of the rescuer for a single instant, or if he failed her, she was lost. Her horrified eyes were strained and fascinated with the fearful spectacle till it seemed she could bear it no longer; then she closed them with a shiver and

dropped her face to the broad blue jean shoulder that offered the only relief.

The strong arms seemed to hold her closer with a reassuring pressure that comforted her. The rushing of the train was growing less as if some spell had it within control now, and she felt herself lifted and borne swiftly beyond the noise and confusion. She dared not open her eyes until he put her down upon a quiet bench at the far end of the platform away from the crowds.

She dimly felt that people were looking curiously, excitedly, after her, and that the trainmen, with startled faces, were calling out something to her companion; but she paid no heed to any of them. She only saw his face bending solicitously over her, his pleasant eyes so brown and merry, and heard his cheery voice:

“Say, kid, that was a close call! Didn't you know any better than to cross those tracks with both fliers due? Where was the station man, I'd like to know, that he let you start?”

“Oh!” gasped Hilda, turning whiter than ever. “I didn't know! I couldn't find a way across, and I had to make my train!” Then the tears came in a flood of nervous reaction and she dropped her face into her hands and sobbed.

The man in the blue overalls sidled up to her in dismay and put his big arm awkwardly around her, forgetful of his amused comrades not far away.

“There! There! Kid! Don't cry! It's all over, and you're perfectly safe!”

He patted her slender shaking shoulders gently with his big blackened hand, and looked helplessly down at the girl.

“What train were you meaning to take?” he asked with sudden inspiration.

Hilda lifted a pair of drenched blue eyes, large and wide, with a new fear, and started to her feet.

“Oh! The train to Platt's Crossing! Has it gone? I ought to hurry! Which way do I go?”

The young man looked at his watch. He had nice hair and a handsome head. She liked the way the dark curl fell over his white forehead, and the strength of the bronzed neck above the jumper.

“You’ve plenty of time. Number ten isn't due for fifteen minutes. Come over to the restaurant and have a cup of coffee. That'll put some pep into you.”

He seized the suitcase and led the way. She noticed that he did everything as if he were a gentleman. She liked the way he pulled out the chair and seated her at the table. He gave an order for sandwiches, coffee, baked apples and cream. It looked good to her after a night and morning of fasting.

“Do you live at Platt's Crossing?” His brown eyes were fixed pleasantly, respectfully upon her.

“No! That is—I live in Chicago—or I did till father died. I'm going to work at Platt's Crossing.”

She spoke as if it were an unpleasant fact that had not yet become familiar enough to lose the pain of its expression.

“You look young to go to work,” he said kindly, interestedly. “What line? Telephone girl or stenography?”

The color stole up under her clear skin.

“Neither,” she said bravely. “It's a truck farm. They're Germans my uncle knows. I'm to help. Housework, I suppose. I'm going to try to like it, but I wanted to teach. I had finished high school and was going to normal next fall if father hadn't died. But something happened to our money and I had to take this place. Mother's got a place as matron in an orphan asylum, where she could take my little brother

with her. It isn't very pleasant, but it was the best that we could do."

"That's tough luck, kid!" said the young man sympathetically, "but brace up! If you've got it in you to teach you'll get your chance yet. Are you German?"

"No," said the girl decidedly. "Father was. He was born in Germany. He liked this country, though, and didn't keep running hack to Germany every year the way my uncle does. But mother and I are Americans. Mother was born in Chicago."

"Well, you'd better keep your eyes open, kid! Those German truck farms have been getting a bad name since the war broke out. There are lots of spies around just now. You can't tell what you may come across."

There was a twinkle of fun in his eyes, but a strain of earnestness in his voice. The girl looked at him in wide-eyed wonder.

"You don't suppose there would be any such thing as that?" she asked, dropping her spoon. "I thought spies were just newspaper talk. Our high school teacher used to say so."

"Well, there are plenty of spies around all right!" be said seriously. "It's not all newspaper talk. But don't you worry. It isn't likely they'll come around you, and you might not know them for spies if they did."

"Oh! I should be so frightened!" she said, her hand fluttering to her throat. "What do people do when they discover spies?"

"Just lie low and send word to Washington as quick as they can. But don't look like that, kid; I was just talking nonsense!"

She tried to answer his smile with another.

“I know I'm silly,” she said contritely, “but it seems so dreadful to come to this strange place among people I don't know anything about.”

“Oh, you'll come out all right. It won't be so bad as you think. They'll likely turn out to be fine.”

