

BRENTWOOD

By Grace Livingston Hill

TWELFTH INSTALLMENT

Synopsis
When the wealthy foster parents of Marjorie Wetherill both die she finds a letter telling that she has a twin sister, that she was adopted when her own parents couldn't afford to support both of them and that her real name is Dorothy Gay. Alone in the world, but with a fortune of her own, she considers looking up her own family whom she has never seen. A neighbor, Evan Bower, tries to argue her out of it and tells her he loves her and asks her to marry him. She promises to think it over but decides first to see her family. She goes to their address, finds that they are destitute and gradually persuades them to accept things they need. When the doctor calls to see her mother she notices that he seems particularly interested in her sister. Marjorie goes to church in Brentwood, where her family used to live, and becomes very much interested in the young minister there, with whom she later has lunch in the city. While at Brentwood she sees the home her family formerly

owned, buys it back for them and gives the deed to it to her father on Christmas morning. The whole family is very joyful. While preparing for Christmas dinner the minister and doctor both drop in and are urged to stay to dinner. All are enjoying themselves when Evan Brower makes a surprise visit. He is unwelcome by all, but Marjorie agrees to have lunch with him the next day.

"Oh, no!" laughed Marjorie firmly. "I'm not going back yet. I haven't finished my visit. But I'll be ready at eleven if you like. Thank you again for the orchids. So nice of you to think of me. Oh—" as he swung the door smartly open, "it's snowing again, isn't it? How lovely! Christmas always has twice the thrill when it snows sometime during the day! Well, good night. I'll be ready at eleven."

So they started in to sing again discovering a lot of sweet old Christmas songs they all knew.

A little after eight Gideon rose. "Friends, I've got to tear myself away," he said. "I have a service at nine. I came here originally to get recruits for it, but I haven't

the heart to tear you apart on Christmas night. Though it would be great to have that last song repeated, and if the doctor would come too he and Ted and I could do the trio!"

"He wasn't going to ask us? No, he hasn't the heart to tear us away! And yet he's fixed it all up for us to be on the program!" laughed the doctor. "But, friend, you're going to have the surprise of your life. We're going, of course, aren't we, Betty?"

"Oh!" said Betty both eagerly and with a fight. "I was hoping Marjorie passed her brother as he was coming down the stairs, a kind of triumph in his tread."

"Is Betty going?" she whispered as she passed.

"I don't dare ask," he grinned back. "Leave it to Doc. Perhaps he can work the trick!"

But Betty was flying as fast as any of them to get ready. Here was a chance to go out with a good-looking young man and wear her new fur coat and her new gray hat, and Betty was not the one to turn that down, even if it was just a religious service in a little old deserted common chapel!

By common consent the doctor went with Betty.

It was a beautiful service. There was much singing and prayer, wonderful, tender prayer from both minister and people. There was a hymn—searching talk from Gideon. Reaver pressing home the fact to each soul present that the Lord Jesus was born and suffered and died just for him.

And then after another tender brief prayer Gideon called for his quartette, and Ted calmly arose and led the way to the front. Marjorie as she walked behind him marveled at his coolness, his reverent attitude, as he wore a young priest going to perform his duty at the altar. She found herself a little nervous about Betty.

But Betty came, and her alto was deep and sweet.

Then they went home with the memory of the little chapel in its gala greenery, and the sweet songs, the tender looks on faces, the Christian testimonies with which the meeting had closed, all a holy beautiful ending to a day that had been wonderful from start to finish.

Marjorie lay awake for a long time and thought it over, step by step, thrilling anew at the memory. There was just one part she forgot to review, and that was the interlude in which Evan Brower figured.

And none the least among her memories was that of Gideon Reaver.

Betty lay beside her, eyes staring wide ahead at the blank wall of the room in the darkness. Betty was thinking of the look on the doctor's face when he had said, "Something real about this place!" Wondering about the doctor, thinking of all the fun he had made for them during the afternoon and evening. Contrasting it with a few experiences in her meager past that she had called "good times."

The next morning Marjorie became aware of something strained in the atmosphere that hadn't been there the day before.

Finally she said to Betty, "Have I done something wrong?"

"Oh, mercy no!" said Betty sharply. "It's just seeing that high-and-mighty friend of yours, I suppose. Have you known him long?"

"You mean Evan Brower? Oh, yes, I've known him practically all my life."

"He means to take you home with him," said Betty. "Excuse me for listening. You'll go, too. I can see that! And if you do it'll be goodbye sister, all right! Are you engaged?"

"Mercy no!" said Marjorie. "Where did you get that idea?"

"Out of his masterful manner. If you aren't, you probably will be by the time lunch is over. You ought to have told us about him before you let us all get to caring about you. It wasn't fair, after all these years without you."

"Betty!" Marjorie whirled about toward her sister.

"What in the name of peace is the matter with you, Betty?" Marjorie said, half ready to cry. "There wasn't anything to tell. He's just a friend of the family and there's nothing at all between us. I'm not engaged to anybody, and don't mean to be for some time if I ever am."

"Oh, yes?" said Betty again incredulously. "Well, wait till you come back—if you come back!"

Suddenly Marjorie rushed at her sister, half laughing, half crying, and gave her a loving shaking.

"There!" she said breathlessly. "Stop this! I'm not going away with him. I wouldn't think of such a thing."

Then a taxi drew up and she was gone.

Down in the city Marjorie had troubles of her own. It was Evan Brower's idea of a good time to make Marjorie suffer plenty for having gone off without leaving him her address.

So Marjorie was seated at a sumptuously appointed table in one of the most exclusive hotels in the city, with a stern companion who lectured her as if she were a naughty little girl.

At last she looked up and smiled.

"Now, Evan, don't you think we'd better talk about you awhile?" she suggested. "And how in the world did you get away from your family Christmas party? I'm afraid you hurt your mother's feelings terribly."

