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***SUSAN
PROUDLEIGH***

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BOOK I

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CHAPTER I

SUSAN'S DILEMMA

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"I know I 'ave enemies," said Susan bitterly; "I know I am hated in this low neighbourhood. But I don't see what them should hate me for, for I never interfere wid any of them."

"Them hate y'u because you are better than them, and because y'u don't mix with them," sagaciously answered Catherine, her second sister.

"That they will never get me to do," snapped Susan. "I wouldn't mix with a lot of people who are not my companions, even if them was covered from top to toe with gold. It is bad enough that I have to live near them, but further than that I am not going. It is 'good morning' and 'good evening' with me, an' that is all."

"Then them will always hate you," said Catherine, "and if them can injure y'u them will try to do it."

Catherine referred to most of the people living in the immediate vicinity, between Susan and whom a fierce feud had existed for some months. It was born of envy and nurtured by malice, and Susan knew that well. She dressed better than most of the girls in the lane, she lived in a "front house," while most of them had to be content with ordinary yard-rooms. She frequently went for rides on the electric cars, whereas they could only afford such pleasure on Sundays and on public holidays. She carried herself with an air of social superiority which was gall and wormwood to the envious; and often on walking through the lane she had noticed the contemptuous looks of those whom, with

greater contempt, she called the common folks and treated with but half-concealed disdain. On the whole, she had rather enjoyed the hostility of these people, for it was in its way a tribute to her own importance. But now a discomfoting development had taken place in the manner in which the dislike of the neighbourhood habitually showed itself.

This evening Susan sat by one of the windows of the little house in which she lived, and which opened on the lane. It contained two tiny rooms: the inner apartment was her bedroom, her two sisters sleeping with her; the outer one was a sitting-room by day and a bedroom at night, when it was occupied by her father and mother. The house had originally been painted white and green, but the dust of Kingston had discoloured the painting somewhat; hence its appearance was now shabby and faded, though not as much so as that of the other buildings on either side of it. Opposite was an ancient fence dilapidated and almost black; behind this fence were two long ranges of rooms, in which people of the servant classes lived. The comparison between these and Susan's residence was all in favour of the latter; and as this house overlooked the lane, and was detached from the buildings in the yard to which it belonged, its rental value was fairly high and its occupants were supposed to be of a superior social position.

The gutters on both sides of the lane ran with dirty soap-water, and banana skins, orange peel and bits of brown paper were scattered over the roughly macadamized ground. Lean dogs reclined in the centre of the patch, or prowled about seeking scraps of food which they never

seemed to find. In the daytime, scantily-clad children played in the gutters; a few slatternly women, black and brown, drawled out a conversation with one another as they lounged upon the doorsteps; all during the long hours of the sunlight the sound of singing was heard as some industrious housewives washed the clothes of their families and chanted hymns as they worked; and now and then a cab or cart passed down the lane, disturbing for a little while the peaceful tenor of its way.

There were no sidewalks, or rather, there were only the vestiges of sidewalks to be seen. For the space which had been left for these by the original founders of the city had more or less been appropriated by householders who thought that they themselves could make excellent use of such valuable territory. Here a house was partly built on what was once a portion of the sidewalk; there a doorstep marked the encroachment that had taken place on public property; between these an empty space showed that the owner of the intermediate yard had not as yet been adventurous enough to extend his fence beyond its proper limits. Most of the houses that opened on the lane were of one storey, and built of wood, with foundations of red brick. An air of slow decay hung over nearly all of them, though now and then you saw a newly painted building which looked a little out of place in such surroundings.

Susan saw that hers was by no means the shabbiest of these houses, and Susan knew that she was the finest-looking young woman in that section of the lane in which she lived. It was her physical attractions that had helped her to comparative prosperity. In the euphemistic language of

the country, she was “engaged” to a young man who was very liberal with his money; he came to see her two or three times a week; and though of late he had not seemed quite so ardent as before, Susan had not troubled to inquire the reason of his shortened visits. He had never hitherto failed on a Friday night to bring for her her weekly allowance, and that she regarded as a sufficiently substantial proof of his continued affection.

