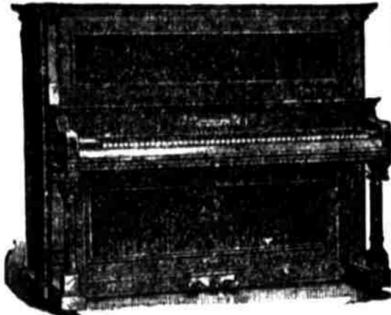


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ONE LIFE'S INFLUENCE.

(Continued from page 5.)

Wayne would better move on." It was
Prince who broke the silence.
"I reckon," "The Little One" re-
sponded, and sat up again.

It was a hot Sunday afternoon. The
grasshoppers whirred noisily through
the layers of heat, the leaves on the
tees looked dusty and shrivelled.

Wait and Mariam walked along the
road leading from the town and turned
on an old wood road that lead up the
hillside under tall steady pines.

She was clad in a light summer dress
and carried her hat in her hand. She
looked happy and contented. He had
not changed in looks from the dissi-
pated feckless Wait that he was wont
to be, but there was a something about
him that seemed different.

"I'm going to work in the Tornado
shaft Wednesday, Mariam," he was
saying. "I've quit that other life, and
for good. You—"

She interrupted him: "O, John, I'm
so glad, and I know you'll stick to it.
You've got it in you, and I always
knew that some day you'd wake up and
leave Prince and his wretched com-
panion. I'm proud of you, John. I'm
proud of you," and she held out both
her hands to him, her face all sunny
with smiles and her eyes shining. He
took her hands and started to raise
one to his lips, but she drew it quickly
away, and the light died out of her
face.

"You mustn't do that," she said gen-
tly.

They walked on in silence for a mo-
ment, till they came to a clearing
among the trees, which gave them a
view out over the hills. There they
paused. She seated herself at the foot
of a tree and he stood leaning against
its trunk, above her.

"I'm sorry I offended you, Mariam,"
he said. She looked up at him and
smiled. "But it was unintentional. I
meant to tell you something then, but
you stopped me, now you must listen
to me."

She did not look up, but sat with
her chin in her hands, gazing out over
the hills.

"You can't know what your friend-
ship has meant to me; when a fellow
is down as I was, it's pretty hard to
get up alone, and when he meets a
good, pure woman who is a true friend
to him and helps him and trusts and
helps him, and shows him that there
is something in life for him and points
out the way to a better life, why—why
—he—he grows to care for that woman
with all his heart and soul." Mariam
rose quickly to her feet and stood with
her face turned from him. "For me,
Mariam, you are that woman, and I—
I—love you."

He reached and took one of her
hands which hung at her side. She
pulled it hurriedly away and faced him
squarely; her face was pale and drawn
and tears were streaming down her
cheeks.

"Oh! Why did you tell me," she
said wildly. "Why did you tell me. I
—I—" she sobbed. "I love you—but
why did you tell me? O! I hate you."

She ran a few steps from him, then
paused and leaning against a tree she
covered her face with her hands and
her body shook with sobs. Wait start-
ed towards her, but she motioned him
back, and he stopped and waited, with
great staring eyes, for—he knew not
what.

Gradually the sobs died away; then
she dried her eyes and came slowly to
the tree—where they first were and
they both sat down.

"I'll tell you now—why," she said in
a low strained voice. "My name as
Mariam Price. Mrs. Mariam Price, lis-
ten dear." Wait had partly risen. "I
was married when I was seventeen. I
ran away with Will Price and was mar-
ried against my parents' wishes. Will
was always a good husband but as I
grew older I found we didn't have much
in common, but still we were happy.
He worked in a bank as cashier, his
brother was president. One month the
accounts appeared short, the blame
and suspicion fell on Will. He knew
where the shortage was, his brother
had used the money, but would not
own up to it. Will was tried, con-
victed and sentenced to five years' im-
prisonment. He kept his brother's se-
cret and is—serving his time. He
has served four years of it. All our
money, which wasn't much, is gone,
and I'm working here to make a little
start for us when he comes out. God
knows we'll need it. I came here be-

cause no one knew me." She paused a
moment, then went on. "And now,
dear, you understand." Wait remained
silent, gazing at the ground. "God
knows I love you, dearest, better than
all. But He sees and knows I belong
to another and he needs me and I must
be true to him. Our love is not for
this life, possibly in the next world He
will bring us together. But promise
me before—before—we part, that you
will lead a life such as you would if
we were to be together. In your love
for me swear that you will be true to
all that is best in you."

"I swear," he whispered hoarsely. "I,
Mariam, Mariam." She rose to her feet
steadily.

"You must leave me here," she said
softly.

He sat in silence like one stunned
for a moment, then rose slowly to his
feet and passed his hand across his
eyes.

"You'll leave town tonight, won't
you?" she asked earnestly. He nodded.
"Then—Goodbye! John."

She held out her hands and he took
them and covered them with kisses,
and started to draw her to him, but
she broke from him with a low moan.
"No! No! O, God! No! Please—I,
please go quickly."

Then he turned and left her, going
slowly down the old wood road, under
the tall, cool pines.

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