

The Story Page

Irene's Discovery.

BY ANNETTE L. NOBLE.

Irene Wells when a child lost her mother, and an aunt begged the care of her for a few years. Irene's father was a busy doctor in a country town, and as he never married again, Irene stayed with her aunt until she was eighteen years old. Then as her father's housekeeper had become rather infirm, Irene thought it was her duty to return to him. He was a large-hearted, wise man of whom any daughter should have been proud as she was fond, and Irene loved him devotedly. She was a good girl; and in the main sensible but she was a little romantic; in fact, she had read so many novels that she was vaguely dissatisfied with everything and everybody not after the pattern which she fancied most elegant.

Irene's father was delighted to have her at home, and she found that he had refurnished her room and done everything that his love could devise to make her happy. For a few weeks she seemed quite contented, but before the summer ended, Dr. Wells noticed an expression of discontent every day increasing on the pretty face of his only child.

One morning before he started out on his professional duties he playfully detained her, and asked if she were ill, or what was the matter with his little girl. Then it all came out in a burst. Irene declared that life seemed 'so stupid, so deadly monotonous,' and that all the people she met were 'tiresome to the last degree.' The men talked only of business or politics; the women about their babies, servants, of one another, and the girls were shy or 'shallow.' Her efforts to get up a club to study Browning's poems had failed; she had shown the young girls her photographs of the Elgin marbles in the British Museum. They looked at them politely, and then were ten times more enthusiastic about the amateur kodak pictures of their own friends, or of the interior of their houses. How had her intellectual father ever managed to exist in a town where all life was so 'stale, flat and unprofitable.'

Dr. Wells' gray eyes twinkled with humor and a keen speech was on the tip of his tongue, but he wanted to retain his daughter's confidence, so he only asked: 'Have you ever heard of Mrs. H—L—, or read any of her books?'

'Indeed, I have. Why some critics say that she is almost the best writer of fiction we have today in this country.'

'Yes, I know. Well, she is staying at the Boyd Hotel and is a patient of mine. She was on her way to California, but feeling ill stopped off for a night and has been detained here ever since. I have had some delightful talks with her and I will ask her to let you call this evening; she is by no means stupid, I can assure you.'

'No, indeed,' cried Irene. 'How I should love to meet her! I never knew an author in private life,' and then she thought, 'Perhaps she will tell me how she began, and give me suggestions how to write a novel,' for deep down in Irene's heart was the hope that she would some day write a book which would make her famous.

Dr. Wells called that morning on his distinguished patient, and perhaps gave her a hint of Irene's state of mind, for the lady, who greatly liked and admired her physician, invited him to bring Irene and leave her to spend that evening.

How the young girl's heart fluttered when she first met the gentle responsive lady who stood for all that seemed to Irene most to be desired! She was not 'common,' before middle age she had attained fame. They talked first of indifferent things, and then the lady said that, if she must be ill at all, she was very glad that it was with a malady which left her head clear so that she had been able to write every day, but most of all she was grateful to Dr. Wells, who had treated her so skillfully and proved so interesting a friend.

'Do you know, Miss Wells, that your father took me for a ten-mile drive this afternoon while he visited his country patients? When he was in their houses I sat in the carriage and scribbled; then as we drove about, he talked to me of them. He seemed to know every man, woman and child within a circuit of twenty-five miles. What a grand life, a

good doctor leads! How many chances he has to do good. He gets so close to people.'

'Yes, I suppose it is so. I know that people are always coming to my father with troubles of mind as well as with those of the body. But you say that you were writing. I should like so much to know how you compose—how you imagine the people in your stories; they seem so like real life.'

Mrs. H—L—did not answer directly, but exclaimed: 'What novels your father might write if he had the time! He gave me so many ideas this afternoon told me of so many interesting characters here, that I longed to stay a month and get to know the people but the people are so interesting to me everywhere. Miss Wells if by any chance you have the desire and ability to write stories, what a suggestive place you live in, and what a wealth of material is all around you here.'

'I do not quite understand the people here—why they are the stupidest and most uninteresting of mortals it seems to me.'

'My dear girl, I am sure you are making a mistake. There is a Persian rhyme that says:

'Diving and finding no pearls in the sea,
Blame not the ocean, the fault is in thee.'

'Don't you like the people just because they are human? Don't their different temperaments and their peculiarities interest you? When their faces show joy or grief, don't you find yourself wondering what lies behind that expression?'

'Not unless I know and like the people already.'

'What made Shakespeare Shakespeare do you think?'

'Why he had a marvelous imagination and a wonderful gift of expression—and everything else that goes to make up genius.'

'True, but the one thing that made him the master story teller of all the ages was his sympathetic insight into the workings of all men's minds. And it was largely the common people whom he studied for he lived among them. I imagine that he could never be left five minutes with a human being without finding that person interesting and suggestive.'