She took a deep breath and smiled bravely.

“I don't know what mother would say if she knew I was talking to you,” she remarked anxiously.

“She brought me up never to speak to strange young men. But you've been so kind saving my life! Only I wouldn't like to have you think I'm that kind of a girl———”

“Of course not!” he said indignantly. “Anybody could see that with a glance. I hope you haven't thought I was fresh, either. I saw you were all in and needed a little jollying up. I guess those two expresses sort of introduced us, didn't they? I’m Dan Stevens. My father is—has a position—that is, he works on the railroad, and I'm engineer just at present on number five freight. I'll be glad to be of service to you at any time.”

“My name is Hilda Lessing,” said the girl shyly. “You certainly have been kind to me, I shan't ever forget that I would have been killed if it hadn't been for you. I guess you might have been killed, too. You were very brave, jumping in between those trains after me. I shan't feel quite so lonesome and homesick now, knowing there's someone I know between Platt's Crossing and Chicago.”

“Oh, that wasn't anything!” said the young man lightly. “That’s part of the railroad business, you know. But say! It's rank to be homesick! Suppose I give you a signal as I pass Platt's Crossing. I get there at 2:05 usually, unless we're late. It will maybe cheer you up to let you know there's somebody around you know. I’ll give three long blasts and two short ones. That'll be to say: ‘Hello! How are you? Here's

a friend!’ I know where that truck farm is, right along the railroad before you get to the bridge, about, a quarter of a mile this side. There isn't much else at Platt's Crossing but that farm. We stop to take on freight sometimes. Here, tell you what you do. If everything's all right and you think things are going to go you just hang a towel or apron or something white out your window, or on the fence rail somewhere. I'll be watching for it. That will be like saying: ‘I'm very well, thank you.’ Won't that make you feel a little more at home?"

“It certainly will. It will be something to look forward to,” said Hilda smiling shyly. “I shan't be half as much afraid if I know there is somebody going by to whom I could signal if I got into trouble. Of course, I know I won't, but you understand.”

“Of course,” said the engineer rising. “That’s all right. If you get into trouble or find that spy or anything, you can hand out a red rag for a danger signal, and then I'll know there is something that needs to be looked after. See? Now, I guess we had better beat it. It's time for that train of yours. I'm glad to have met you. You're a mighty plucky little girl and I honor you.”

He pushed back his chair and picked up the suitcase. She noticed again the ease of every movement, as if he were waiting on the greatest lady in the land. Then the train boomed in; he put her on, found a seat for her, touched his greasy cap with courteous grace and was gone. A moment more and she was started on her way to Platt's Crossing.

She paid little heed to the landscape by the way, for she was going over and over again all that had happened since she set her first timid step across that labyrinth of tracks, and was caught from sudden death by the strong arms of the young engineer. Various sensations that had hardly

seemed to register at the time now came back to make her heart leap and her pulses thrill with horror or wonder or a strange new pleasure. How strong he had been! How well he had protected her, with never a quiver of his sturdy frame while those monster trains leaped by! How little and safe and cared-for she had felt in spite of her fear! And how thoughtful he had been, taking her to get some lunch and planning to cheer her up a little on her first lonely day at the new home! Perhaps mother would not quite think that was proper, for she had warned her many times to have nothing to do with strange young men, but, then, mother surely would understand if she could see him. He was a perfect gentleman, if he did wear blue jean overalls: and besides, they would never likely see each other again. What possible harm could a whistle and a white towel banging out a window do? He wouldn't likely do it but once, and, of course, she wouldn't; and it was pleasant to feel that there was someone to whom she could appeal if anything really frightened her, which, of course, there wouldn't. And, anyhow, he had saved her life and she must be polite to him.

It seemed ages since she had left her mother and little brother the day before to start on this long journey into the world. She seemed to have come a lifetime in experience since then. What would it be like at the farm? Was she going to like it, or was it going to be the awful stretch of emptiness that she had pictured it ever since Uncle Otto had told her she was to go? Somehow, since she had talked with the young engineer there was just the least bit of a rift in the darkness of her despair. He had said that if she had it in her to teach she would get her opportunity. Well, she could be patient and wait. Meantime, it was pleasant to think of that handsome young man and the courteous way in which he

had treated her. He reminded her of a picture she had once seen of a prince. True, he was not dressed in princely robes, but she was American enough to recognize a prince in spite of his attire.

