

RHODA INCONSISTENT.

"I wish I were rich," Rhoda said, entering the room. "I just wish I were rich."

"Nonsense," said the other, lifting her eyes. "You'd be bored to death."

"Ah," demurred Rhoda. "You certainly would. Rich! An imaginative person like you or me. There'd be nothing left to wish for. Much more interesting to be poor."

"If one were rich," said Rhoda, "one might wish for that."

"Allez Done! That brings me where we started."

"If," said Rhoda, raising her little hands above her head and letting them fall. "If I might have a pair of bronze boots, and a lace shawl, and a large box of macaroons, and a book called Leaves From the Life of a Good for Nothing, translated from the German, I should be happy, perfectly happy."

"You're mistaken about that, I reckon," Winnie replied, regarding her through her long eye lashes. "Still if you think so, let us try. You're quite sure that's all?"

"At present," said Rhoda, with a gesture of her arms, "all. I'm those four things short of happiness."

"Very well then, you shall have them."

"But," said Rhoda, "I'm tired of pretending."

"Good! I'm not pretending."

Rhoda shrugged her shoulders, then flung herself down upon the dingy lounge, and commenced to read. Winnie finished her work and rising, put on her hat and took up some gloves. "I'm going out," she said.

"Very well," said Rhoda, rather interested in her book.

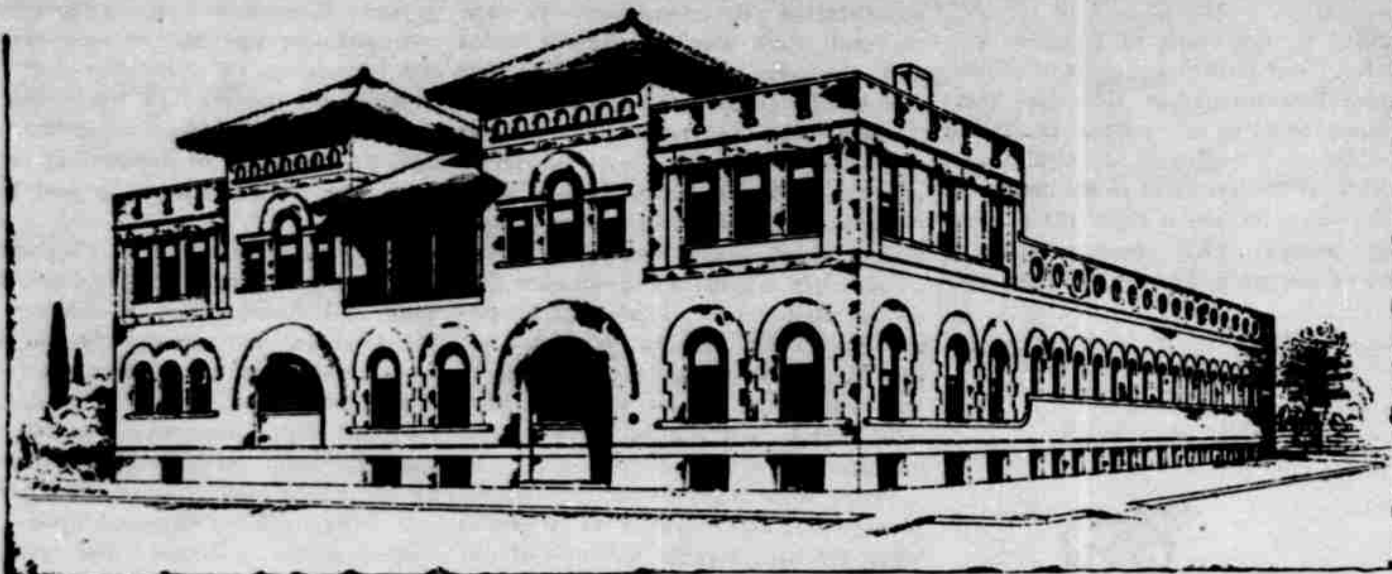
Winnie departed and Rhoda went on reading. After a while she finished and leaning back, with her hands behind her head, she lay, looking out into the dusky streets, and contemplating, with a pleasant melancholy, the lot of two girls of limited means, who, while comfortable enough, found themselves constantly subjected to such trials as the necessity of hard work, of shabby clothes, of few luxuries, of many annoyances.

"Anyway, Winnie's lovely," she said at last, "and we go to most of the good concerts. And we can read all we like."

Just then Winnie came in. She was carrying a number of packages. Her walk had brought a fine color to her cheeks and lips. Her air was one of elation.

"Good gracious," cried Rhoda. "What's that you've got?"

Winnie threw off the papers. There were bronze boots, a shawl of heavy lace, a box of macaroons, and one of chocolates. There was also the book



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Leaves From the Life of a Good for Nothing, translated from the German, in blue covers.

Rhoda caught Winnie's hand. "You are an angel," she cried.

"How did you do it?"

"I sold my ring with the rubies," Winnie answered with unconcern.

"There is some money left, too."

"How could you!" exclaimed Rhoda. She looked ready to cry. "I made you do it," she said.

"On the contrary," replied Winnie. "The thought hadn't entered your head. For the ring," she added grandly, "it was a bauble. Come, let us eat the macaroons. If I do not care, you should not."

Rhoda scanned Winnie's face. It was unaffectedly serene. "You are an angel," she said again.

They passed the evening reading, and eating the bon-bons. Rhoda placed the boots on the table and laid the shawl beside them. At the first of the evening she frequently glanced at them. Later, her glances became not so frequent.

At ten o'clock she shut the blue covers of Leaves from the Life of a Good for Nothing, and sighed.

"What do you want," said Winnie. "Nothing," Rhoda answered. "I feel stupid."

Winnie smiled. "Nous sommes comme tous les autres," she murmured under her breath.

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