'It was so with Dickens and with other writers of fiction. To-day as we rode past little cottages and by great farm houses, your father talked of the people who lived there—such tragedies, such comedies in life! and again such heroes, such saints! and such a host, too, of quaint characters as he knows! Why, I filled my note book to overflowing with types which I can use hereafter in stories; but even as I did it, I was half ashamed to be studying human nature for a purpose so much less noble than your father's purpose. I try to teach what is good and worthy of imitation, but your father enters into these lives for such help to body and mind.'

Irene was much puzzled by the turn the talk had taken, but she was more surprised when the lady asked: 'Do you know Janet Grey?'

'By sight. She is a plain girl who never says much.'

'But she is the heroine of a story exquisitely beautiful—get your father to tell it to you. And that Helen Nelson in the little tumble down cottage do you know her?'

'She never attracted me.'

'She is very poor, but your father says if she had not told the truth to the minutest detail in a law suit, where she might easily have kept back certain proof, she would have come into a large fortune, with the fine house on the hill. Against the wishes of her lover she told all, and he left her in consequence. She seems to be as much of a heroine as Scott's 'Jeanne Deans.'

Irene realized that she was dull and not the people about her; she had been told that if once she met them as her father met them, heart to heart, she would find them interesting, lovable and suggestive. From that night she tried to do this, and her discontent vanished like fog before sunshine. She never wrote a great novel, but she did better; she lived a happy helpful life, beloved by her neighbors and by all who come in contact with her. The girl who finds herself at odds with her surroundings, who finds no congenial souls around her, too often needs not to change her environment, but to realize her own dullness and her self absorption.—Good Cheer.

Guardian Angels.

BY MRS. C. DEER.

Two little heads, one brown, the other golden, bent over their lessons, on either side of the library table in a cozy room, one cold stormy evening. Everything in this neat comfortable home was quiet.

The lads were busy with their lessons. The mother sat in an adjoining room, with her sewing in her lap. She was evidently thinking, and not sewing as her gaze was fixed upon the fire.

All at once Bennie, the elder, threw up his head and said: 'Hurrah! I am through, Haddie.'

'So am I. What will we do? It is only half past 6, and mamma said we must not go out because it is too stormy.'

'Let's get our Sunday school lesson for next Sunday, if it is only Monday.'

'All right; that's just what we can do.'

The father in this home was in the 'mail service, and the mother was the boys' constant companion. The shadow in her life was the dangerous employment of her husband, and the knowledge that he was not a professional follower of the Master. He had been in several accidents, but had never been seriously injured; but she never could free her mind from fear. A dreadful storm was raging which made travel dangerous and she had been worried all day long.

The boys were busy with the lesson for the next Sabbath, when Haddie said suddenly: 'Say Ben, wasn't that a queer lesson yesterday. Miss Burns talked to us about the angels we can't see.'

'So did Miss Kerr. She said we were all like Kisha's servant. But if we could see, we would see God's angels near us.'

'I am going to ask mamma if she thinks the angels are always around. It makes me feel kind of queer.'

'Look here Haddie, don't you go to bothering mamma. She has been worrying all day anyhow.'

'Why what has she been worrying about?'

'Why she is just uneasy about papa, for fear there will be a wreck and he'll get killed or hurt or something. I can always tell, for she can't read or sew or play the piano, or eat hardly a bit. She didn't eat a bite of supper.'

'If the angels are always around, why can't they take care of papa? Anyway, I am going in to ask her.'

As the boys entered the room the mother looked up and smiled, and said: 'Well, have my little men got all of their lessons ready for to-morrow?'

'Yes, but, mamma,' said Haddie, 'you know our Sabbath-school lesson yesterday. Now do you believe God's angels are everywhere around us?'

'Why, my dear child, of course I do.'

'Well, Bennie said you were worrying about papa all day. Why can't the angels take care of him, so he won't get hurt.'

'My darling, you are right,' and they all knelt down, and mamma prayed for her husband, that he might be kept safe and come to have the faith of his little sons. The mother and children slept peacefully till morning, little thinking of the awful accident and loss of life that occurred during the night hours.

Early in the morning a carriage drove to the door. Mother and sons went swiftly to the door and saw the husband and father being helped out. He was all white and trembling.

'Thank God,' he said, 'I am alive. I thought I would never see you again.' Then he told of the awful accident, where so many were crushed out before his eyes. 'Oh,' he said, 'I don't see how it is that I am left alive. I felt the shock and caught with my right hand and the car turned over and over. I don't understand it why I alone was left alive.'

'I know,' said Haddie; 'we all prayed God to send his angels to take care of you, and he did—oh, Bennie, ain't you glad?'

The father, not understanding, looked inquiringly at the mother, who told him of the little boys' wish and their prayers. The strong man wept like a child and said: 'I will never doubt God's goodness and mercy, and from this hour I will try to serve him faithfully.—Sel.