She still had the dream of him in her mind when she got out at Platt's Crossing and looked around bewildered at the loneliness of the landscape.

There was nothing more than a shanty for a station, and the only other building in sight was a dingy wooden house across some rough, plowed fields, with a large barn at a little distance from it.

She looked about in dismay for something else to guide her, and perceived a man coming toward her. He was attired in brown jeans with an old straw hat on his head, and he was as far as possible from any likeness to the young man who had put her on the train. Idealism soaring high and sweet above her head suddenly collapsed at her feet and she went forward to meet the stolid-looking man.

There was no kindly greeting, no lighting of the face, nor twinkling of the little pig eyes. She might have been a plow or a bag of fertilizer just deposited, for all the personality he allowed to her. He asked her if she was the girl from Chicago in much the same way he would have looked at the markings on some freight to be sure it was his before he went to the trouble of carrying it home.

Hilda had a shrinking notion that he was rather disappointed in her appearance. He pointed across the plowed ground to the forlorn house in the distance and told her she could go on up, they were waiting for her; as if it were her fault that she had not been there before.

Hilda picked up her heavy suitcase, looked dubiously at the long, rough road before her and glanced at the man. He had apparently forgotten her existence. He made no effort

to carry her burden for her. With a sudden set of her firm little chin and a keen remembrance of the strong young engineer who had carried it so gallantly a little while before, she started bravely on her way, slowly, painfully toiling over the rough ground, and in her inexperience taking the hardest, longest way across the furrows.

The stolid woman who met her at the door with arms akimbo, furiously red face and small blue eyes that observed her apprizingly was a fit mate for the man who had directed her to the house. She gave no smile of welcome. Her lips were thin and set, though she was not unkindly. Hilda gathered that her coming had not been exactly looked forward to with pleasure, and that her presence was regarded more in the light of an unpleasant necessity than that of a companionable helper, as her uncle would have had her think.

“So! You’ve come!” Said the woman in a colorless voice.

“Yes!” said Hilda. “Is this Mrs. Schwarz?”

The woman nodded, meantime giving her closer scrutiny.

“You ain't so strong!” she announced sternly, as if the girl were somehow defrauding her of what she had a right to expect.

Hilda put down her suitcase and straightened her slender back, tilting her delicate chin just a shade.

“I'm never sick,” she said coldly. She looked regretfully back across the rough way she had come to the friendly railroad tracks gleaming in the distance and wished she dared turn and flee. Then she saw the stolid man moving heavily across the field, and turned back to her fate.

“You can take it up to your room,” the color-less voice directed, pointing to the suitcase. “Up the stairs und the first door in front. Ged in your vork cloes und cum down und help me. I haf mooch to do!”

Hilda fled up the stairs. A sudden desire to cry had stung in her eyes and crowded into her throat. She must not break down now, just at this first hour in her new home and before her employers.

She drew the door shut and noticed with joy that there was a lock. She turned the key softly and went to the one little window, looking out stealthily. Yes, it was on the side of the house toward the railroad track, whether front or back she could not tell, the house was of so nondescript a fashion. But her heart rejoiced that at least she would not have to manoeuvre and contrive to fling out her signal.

Opening her suitcase she took out a little white apron and hung it out the window by its strings. She removed her hat, bathed her face, smoothed her hair, and changed her dress for a neat school gingham. She was about to go downstairs when a low distant rumble broke on her ear. Hurrying to the window, she knelt on the floor and looked out. Yes, it was a freight train winding far down the valley, coming up the shining steel track. Was it his train? Would he remember to look or would he not expect her to have the signal ready before tomorrow?

Forgetful of her waiting mistress and the new duties below stairs, she knelt and watched the train crawl like a black writhing serpent up the track; and just as it drew near and was almost in front of her window the voice of her mistress sounded raucously up the passageway with insistency:

“I haf told you to hurry! You should cum down at vonce!” The tinge of German accent was stronger under excitement.

“Yes, in just a minute, Mrs. Schwarz!” called Hilda, turning her head excitedly from the window to answer. At that instant the clear piercing shriek of the whistle sounded forth:

——————! ——————! ——————! —————! ———!

The voice of the mistress was drowned beyond all hearing. Hilda leaned out of her window, caught the little white apron and fluttered it forth at arm's length. The train was opposite the house now, and the girl could distinctly see a cap waved from the caboose of the engine, although the distance across the fields was not short. Something happy leaped up in her heart, making her cheeks glow and her eyes shine. And then came the blast of the whistle again:

——————! ——————! ——————! —————! ———!