But now she felt that she must take some thought of the future. Thrice during the current week she had been openly laughed at by Mother Smith, a peculiarly objectionable old woman who lived about a hundred yards farther up the lane. Mother Smith had passed her house, and, looking up at the window, had uttered with a malignant air of triumph, “If you can’t catch Quaco, you can catch his shirt.” Meaningless as the words might have appeared to the uninitiated, Susan had immediately divined their sinister significance. She knew that Mother Smith had a daughter of about her own age, whose challenging attractiveness had always irritated her. Because Maria, though black, was comely, Susan had made a point of ignoring Maria’s existence; she had never thought of Maria as a possible rival, however, so confident was she of her ascendancy over her lover, and so certain was she that Maria could never be awarded the prize for style and beauty if Susan Proudleigh happened to be near. Still, there could be no mistaking the triumphant insolence of Mother Smith’s glance or the meaning of her significant words.

Tom’s growing coldness now found an explanation. The base plot hatched against her stood revealed in all its

hideous details. What was she to do? She did not want to quarrel with Tom outright, and so perhaps frighten him away for ever. That perhaps was precisely what her enemies were hoping she would do. After thinking over the matter and finding herself unable to decide what course of action to adopt, she had put the problem before her family; and her aunt, Miss Proudleigh, happening to come in just then, she also had been invited to give her opinion and suggest a plan.

Susan soon began to realize that she could not expect much wisdom from their united counsel. They all knew that she was not liked by the neighbours; unfortunately, Mother Smith's design was a factor in the situation which seemed to confuse them utterly. They had gone over the ground again and again. Catherine had said the last word, and it was the reverse of helpful. For a little while they sat in silence, then Susan mechanically repeated Catherine's words, "If them can injure me, them will try to do it."

"They does dislike you, Susan," agreed her aunt, by way of continuing the conversation, "an' if them can hurt you, them will do it. But, after all, the Lord is on your side." This remark proved to Susan that at such a crisis as this her family was worse than hopeless. She turned impatiently from the window and faced Miss Proudleigh.

"I don't say the Lord is not on my side," she exclaimed; "but Mother Smith is against me, an' the devil is on her side, an' if I am not careful Mother Smith will beat me."

As no one answered, she went on, "Mother Smith wouldn't talk like she is talking if she didn't know what she was talking about. She want Tom for Maria, her big-mouth

daughter. She an' Maria tryin' to take Tom from me—I know it. But, Lord! I will go to prison before them do it!" She had risen while speaking, and her clenched hands and gleaming eyes showed clearly that she was not one over whom an easy victory could be obtained.

She was of middle height, slimly built, and of dark brown complexion. Her lips were thin and pouting, her chin rather salient; her nose stood out defiantly, suggesting a somewhat pugnacious disposition. Her hair, curly but fairly long, was twisted into several plaits and formed a sort of turban on her head; her eyes, large, black, and vivacious, were the features of which she was proudest, for she knew the uses to which they could be put. As her disposition was naturally lively, these eyes of hers usually seemed to be laughing. But just now they were burning and flashing with anger; and those who knew Susan well did not care to cross her when one of these moods came on.

Her father saw her wrath and trembled; then immediately cast about in his mind for some word of consolation that might appease his daughter. He was a tall, thin man, light brown in complexion, and possessed of that inability to arrive at positive decisions which is sometimes described as a judicial frame of mind. He was mildly fond of strong liquors; yet even when under their influence he managed to maintain a degree of mental uncertainty, a sort of intellectual sitting on the fence, which caused his friends to believe that his mental capacity was distinctly above the average. By these friends he was called Schoolmaster, and he wore the title with dignity. By way of living up to it he usually took three minutes to say what another person

would have said in one. That is to say, he delighted in almost endless circumlocution.

