

WANTED: COMPANION

By ELEANOR HOUSTON

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Mrs. Southwick
Advertised for
a Secretary,
but She Got a
Daughter-in-Law

THE houses were set too far back in shaded grounds for Emily to see them with any degree of clearness. A broad, white column, a high stone chimney, a varicolored lawn umbrella, all glimpsed through the turning Autumn foliage, created an impression of genteel leisure, impregnable security.

The staccato sound of her dainty heels clicking on the cement highway stopped as she paused at the high gateposts that served as an entrance to a long, winding driveway. Pushing aside a riotous mass of English ivy, she found the metal numerals that told her she had reached her destination, 72 Morningside. Emily silently had been repeating the address every step of the way; in fact, with every breath she had drawn since she had read the short advertisement in the morning paper: Wanted, woman as companion to elderly invalid. Satisfactory remuneration. Call in person. References required. 72 Morningside.

In between repetitions she had been saying a little prayer: "Please let me be the one to get it. Please." And now in just a few moments she would know whether or not her prayer had been answered. Whether she could keep the plainly furnished but private room at Mrs. Pope's, or whether she would have to spend her only remaining \$5 for a ticket back to Banton and Aunt Hattie's overcrowded house.

Then, too, as though that prospect were not revolting enough in itself, there was the terrifying knowledge that between them all they would compel her to marry old, monkey-faced Mr. Dunner. "You, an orphan, without a cent to your name, should be grateful for the opportunity," Aunt Hattie had pointed out repeatedly. At the recollection of it, Emily was seized with the same violent and uncontrollable shuddering that it never failed to bring.

THE silver-haired butler who answered her ring had a steady effect upon her, however. His self-contained placidity seemed to give her

very, very best," and in her eagerness and gratitude she put her hand on his arm. He looked down at her with such



was and could do nothing to help the situation.

"It's just like a play I saw once," she told Emily, "only the play ended happily, and somehow I believe your story will, too."

"It's nice of you to say so," Emily answered, large eyes tragic in her small face. But deep in her heart she felt that everything for her had already ended—even life itself.

Emily hardly changed her position, once on the green plush seat of the train, during the four-hour ride to Banton. She tried to make herself feel sorry that she had spent the last \$50 of her meager inheritance to escape the life to which she was now returning. Then, with closed eyes, she would relive those brief hours with Dana, and a warm flood of thankfulness would diffuse her being; thankfulness that she would at least have that memory to cherish the remainder of her life.

Finally the slow train wheezed to a stop at Banton and Emily, picking up her bag from the station platform, started the long, uphill walk to Aunt Hattie's.

THE late afternoon sun was on her back and her arms ached from carrying the heavy bag as she came in sight of the house; but instead of the crowd of noisy children playing in the yard as she expected, there was no sign of life about the place. Too, the doors and windows were all locked, but under an accumulation of mail in the mailbox she found the key in its accustomed place.

She let herself into the house, wearily dragging her suitcase to her old room on the second floor. Apparently Aunt Hattie and her entire family had gone for a few days' visit with her oldest daughter, who was married and lived in the next village.

Emily was really grateful for the respite that this would afford her before the ordeal of explanations and the complacent "I told you so's" that would follow.

She felt almost alive again as she tubbed and dressed in a cool, green Summer frock. Then, becoming aware she had eaten nothing all day, she descended to the kitchen and made herself some tea and toast.

After that she sat on the porch and made a half-hearted effort to read as long as it was daylight. Then she curled up in the porch swing and watched the stars come out.

She must have fallen into a light sleep for even in the bright moonlight she did not see Dana Southwick stop his car in front of the house. But she did hear him open the screen door and the next moment was on her feet facing him. Seconds passed before either of them spoke, and then, in a torrent of words that seemed torn from them, they were both talking at once.

the doorway. "Never mind that," she said. Then, closing the door on Mrs. Pope, she leaned indolently against it. Embarrassed as Emily was at her dis-

"Dana, how could you?" she cried. "Sweetheart, I had to know," he said.