The train passed on over the big bridge, whose high stone arches reflected in the stream below; and echoing back its signal as it passed it wound on between the hills and was gone. Then Hilda got to her feet with illumined face and went down to meet her future. She had not even seen the young lout in cowhide boots and brown overalls who had appeared out of the clods of the earth it would seem, in color like unto them, and stood leaning against a fence, leering up at the window.

CHAPTER II

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It seemed a lifetime to Hilda before they finally sat down to supper, although in reality it was but five o'clock. The mistress had spoken well when she had said there was much to be done. The girl, already weary with her journey and the excitement, was in no fit condition to plunge into the vortex of new duties which met her like a foe she had to face. Her back ached and her head throbbed as she bent her slender shoulders under the weight of big buckets of water and armfuls of wood which she was required to carry. Fresh from the class-room, having led a sheltered, guarded life hitherto, she staggered under duties that might have seemed easy to one accustomed to them. She grew white around the mouth and black under the eyes as she toiled on uncomplainingly, but she would not flinch. She had seen the look of disapproval that both Mr. and Mrs. Schwarz had swept over her when she arrived. She had a fine spirit in her, and did not wish to be rejected on account of physical disability. She knew that if she were rested and accustomed, she could match her strength plus her strong will against any girl, and she meant to prove it so. Hers was to be no moping, half-way service, disagreeable as her situation seemed to her at present.

Her view of the future was by no means brightened by the advent of the son of the house and the three hired men who presently obeyed the summons to supper, performing their noisy ablutions on the back porch. They were big blond men with pink complexions, whose appearance the grime of sweat and toil did not enhance. Sylvester Schwarz was lank

and flabby, with a selfish mouth and a pimply face, which the sun had turned to brick color. He had small, cruel blue eyes. When Hilda made the acquaintance of the animals about the place, she found it impossible not to think of Sylvester when she glanced into the abode of the swine. It may have been the way he cast his greedy little eyes upon her when he entered the kitchen. From the first he seemed to claim her for his prey, and from the first she had the most revolting dislike toward him. Perhaps he sensed this at the start, for the light of battle and the assurance of final victory followed hard in his face upon his first greedy glance.

The other three men were older, with stolid faces much like the master, and all had a cunning look in their eyes. She liked none of them. One, whom they called Fritz, wore a large yellow curling moustache, and his red wet lips bulged beefily between its parting. He smiled when he saw Hilda, and gave her an apprizing glance that brought the blood angrily into her cheeks. His eyes were larger and bolder than the rest, and he used them much on Hilda as she came and went from stove to table serving pork, cabbage, coffee and Limburger cheese.

She had been fiercely hungry when supper was first put upon the table, but by the time that she had finished serving the men and was free to eat what food they had left she was too dizzy and faint to care for it. The thought of the food sickened her. She did her best with a mouthful or two of bread and a swallow of coffee, but her head was aching badly before she was through with her tasks.

The men sat on the back porch, smoking, talking in loud tones, telling vile stories and laughing among themselves. Almost entirely they spoke in German. She heard one of them ask Mrs. Schwarz about her, where she came from and if she understood German, and Mrs. Schwarz told them no,

she was American. The one they called Fritz laughed and said that was better, they would not have to be so careful; and she wondered idly what he meant, for it had not seemed to her they were careful in their speech either in German or English. She resolved that for the present she would not let them know that she had not only been the finest German scholar in her class in high school, but had also always kept up the practice of conversing with her father in his native tongue. It would at least give her the advantage of being left out of the conversation most of the time, and this seemed to her most desirable, in fact, the only possible way to live among them. She could not imagine herself ever having any more to do with any of them than was absolutely necessary.

She was wringing out her dishcloth and hanging it up to dry as she made these resolutions, and she did not see that Sylvester Schwarz had arisen from his scat on the back steps and lounged silently into the kitchen. Not until he was close behind her did she realize that anyone was there, and then too late. He caught her in his arms and gave her a resounding smack on her cheek.

Hilda screamed with horror, and, snatching the big wet dishcloth, whipped it smartly across his face, struggling wildly all the while, until, blinded by the dishcloth he let her go. She darted away from him and ran plump into his mother, who had rushed downstairs to see what was the matter. Hilda flung her arms around the astonished woman's neck and burst into tears.

