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(Continued from Page 14.)

seconds she had backed off and was under way again. She was preternaturally keen now in her outlook She felt the strain acutely; for the road seemed to be always curving away from her. Moreover there was another cause of concern. Night was coming on. Even in the densest mist or the blackest fog the light or darkness of the sky is to some degree apparent. Now the sense came on her that over the thick mist was darkness. She stopped a moment and getting out looked at her watch in the light of the lamps.

Her heart fell away, away. It was close to eight o'clock. There was no use worrying she felt; nothing to be done but go on, carefully for the present. When she made up her mind to the worst, her courage began to come back and she could think. She felt that as the wind was now strongly in her face she must be nearing the Firth, and that in time she would pass the Border and be heading for home

[illegible] mped into her seat and rather, she realized now that it and was off again. g was thicker than The fog—she reang strongly in her was not mist but fove the glare of the ever; the wind become boiling up out this, it seemed abolich she could see powerful lamps, to vague and gaunt, of the roadway ww her. But there but dimly. Fear, ng or thinking of began to overshadimmediate present was no use worrile of her thought and [illegible] kept the face of her surroundings she c wl not go fast, dared not stop. And in for a time that seemed endless she pressed on through the fog. Presently she became aware that the wind was not so much in her teeth. As she was steering by the road-bed she did not notice curves; there was no doubt as to her route, as there did not seem to be any divergent roads at all. On, on, on, on! A road full of hills, not very high nor especially steep but enough to keep a driver on constant watch-out.

At last she felt that she was close to the sea. The wind came fiercely, and the drifting fog seen against the luminous aree round the lamps seemed like a whirlpool. There was a salt smell in the air. This gave her some hope. If this were the Firth she must be close to the Border and would soon be at the bridge over which they had entered Scotland. Instinctively she went forward faster. And at last there surely was a bridge. A narrow enough bridge it was; as she went slowly across it she wondered how it was that they had seemed to fly over in the morning.

However she could go on now in new hope. She was in England and bye and bye would come through the fog-belt, and having passed Carlisle would drop down through the Lake roads to Ambleside. Though the fog was dense as ever she did not feel the wind so much; she crowded on—she did not dare go much faster as yet and as she was now climbing a long steep hill she ceased to notice it. After a while, when there came a stronger puff than usual, she noticed that it was on her back—the high hood of the car had protected her for some time past. After a little however the old fear came back upon her. At the present rate of progress to reach home at any time, however late, seemed an impossibility. And all was so dark and the fog was so dense; and the road didn't seem a bit like that they had come by between Carlisle and the Border. All at once she found that she was crying—crying bitterly. She did not want to stop the car, and so dared not take her hands from the wheel, even to find her pocket-handkerchief. She wept and went; went her heart out, whilst all the time mechanically steering by the light of the lamps on the road. Her weeping aided the density of the fog, and with her eyes set on the road and the driving wheel in her hands she did not notice that she was going between houses. She came to a bridge, manifestly of a little more importance than the one she had already passed, and crossed it. The road swayed away to the left; presently this was crossed by another almost at right angles, but she kept straight on. There was no one from whom to ask the way; and had there been anyone she probably would not have seen him. A little way on there was another cross-road but of minor importance; then further on she came to a place of difficult choice. Another cross-road, again almost at right angles; but the continuance of the road she was on showed it to be but a poor road ill-kept. So, too, was that to her left; but the road to the right was broad and well kept. It was undoubtedly the main road; and so keeping to the rule she had hitherto obeyed, she followed it.

She was now feeling somehow in better heart; the fit of crying had relieved her, and some of her courage had come back. She wanted comforting—wanted it badly; but those whose comfort only could prevail were far away; one behind her in Scotland, the other still far away at Ambleside. The latter thought made her desperate. She put on more speed—and with her thoughts and anxieties not in the present but the future, ran up a steep bank. There was a quick snap of something in front of the car; the throbbing of the engine suddenly ceased. With the shock she had been thrown forward upon the wheel, but fortunately the speed had not been great enough to cause her serious injury. The lamps made the fog sufficiently luminous for her movements, and she scrambled out of the car. She knew she could do nothing, for she was absolutely ignorant of the mechanism, and she had no mechanical skill. The only thing she could do was to go along the road on the blind chances of meeting or finding some one who could help her, or who might be able to assist her in finding better help. And so with a heavy heart and feet that felt like lead, she went out into the fog. It was a wrench for her to leave the car which held darkness and the unknown mystery of the fog seemed by comparison a sort of home or shelter. It was an evidence of the mechanical habit of the mind which came back to her later, that through all her weariness and distress she thought to pin up her white frock before setting out on the dusty journey.

It was astonishing how soon the little patch of light disappeared. When she had taken but a few steps she looked back and found all as dark as it was before her. One thing alone there was which saved her from utter despair: the fog seemed not to be absolutely dense. In reality it was not that the fog had lessened, but that her eyes, so long accustomed to the glare of the lamps which had prevented her seeing beyond the radius of their power, had now come back to their normal focus Though the darkness seemed more profound than ever, since there was no point of light whatever, she was actually able to see better. After all this fag was a sea mist unladen with city smoke, and its darkness was a very different thing from the Cimmerian gloom of a city of fog. To her not accustomed to winter fogs, it was difficult and terrifying. When however, she began to realize, though unconsciously, that the nebulous wall in front of her fell back with every step she took, her heart began to beat more regularly, and she breathed more freely. It was a terrible position for a delicately nurtured girl to be in. Though she was a brave girl with a full share of self-reliance her absolute ignorance of all around her—even as to what part of the country she was in—had a somewhat paralysing effect upon her. However she had courage and determination. Her race as well as her nature told for her. Her heart might beat hard and her feet be heavy but at any rate she would go on her set road whilst life and strength and consciousness remained to her. She shut her teeth, and in blind despair moved forward in the fog.