It was even related of Mr. Proudleigh that, one night, no lamp having yet been lit, he surreptitiously seized hold of a bottle he found on a table and took a large sip from it, thinking the liquor it contained was rum. It happened to be kerosene oil; but such was his self-control that, instead of breaking into strong language as most other men would have done, he muttered that the mistake was very regrettable, and was merely sad and depressed during the remainder of the evening. Such a man, it is clear, was not likely to allow his feelings to triumph over his judgment, though upon occasion, and when it suited his interests, he was ready to agree with the stronger party in any argument. Though he now felt somewhat alarmed by Susan's suspicions, and knew it was a matter of the first importance that Tom, her lover, and especially Tom's wages, should be retained as an asset in the family, he could not quite agree that Susan had very good cause for serious apprehension as yet. Up to now he had said very little; he was convinced that he had not sufficient evidence before him on which to pronounce a judgment. He thought, too, that his hopeful way of looking at the situation might help her at this moment; so, his mild, lined face wearing a profoundly deliberative expression, he gave his opinion.

"I don't think you quite right, Susan," he observed; "but, mind, I don't say y'u is wrong. Mother Smit is a woman I don't like at all. But de Scripture told us, judge not lest we be not judged, an' perhaps Mother Smit don't mean you at all when she talk about Quaco."

On hearing this, Susan's mother, a silent, elderly black woman with a belligerent past, screwed up her mouth by way of expressing her disapproval of her husband's point of view. Mrs. Proudleigh was a firm believer in the unmitigated wickedness of her sex, but judged it best to say nothing just then. Susan, however, annoyed by the perverseness of her father, burst out with:

"Then see here, sah, if she don't mean me an' my young man, who can she mean? Don't Mother Smith always say I am forward? Don't she pass the house this morning an' throw her words on me? Don't Maria call out 'Look at her' when I was passing her yard yesterday? Tut, me good sah, don't talk stupidity to me! If you don't have nothing sensible to say, you better keep you' mouth quiet. I am going to Tom's house to-night, to-night. And Tom will 'ave to tell me at once what him have to do with Maria."

"I will go with you," said Catherine promptly. She was a sturdy young woman of nineteen years of age, and not herself without a sneaking regard for Tom. Hence, on personal as well as on financial grounds, she objected to Tom's being taken possession of by Maria and Maria's mother.

The old man, rather fearing that Susan's wrath might presently be turned against himself, discreetly refrained from making any further remark; but his sister, an angular lady of fifty, with a great reputation for intelligence and militant Christianity, seeing that Susan's mind was fully made up as to Maria's guilt, and being herself in the habit of passing severe comment on the conduct of the absent, determined to support her niece.

“But some female are really bad!” she observed, as if in a soliloquy. “Some female are really bad. Now here is poor Susan not interfering wid anybody. She got her intended. He take his own foot an’ he walk down the lane, an’ he fall in love with her. It is true she don’t marry him yet, but she is engaged. She is engage, and therefore it is an unprincipled sin for any other female to trouble her intended an’ take him away from her. If Maria want a young man, why don’t she go an’ look for one? Why she an’ her mother want to trouble Susan’s one poor lamb, when there is ninety and nine others to pick an’ choose from? Really some female is wicked!”

A speech like this, coming from a woman whose lack of physical charms was more than made up for by strength of moral character, was naturally hailed with great approval by Susan, Catherine, and their mother. The old man himself, never willing to be permanently in a minority, now went so far as to admit that the whole affair was “very provoking,” and added that if he was a younger man he would do several things of a distinctly heroic and dangerous character.

But all this, though in its way very encouraging, was not exactly illuminating. It only brought Susan back to the point from which she had started. “What am I to do?” she asked for the last time, reduced to despair, and sinking back into her seat despondently.

“If I was you,” said Catherine at last deliberately, “I would catch hold of Maria, and beat her till she bawl.”