“Ach! Vat haf you pin doing, Sylvester?" complained his mother, quite upset by Hilda's appeal, and standing helpless with the girl's arms around her unsympathetic neck. “Can't you zee she iss strange? Go vay and leef her be!"

Sylvester stood sheepishly in the middle of the floor, and Hilda caught a glimpse of the other men outside laughing at him as she raised her head from the ample, unresponsive bosom and began to realize that it was no refuge for her. She must hold her own alone against all odds in this house.

“Ach ! She ain't so fine and fancy as you think, mom!” retorted Sylvester sneeringly. “You ought to seen her flirtin’ with the train hands when she first come, and him a tootin' the whistle at her for the whole country to hear. She ain't so pertickiler as she tries to make out!”

Hilda flashed a look of horror and contempt at the young man and straightened up like a young rush as she turned to the woman.

“I was not flirting, Mrs. Schwarz. That engineer saved me from being run over and killed down at the junction where I changed cars. He was very kind and put me on the train and told me he would whistle when he passed this farm, and if I had found the place all right I could wave something out of the window to let him know. I am not that kind of a girl, Mrs. Schwarz!”

“Ach! Well! What's the difference! You better get to your ped. You haf to get up at half-past four. There is much to be done tomorrow!”

Blinded with tears Hilda, stumbled up the stairs, dimly aware that the oldest of the three laborers, the one they called Heinrich, with gray theaks in his stubbly hair, was standing outside the door glaring angrily in at Sylvester Schwarz. She heard his contemptuous guttural hurled like a command:

“Pig! Come out o' that!” and she realized that she was being gruffly championed, but was too distraught for even a grateful glance in his direction. It was horrible to have to be championed by one so utterly repulsive.

She locked her door and dropped upon her hard little bed, terrified, despairing, exhausted. The future seemed a blackness of horror. She was too sick at heart to think if she might get away from it all. Yet how could she stay for even a night? To live in that house with all those dreadful men! To be scolded, driven, by that hard, unfeeling woman, and sworn at by the stolid husband! It seemed impossible to endure. Yet where could she go and what could she do but stay? Even supposing she succeeded in getting away without anyone noticing, she had but a dollar and ten cents in the world, and that would not carry her back to her mother. Poor mother! How frightened she would be if she knew in what a position her young daughter had been placed! Mother thought she was to have a nice, pleasant home with friends of Uncle Otto, good Christian people who would treat her like a daughter." "Good, kind Germans," that was what Uncle Otto had said when he got her the place. She shuddered at the thought of what it would mean to be a daughter in this house. The sting of Sylvester Schwarz's kiss was still on her cheek. She rubbed wildly at it again, and, slipping from her bed, groped her way through the dark to her window. She must get away. Could she, dared she, get out of that window and steal away in the night?

She looked out in the darkness. The sky overhead was luminously kind, but far away. There was starlight and a young moon, serene but distant, unheeding of her distress. The tears rained down upon her hands, which were clasped desperately on the window sill as she knelt, her breast heaving with silent sobs she dared not make audible lest they should be heard downstairs. She put her head down on the window sill and prayed a pitiful little prayer. Heaven seemed so far away tonight. Did God care about her? She looked out again.

It seemed a long way to the ground in the darkness and very black below. She could not remember how it had appeared when she had looked out in the afternoon. She had been all taken up with watching the engineer's cap then and realizing that he had actually kept his word and whistled to her. How long ago that seemed, and how different he had been from these dreadful men among whom she had come to live. Kind, gentle, strong, courteous, gallant! She could feel his arms lifting her now, and holding her against the bars of the fence as the trains flew by on either side! Oh, that she were hack at that spot in her life and could turn and flee from this new life, anywhere, so it was not here! Better even if her life had ended quickly, sharply under those fierce wheels!

She reached out her hands wistfully to the black line of the railroad grade. If his train would only pass again and she could signal her distress! But it was night! He could not see a signal if he came. Red he had said for danger. Had she anything red? Yes, a little red scarf she had caught up and stuffed in her suitcase just before leaving home, because it reminded her of her school days and all she was leaving behind. She turned and groped in her suitcase in the darkness till she felt the woolly softness of the scarf and hugged it to her breast, kissing and crying over it. How many times her mother had tied it around her throat on a cold day, and how she had hated to wear it sometimes as she grew older and did not want to be bundled up. But now it was precious. It reminded her of her mother, and of the little brother who had often worn it also.

