

A light form had crossed the garden a moment previous, but he was too absorbed to note its presence. Out in the deserted lane he chose a grassy spot beside the hedge and buried his face in his hands in painful thought.

In a single day he had seen the business of years go by the board. There had been the consolation, however, that the assets had paid off every dollar of debt—that is, with his own private inherited fortune thrown in. He believed in Cleora. He had anticipated that, like a true woman, she would sympathize with him in his affliction, comfort and encourage him. How cruelly was he disappointed!

Suddenly Bliss lifted his head in sharp surprise. Some one was sobbing on the other side of the hedge. Then came the words:

"And, oh, Midget! How cold and cruel they were! After all his love for Cleora and his noble loyalty to his friend! They have thrown him out on the cold world just as Uncle John said I would have to go. Oh, cruel! cruel! And Mr. Bliss was so kind to us!"

Peering through the hedge Bliss made out a young girl caressing a pet kitten and confiding to the purring animal her heart's grief. He knew Dorothy Lane well—a poor relative of the haughty Cleora. He had pitied her life of drudgery, and once when Miss Boyden was away had thoughtfully strolled up to the place with a box of caramels for Dorothy and a pretty new ribbon for Midget's snowy neck. It had been a pleasant hour and he had not forgotten. Now vast sorrow and pity oppressed him as he realized that the hard-hearted selfishness of the Boydens was to be wreaked on this helpless, innocent orphan.

It was two weeks later when a new surprise came to Bliss. He had rented a vacant store in the village, and his clear business record enabled him to secure a limited stock of

goods. Cleora was a dead issue with him now, but his business pride was left. He resolved to build anew among those who knew and respected him.

"It's only Dorothy and Midget, Mr. Bliss," announced a sweet, confiding voice, and, looking up from his desk, Bliss recognized Dorothy. In one arm, she bore a bundle, in the other a pet kitten.

"They are going away to the seaside, Cleora and her father," she explained. "All the money my mother left me is gone, he says, so they turned me out. But I came straight to you!" cried the little wail brightly, as if that fact solved all troubles in her path.

"Oh, you want advice, little one?" said Bliss, in a kindly tone.

"No, I don't," dissented Dorothy, strenuously. "I know what a great, grand man you are, and I want to work for you and help you. Oh, we need so little, Midget and I, and an old lady in the village will give us a free home for getting the meals and keeping the house in order. I've thought it all out. Daytimes I'll come here and be your clerk. You can teach me how to sell goods and keep your books, and I'll work like everything. Oh, please, don't say no!"

A humid blur came before the eyes of Bliss at an appreciation of the impetuous, unselfish devotion of this poor little wayfarer. He saw that he would fairly break her heart if he denied her.

It was wonderful how quickly Dorothy learned the business way. She was bright, joyous company all day long. Then, too, the business began to grow. At the end of six months she was proudly earning a salary. She wore more neat, fitting clothes. She was "Miss Lane" now.

One afternoon, just as Dorothy left the store for the day, Bliss stood gazing after her raptly. Something new, something love-inspiring stirred within his soul.

"Hello!" uttered a sudden, jolly