This advice appealed to Susan; it corresponded with the wish of her own heart. But she doubted the efficacy of physical force in dealing with a difficult and delicate

situation. No: a beating would not do; besides, in the event of an encounter, it might be Maria who would do the beating! Susan saw plainly that no word of a helpful nature would be forthcoming from any of the anxious group, who usually appealed to her for advice and assistance. So when Miss Proudleigh was again about to give some further opinions on the general wickedness of females, she got up abruptly, saying that she was going round to Tom's house to see him. Catherine rose to accompany her, and after putting on their hats the two girls left the room.

CHAPTER II

A PASSAGE-AT-ARMS

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It was about eight o'clock; and, save for a few lights gleaming faintly here and there in the yards and the little houses, the lane was in darkness. It was quiet, too; only three or four persons were to be seen moving about, and the innumerable dogs would not begin to bark until nearly everybody had gone to bed. A stranger standing at one of the numerous crossings that intersected the lane, and looking up or down the narrow way, might imagine he was peering into some gloomy tunnel were it not for the brilliancy of the stars overhead. The cross-streets were very much brighter and livelier, and that one towards which Susan and her sister directed their steps was particularly bright.

A Chinaman's shop at the lane corner opened upon this street. To the right of this, and also opening on the street, was another shop presided over by an elderly woman. It was small, but contained a comparatively large quantity of things which found ready sale in the neighbourhood; such as pints of porter, little heaps of ripe bananas, loaves of bread, coarse straw hats, charcoal, pieces of sugar-cane, tin whistles, reels of thread and peppermint cakes. On the opposite side of the crossing were other shops, and on either hand, east and west, as far as the eye could reach, were still more shops standing between fairly large two-storeyed dwelling-houses of brick and wood. On the piazzas women squatted selling native sweetmeats and fruit. To the

west, in the middle distance, two or three taverns blazed with light; away to the east was a great crowd of people singing, and in the midst of this crowd jets of flame streamed upwards from the unprotected wicks of huge oil-lamps. These lamps gave off thick columns of black smoke which slowly drifted over the heads of the sable, white-clothed revivalists who passionately preached on the always approaching end of the world, and called upon their hearers to repent them of their sins.

People were continually passing up and down. They passed singly or in groups, the latter discussing loudly their private affairs, careless as to who might hear: even love-making couples ignored the proximity of other human beings, and laughed and chatted as though there was no one within a mile of them. Many of these pedestrians were barefooted, but most of them wore shoes or slippers of some sort. A few were in rags, but the majority were fairly well dressed, for this was a populous thoroughfare, and the people took some pride in their appearance. A number of children hung about, playing with one another or gazing idly at the passing show; a fine grey dust lay thick upon the ground; gas-lamps placed at wide distances apart burned dimly, so that large spaces of the street were in shadow. Cabs conveying passengers home or on visits drove by frequently, and every now and then the electric cars flew by, stirring up a cloud of dust which almost blinded one, and which for a moment shrouded the street with a moving, impalpable veil. There was life here, there was movement, and while the revivalists prayed and preached in the distance, the candy sellers near by plaintively invited the

young to come and purchase their wares, the proprietors of little ice-cream carts declaimed vociferously that they sold the best cream ever manufactured, and the vendors of peanuts screamed out that baked peanuts were strengthening, enlivening, and comforting. This was the life of the street.

At the right-hand corner of the lane, where the Chinaman's shop stood, was a gas-lamp, and the gossiping groups about the spot indicated that it was a favourite rendezvous of the people of the vicinity. Susan never condescended to linger for a moment there; that would have been beneath her dignity. But Maria, her rival, sometimes paused at the corner when going for a walk, to talk for a while with a possible admirer or with a friend if she should happen to meet one. To-night Maria was standing under the gas-lamp conversing gaily with two girls. Evidently she was in a happy frame of mind.