That was an unfortunate thought. She saw it at once. Evan stiffened immediately.

"I came away, I had to. I felt that you needed my protection and I had something to say to you."

He put his hand in his pocket and pulled out a tiny velvet case,

of the color of violets. She looked at it and anxiety entered her soul.

"Open it!" he said. "I want to watch your face when you see it." The seemed nothing to do but take it and open it. She held the little box gently in her hand as if it were a living thing that she might hurt, and hesitated, looking at him, and trying to think what to do. Then she touched the pearl spring and disclosed the wonderful blue diamond set in a delicate frostwork of platinum.

For an instant she caught her breath at its beauty, for it was a charming ring. Then suddenly the trouble in her eyes grew definite and she shut the cover down sharply with a snap.

"Oh, Evan! Please! You ought not to have done this! Not now anyway! I told you I could not think of such things now, please! I'm sorry, but I couldn't take that!"

"Please!" she insisted. "I could not take a thing like this until I was sure!"

His face was haughty and frozen.

"And why aren't you sure?" he asked. "It's been nearly ten days since I asked you to marry me. You've had plenty of time to think it over."

"No," she said firmly. "I haven't. I've had other things to think about and settle. They had to come first before anything."

"Well, haven't you got them all settled?"

A gleam of something like joy flitted across her face, but she shook her head.

"Not all, yet."

"How long will it take?" There was a trace of anger in his voice.

"I'm not sure, but when I come home I can talk with you about it. I shall know then what I am going to do."

She laid the box down definitely on the table between them, and sat back with finality.

"But I love you, Marjorie!"

She studied him rather hopelessly for a minute and then she said:

"If you truly love me won't you prove it to me by putting that ring back in your pocket and just sitting there and talking to me in a pleasant natural way as you always have done, without any perplexing questions or anything? Just let's talk!"

He looked at her keenly for a minute and then he said quietly, with an inscrutable mask on his face:

"Very well. What shall I talk about?" She knew by his tone that he was angry but she could not help it.

"Oh anything! Suppose I ask you a question. It's something I've been wondering. Evan, you were brought up a good deal as I was, you're in the same church and active in it. What do you believe about being saved?"

He looked at her as if she had suddenly gone crazy.

"Saved?" he said. "What in the world do you mean?"

"Why saved from your sins. Fit to go to heaven, you know, when you die."

His face softened and he spoke to her as if she were a sick person, or a very young child.

"My dear! I am afraid the long strain of nursing Mrs. Wetherill, and then seeing her die, has been too much for your nerves."

"Oh, no," said Marjorie looking up brightly. "you don't understand me. I'm not in the least morbid. In a way I'm happier than I ever was in my life before, because I've found that I have a Savior from sin."

He studied her face with vexed unresponsive eyes a moment and then he said coldly:

"So, that's the line of your new family is it? They are fanatics!"

She sprang up as if he had struck her, and her eyes grew suddenly alien.

"No, Evan, you are mistaken! My family are not fanatics. But I heard this in a sermon, and is there quite plainly if you will hunt for it."

She was speaking almost haughtily, as if he were a stranger. Then she glanced down at her watch. "And now if you will excuse me I will take a taxi back home."

She flashed a distant little smile at him and walked out of the dining room.

He followed her, of course, instantly, his face haughty and indignant, but he summoned a taxi and put her in it.

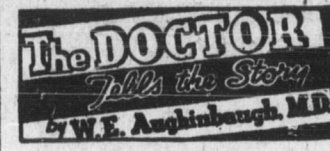
"You are very headstrong!" he said as he gave her hand a cold hard grip. "I didn't dream you had it in you to be so hard. When are you planning to return?"

"I'm not hard, Evan, really. Only you've said some things that were rather difficult to bear. But we'll talk about that when I get home. I shall probably come a few days after New Year's."

He watched her gravely as the taxi took her away into the light falling snow, his own face stern, reproachful.

for you, and our longing to have you with us, that we shall be unfair to you. Since seeing the young man who called upon you last evening we realize more than ever that there are others whom you have known far longer than you have known us, who perhaps have a prior claim upon you."

(Continued Next Week)



Signs of Death

Anaxagoras, the Greek philosopher, who lived approximately 500 years before Christ, is responsible for the custom of closing places of business or giving holidays to individuals when death takes a prominent person.

He was a school teacher, and knew full well that his end was inevitable. The morning that he passed into the next country, an old friend approached his couch and asked what he wished. Old in years, but mentally youthful, and knowing school boys intimately, he remarked, "When I am dead give all the school children a holiday." His wish was observed and has come down through the ages. But death never takes a holiday.

Despite the fact that men realize that sooner or later they must cease to live, it is remarkable how many believe that there exists a possibility of not being dead, even after pronounced so by a physician. I have had numerous requests from all classes of people asking for the definite signs of death.

Let me say that the most definite indication of death is the total absence of the respiratory murmur and the lack of cardiac pulsation. I know that in some instances a few individuals have passed into a coma, a trance or have experienced suspended animation, which to a certain extent simulate death, but I have never known any competent or experienced doctor to mistake such a condition for death.

However, for the benefit of those who desire definite signs which they may interpret, let me say that if a string is tied firmly about the finger, the end will become red or purple in color if life is not extinct. If one looks through the fingers held closely together, with a bright light on the other side and they do not appear reddish, but opaque, death is sure.

If an artery is cut—such as the radial artery—and no bleeding

takes place, death has occurred. If a blistering compound is applied to the skin and no redness appears, death is positive. Failure to respond to the touch of the finger applied to the eyeball is presumptive of death. Usually dark spots form gradually on the outer side of the eyeball, from a drying of the sclerotic coat, after life is gone.

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