In all her after life Joy could never recall the detail of that terrible walk. Like most American girls she was unused to long walks; and after a couple of miles she felt wearied to death. The long emotional strain of the day had told sorely on her strength, and the hopeless nerve-racking tramp on the unknown road through the gloom and mystery of the fog had snapped her natural strength. Looking back on that terrible journey she could remember no one moment from the other from the time that she lost sight of the lamps until she found herself in a dip in the road passing under a railway bridge. The recognition of the fact reanimated her. It was an evidence that there was some kind of civilization somewhere—a fact that she had begun in a vague way to doubt. She would follow that line if she could, for it must lead her to some place where she might find help where she could send reassuring word to her father, and where there would be shelter. Shelter! At the first gleam of hope her own desplorable position was forced upon her, and she realized all at once her desperate weariness She could now hardly drag herself along.

Beyond the railroad there was a branch road to the left; and this she determined to follow, rather than the main road which went away from the line. She stumbled along it as well as she could. The time seemed endless. In her weariness the flicker of hope which her juxtaposition to the railway had given her died soon away. The fog seemed denser, and the darkness blacker than ever.

The road dipped again under the line; she was glad of that; manifestly she was not straying from it. She hurried on instinctively; found the road wider, and rougher with much use. Her heart beat hard once again, but this time it was with hope.

(To be Continued.)

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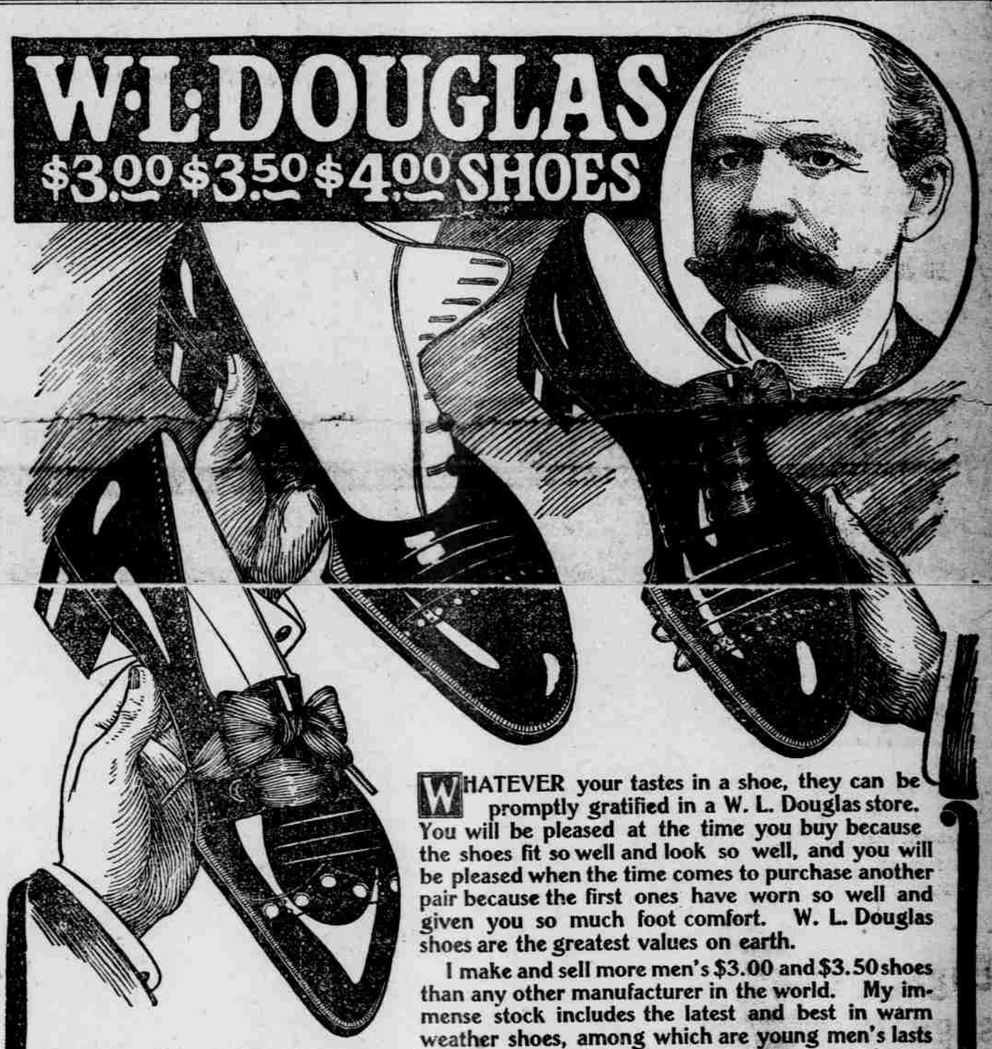

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