"Yes," she was saying, in answer to a question put to her by one of the girls, "I am goin' to tell her so. She is proud an' she is forward; but she will soon sing a different tune. I wonder what she would say now if she did know dat her lover write me two letters last week, an' say that him love me! I don't answer him yet, but him say him coming to see me to-morrow night. You watch! If I want to teck Tom from her, I have only to lift me little finger. An' I am not too sure I won't do it."

She laughed as she spoke of her prospective victory over Susan; but her friends, though they hated Susan, were not particularly delighted with the news they heard. They were agreed that Susan ought to be humbled, but that was no reason why Maria should be exalted. It was, therefore, not

altogether in a cheerful tone of voice that the elder one asked Maria:

“Y’u think Tom going to come to you?”

“Him almost come to me already,” replied Maria, with pride. “Look what him send for me last night!”

She thrust her hand into her pocket as she spoke. As she was taking out Tom’s present, Susan and her sister emerged into the light.

Both Susan and Maria caught sight of each other at the same moment. And each realized in a flash that the other knew the true position of affairs. The glare of hate from Susan’s eyes was answered by a contemptuous stare and a peal of derisive laughter from Maria. Susan’s sister and Maria’s friends at once understood that a desperate struggle had begun between the two.

Maria’s ringing jeer was more than any ordinary woman could tolerate. Susan tried to answer it with a laugh as contemptuous, but failed, her wrath choking her. Then she put all pretence aside, and swiftly moving up to Maria she thrust her face into the face of the other girl. “See here, ma’am,” she hissed, “I want to ask you one thing: is it me you laughing at?”

“But stop!” exclaimed Maria, backing away a little, and defiantly placing her arms akimbo. “Stop! You ever see my trial! Then I can’t laugh without your permission, eh?” Saying which she laughed again as contemptuously as before, and swung round with a flounce so as to bring one of her elbows into unpleasant proximity to Susan’s waist.

“I don’t say you can’t laugh, an’ I don’t care if y’u choose to laugh till you drop,” cried Susan bitterly; “but I want to

tell you that y'u can't laugh at me!"

"So you're better than everybody else?" sneered Maria. "Y'u think you are so pretty, eh? Well! there is a miss for you! She can't even behave herself in de public street, though she always walk an' shake her head as if she was a princess, an' though she call herself 'young lady.' But perhaps she think she lose something good, an' can't recover from the loss as yet!" And again that maddening peal of laughter rang out.

Susan did not answer Maria directly. She eyed that young woman swiftly, and noticed that her dress was old and her shoes poor and dusty. This gave her the advantage she needed in dealing with a girl who was all contempt while she herself was all temper. She turned to her sister and to Maria's friends, and pointed to Maria with scorn.

"Look at her!" she cried. "Look how she stand! Her face is like a cocoa-nut trash, and she don't even have a decent frock to put on!"

Maria might have passed over the reference to her face; she knew it was only spiteful abuse. But the allusion to the scantiness of her wardrobe was absolutely unforgivable. If not exactly true, it yet approached perilously near the truth, and so it cut her to the quick. No sooner were the words uttered than Maria's forefinger was wagging in Susan's face, and:

"Say that again, an' I box you!" she screamed.

"Box me?" hissed Susan. "Box me? My good woman, this would be the last day of you' life. Take you' hand out of me face at once—take it out, I say—take it out!"—and without

waiting to see whether Maria would remove the offending member, she seized it and pushed Maria violently away.

In a moment the two were locked in one another's arms. There was a sound of heavy blows, two simultaneous shrieks of "Murder!" and a hasty movement of about forty persons towards the scene of the combat.

Catherine now thought it time to interfere. She threw herself upon the combatants, making a desperate but vain attempt to separate them. Maria's friends protested loudly that Susan was ill-treating Maria, though, as the latter was at least as strong as Susan, it was difficult to see where the ill-treatment came in. A dignified-looking man standing on the piazza loudly remonstrated with the crowd for allowing "those two females to fight," but made not the slightest effort himself to put a stop to the struggle. The little boys and girls in the vicinity cheered loudly. The one thing lacking was a policeman. Noticing this, the dignified-looking man audibly expressed his opinion on the inefficiency of the force.