Sobbing softly she stumbled back to her bed again, the old red scarf in her arms, and pulling the stubby quilt up over her, sobbed herself to sleep. Somehow it seemed too awful a place to think of undressing and going to bed

regularly, but she was so utterly weary with her hard exciting day that she could stand up no longer.

Some time in the night she awoke from an ugly dream in which she was being pursued over plowed ground by Sylvester Schwarz, who was determined to get her old red scarf away from her, and her own cries for help were stifled in her throat as she struggled on over the furrows. Off in the distance she heard a dim rumble of a freight train, like a kindly voice to still her fright. It soothed and comforted her, so that she fell asleep again.

The raucous voice of Mrs. Schwarz sounded in her ear while it was yet dark, and a vigorous shaking of her locked door brought her to her feet frightened and half stupefied with sleep.

There was no place for her to wash in her room; nothing but the tin basin on the bench by the pump below, and the roller towel on the kitchen door, which she was expected to use in common with the men who were spluttering through their ablutions now. Hilda determined to omit much of her toilet until she could beg for better accommodations for washing. If worse came to worst there was an old towel in her suitcase, and she could certainly find something in which to carry up water—that is, if she stayed here. The horror of the morning made her sure she would find some way of escape before another night if possible.

The men were cross and all swearing at each other in German. Something had happened in the night, or else it had not happened. Hilda could not quite make out from their chance remarks that floated out to the kitchen where she was frying sausage and potatoes. She was not interested and paid little heed.

Sylvester Schwarz did not come down to break-fast with the men. He slept late, and when be came his mother

waited upon him and hovered over him till his father came in from the barn, his little pig eyes snapping angrily, and began swearing at Sylvester like a raging bull. It seemed that the young man had been trusted with some weighty errand to a neighboring village the evening before and had neglected or forgotten it until too late. His father raged as if it were a matter of life and death. Sylvester sat stolidly, sullenly, and ate many hot cakes that his indulgent mother baked and brought to him incessantly, with silent tears running down her fat countenance. She spoke no word of protest to her angry spouse, but doggedly fed the pampered culprit till old Schwarz turned on her a storm of words that made the young girl in the kitchen cringe and heartily wish she did not understand German. During the tirade she managed to secure a basin of clean water and escape to her room till the storm was over and Sylvester gone sullenly off with a hoe over his shoulder. It appeared that Sylvester's mission had been one which called for mental attainments, for Hilda heard his father hurl this final sentence after him as he sauntered toward the barn:

“What for did I gif you all this expensive education yet if it was not to look after this end of the pizness? You will bring us all to zhame if you keep on. You might as well know nothing, you pig of a boy!”

Hilda worked silently, almost frenziedly, as the sun rose higher and the morning went on. Mrs. Schwarz moved stolidly through her domain, giving sharp commands, finding incessant fault, and growing more and more unreasonable. Just as the dinner was ready to dish up, and the men were answering the call, Hilda wiped her hands, drew down her sleeves, and turned on her fat persecutor:

“I better tell you, Mrs. Schwarz, I don't think I will stay. I'm not the hind of a girl you need here. I've never had

experience in heavy work, and I can see I don't suit you. J know that I can do better work in some other line, and it's best for me to stop right now before you've taken a lot of trouble to teach me your ways.”

Mrs. Schwarz went stolidly on dishing up the potatoes as though she hid not heard. When the last potato was steaming on the piled-up dish she remarked monotonously:

“H’m! What can you do? Otto Lessing send you here. You got to stay! What else can you do?”

“Why, I thought if you could lend me the money to go back to Chicago my teacher would find me a place where I could earn enough to pay you back. I could learn stenography nights while I am working and very soon get a good position.”

“Ach! I have no money! And if I had, Otte Lessing send you here, and here you stay! Unless Otto Lessing say you can go, you stay! I know you are no good to me, but what can I do? You and I are women. We must do what we are told.”

Hilda stood struggling between anger and amazement, trying to think what to say. At last she answered haughtily:

“Very well, then, I will write to my Uncle Otto and tell him. If you will excuse me now, I will go up and write the letter at once. Or perhaps it would be best to send a telegram and my uncle can send me some money.”

“You have no time to write letters and there is no way to send telegrams here. You get down off your high horse and carry in the potatoes! Your Uncle Otto send you here, and your time pelongs to me now. You are mighty poor help, but such as it is it pelongs to me. Take that platter in and shut up!”

This was the only result of her well-planned decision. Hilda saw she had little chance unless she made a