"Let me go, I say, let me go!" gasped Susan, her head being somewhere under Maria's right arm.

"You wants to kill me!" stammered Maria, whose sides Susan was squeezing with all the strength she possessed—"murder, murder!"

But neither one would let the other go. Neither one was much hurt as yet. The struggle continued about a minute longer, when some one in the crowd shouted, "Policeman coming!"

Then indeed both Susan and Maria came to their senses. They separated, and vainly tried to put on an appearance of

composure. It was time, for yonder, moving leisurely through the crowd, now composed of over a hundred persons, was the policeman who had been spied by one of the spectators. The girls made no effort to run, for that would surely have provoked the policeman to an unusual display of energy, and, justly angered at having been compelled to exert himself, he might have arrested them both on the charge of obstructing him in the execution of his duty. They waited where they stood, their eyes still flashing, their bosoms heaving, and their bodies trembling with rage.

But angry as she was, Susan had already begun to feel ashamed of fighting in the street. She had always had a horror of street scenes; people of her class did not participate in them; before this event she would not have thought it possible that she could ever be mixed up in such an affair as this. Oh, the humiliation of being handled by a constable! She heartily wished she were a thousand miles from the spot.

In the meantime the policeman, having arrived at the outskirts of the crowd, began busily to work his way through to the centre. True to its traditions, the crowd was hostile to him and friendly to the culprits; so some of the women managed to put themselves in his way, then angrily asked him what he was pushing them for.

“What is all dis?” was his first question as he came up to the spot where Susan and Maria stood. “What is de meaning of this?” He looked fixedly at the gas-lamp as if believing that that object could give him the most lucid explanation of the circumstances.

Nobody answered.

“What is all dis, I say?” he again demanded in a more peremptory tone of voice.

“These two gals was fighting, sah,” explained a small boy, in the hope of seeing somebody arrested.

“Mind your own business, buoy!” was all the reward the policeman gave him for his pains, and then the arm of the law, feeling that something was expected of him, proceeded to deliver a speech.

“The truth of de matter is dis,” he observed, looking round with an air of grave authority: “You common folkses are too ignorant. You are ignorant to extreme. You ever see white ladies fight in de street? Answer me that!”

No one venturing to answer, he continued:

“White people don’t fight in de street, because them is ladies and gentleman. But I can’t understand the people of my own colour; they have no respect for themself!”

He spoke more in sorrow than in anger; almost as though he were bitterly lamenting the deficiencies of the working classes. But Susan, though in trouble, would not even then allow herself to be classed with the policeman and others in the category of “common folkses.” “I am not common,” she answered defiantly; “I am not your set!”

“Silence, miss!” thundered the policeman, scandalized. “I am the law! Do you know dat?”

“I never see a black law yet,” cheekily replied Susan, who thought that, if she had to be arrested, there would be at least some satisfaction in humiliating the policeman.

“If y’u say another impertinence word I will arrest you!” was the policeman’s threat. “Now de whole of you walk right off! Right off, I say, or I teck you all to jail!” He included the

crowd with one comprehensive sweep of his arm, perceiving that his edifying attempt to awaken in his audience a sense of respectability had not been favourably received.

There was no disputing his authority, especially as he had begun to get angry. Susan knew, too, that she had mortally offended him by claiming to belong to a better class than his: which remark had also lost her the sympathy of the greater part of the crowd. So she was the first to take advantage of his command, and Maria followed her example by disappearing as quickly as she could. In another minute or two the normal activity of the street had been resumed, and the policeman had again started upon his beat, hoping that he would no more be disturbed that night. But both Susan and Maria knew that the fight would have a sequel. For war had now openly been declared between them.

CHAPTER III

THE CASE IN COURT

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“I will have to bring ’er up!”

It was Susan who spoke. She had returned to the house, where the news of the fight had preceded her. The whole family had been on the point of issuing forth to her rescue when she appeared, and now they were again assembled in full conclave to discuss at length this new aspect of the situation.

“ ‘Vengeance is mine,’ ” quoted her aunt; “but there is a time for all things. An’ if y’u don’t teach a gurl like Maria a lesson, she will go far wid you.”

“She is a very rude young ooman!” exclaimed Mr. Proudleigh with indignation, following up his sister’s remark; he felt that he must lend his daughter his moral support. “Ef I was a younger man,” he went on, “I would ... I would ... well, I don’t know what I wouldn’t do! But Mother Smit is a dangerous female to interfere wid, and de cramps is troubling me in me foot so badly dat I wouldn’t like ’er to put ’er hand ’pon me at all.”

“Ef she ever touch you,” his wife broke in, “old as I is, she an’ me would have to go to prison.”

“You was always a courigous gal, Mattie,” said the old man approvingly; “but I don’t want to see y’u get into any quarrel; an’ to tell you de trute, I don’t t’ink I could help you at all. Susan is goin’ to bring up Maria, an’ that is a satisfaction. I are going to de court-house wid ’er to encourage her.”

“But suppose Susan lose the case?” Catherine suggested. She had been a witness of the encounter, and though she fully intended to forget every fact that would make against Susan in the court-house, she was sagacious enough to realize that Maria’s friends would not do likewise.

“Lose me case?” asked Susan incredulously. “That can’t be done! She provoked me first, an’ the judge must take note of that. Besides, I am goin’ to put a good lawyer on her: not a fool-fool man that can’t talk, but a man who will question her properly an’ make her tell de truth.”

“Dat is right,” said Mr. Proudleigh with proud anticipation of coming victory. “Sue, I advise you to get de Attorney-General.”

“I never hear about him,” Miss Proudleigh remarked; “an’ it won’t do for Susan to get a lawyer we don’t know. But who to get?”

As Mr. Proudleigh knew nothing about the leader of the local bar except his name, he decided not to urge the claims of that high official upon his daughter. One after another, the names of the several lawyers of whom the family had heard were mentioned, and their various merits were discussed. As this was to be the most important case ever tried—or at least so the family thought—it was of the utmost importance that the brightest legal luminary should be obtained: the difficulty was to select one from the many whose reputation for ability commended them all as fit and proper persons to prosecute Maria Bellicant for assault and abusive language. At last Miss Proudleigh suggested a lawyer whose cleverness in handling witnesses determined to perjure themselves had often appealed to her admiration.

Having once mentioned his name with approval, the worthy lady thought it was incumbent upon her to argue away all that might be said against him and all that might be urged in favour of other solicitors; and at length Susan decided that she would go to see Lawyer Jones in the morning. Miss Proudleigh was so delighted with the prospect of having Mr. Jones proceed against Maria, that during the rest of the time she remained at the house she could talk of nothing but that lawyer's merits. But on leaving she reminded Susan of the value of prayer as a consolation for all the troubles of life, and suggested that supplications made properly and in a reverent spirit might lead to Maria's being afflicted with manifold ills throughout the rest of her days.

After Miss Proudleigh had left, the family sat up until twelve o'clock discussing the fight and the coming case. And in many of the yards and houses of the lane the fight also formed the topic of discussion. In the yard where Maria lived some thirty persons assembled to express their sympathy with her and to give fervent utterance to the hope that she had beaten Susan properly. They were comforted on learning from Maria that she had. Mother Smith herself performed a sort of war dance about the premises, showing in pantomime what she would do as soon as she should lay hands upon Susan and Susan's people, down to the third and fourth generation. Everybody agreed that Maria had been most shamefully ill-treated, and one of the girls who had been with Maria at the street corner went so far as to "think" she had seen Susan draw a pair of scissors out of her pocket, presumably to stab Maria. Indeed, in some of the tenement yards it was actually reported that blood had

been drawn, one eye-witness even undertaking to describe the wounds. Altogether, it was a very exciting night in that section of the lane in which the girls lived, and almost every one was glad that Susan had at last met her match.

The excitement was kept alive the next day by the news that Susan had brought up Maria. Maria had been expecting this, for she had rightly calculated that no girl in Susan's financial position would forgo the luxury of a case in court after such a fight. Maria was poor, but she felt that the only proper thing to do in the circumstances was to "cross the warrant"; so she went and crossed it that same day, and Mother Smith began to sell some of her scanty stock of furniture to raise enough money to employ a lawyer.

Susan acted very rapidly when her mind was made up. After leaving the court-house she had sent a note to Tom telling him to come round to see her that night; and Tom, who had already heard about the fight, came as requested.

He was a short, stoutish young fellow of about twenty-six years of age, and somewhat lighter in complexion than Susan. His watery eyes, weak mouth, and tip-tilted nose showed a man of little strength of character; you would rightly have described him as a nondescript sort of person. He took great pride in his appearance, always used cheap scents on Sundays, and carried on his amours as surreptitiously as possible. He had a horror of domestic quarrels, and though it was true that he had been attracted by Maria's appearance, fear of Susan's temper had kept him fairly faithful to his vows of eternal constancy. He had flirted just a little with Maria. He had made her one or two presents. He had written her a couple of letters; he was

rather (perhaps dangerously) fond of writing letters. But Susan overawed him, and in the midst of these amorous exercises he had devoutly hoped that she would never suspect him of even speaking to Maria. Judge of his consternation, therefore, when, after greeting him coldly and saying that she had sent for him because he did not seem to care now about coming to see her as often as before, she launched out upon a sea of reproaches, and overwhelmed him with perfectly just accusations. Naturally, he denied all intercourse with Maria, though remembering with a sinking heart that his own handwriting might be produced against him. But Susan evidently knew nothing about those letters: perhaps he could induce Maria to return them to him. He began to take heart—too soon. For Susan did not believe a word he said, though she pretended to do so in order to gain the end she had in view. She heard him out to the end, and after he had expressed his indignation at the conduct of Maria, and agreed with Susan that that young woman deserved severest punishment, she quietly said:

“I bring Maria up to-day.”

Tom was thunderstruck.

“You mean,” he stammered, “that you going into a court-house with that girl?”

“Yes,” she answered; “I make up me mind.”

“An’ then,” he protested heatedly, “my name will be called, an’ I will be mixed up in it! What you talkin’ about, Sue?”

“You’ name won’t be called,” she answered inflexibly. “What you fretting about? If you know, as you say, that you

have nothing to do with Maria, you needn't trouble you'self. It is me bringing her up, not you. Who is to call you' name?"

Tom looked into her face, and realized that there was no turning her from her purpose. The two were alone in the day-sitting-room; but even if the rest of the family were there, he reflected ruefully, that would hardly assist him.

"I don't like it," he muttered dismally.

"Don't fret about anything," she cheerfully advised him as he bade her good-night. "You' name won't come into the case."

But Tom left her with a sinking heart.

The eventful day of the case dawned at last, and found Susan and her family in a state of intense excitement. The case was to be tried in the Police Court, a building which had once been a barracks for the Imperial soldiers when troops were stationed in the city of Kingston. The courtyard of this building opened on one hand upon the city's central park, a large plot of land planted out in umbrageous evergreens and flowering shrubs; on the other hand, it opened upon one of the city's busiest thoroughfares. Thus on the one side was an oasis of peace and beauty, while in the adjoining street to the west all was squalor and confusion. This street itself was filled with little shops and crowded with clamouring, gesticulating people. A market was there, and the echoes of shrieks of laughter and sudden volleys of abuse sometimes came to the magistrates and lawyers as they transacted their business in the court; but they accepted these minor interruptions as part of the settled order of things, and never complained about them.