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Blind Boy

By DOROTHY DOUGLAS

(©, 1920, by McClure Newspaper Syndicate.)

Pale moonlight shimmered down through the barren trees; barren, yet strangely ethereally lovely, they were rearing their silvered branches up through the soft shadows of the garden.

But Avis saw none of it. Slim and white and sullen, she made her way tarelessly through the glorified evening woods that skirted her father's estate. She was blind to all the beauty in the world—unseeing, unfeeling, save her own hurt lingered. She wanted to close out all living things from sight and never more sense the caressing touch of beauty.

Life had turned on her viciously and wrenched from her hold the only living thing she wanted, and Avis was suffering over the loss of a man as she thought no one else had ever suffered in the whole of the world.

Her eyes turned languidly toward the little lake where the pink pond lilies used to grow. And in spite of her conviction that life was one grand failure and men poor atoms of wreckage drifting about at the mercy of tides, Avis grudgingly admitted that the moonlight on the lily pond was rarely beautiful.

"But treacherous," she meditated ironically, "like love—beautiful on the surface, but tainted, horribly unsavory in the depth of it!"

Avis heaved a sigh. She was of sufficient years to know, though she refused stubbornly to admit it, that Jeffry Arnold was not the kind of man to harbor so sincere and true a love as Avis had given him. He had fled to another woman, and Avis was left with jagged love thrusts in her sensitive nature, making her feel that life was an impossible state for her.

During their fervid courtship she had known, but blinded herself to his limitations. She had been deaf to the council of minds other than her own and had clung to her love for him through all adverse criticism.

Now Arnold had thrown her over and life was a sorry thing for Avis.

Suddenly from out of the shadows of the barren trees a slim, boyish figure strove painfully with the deep undergrowth to make his way into a clearing. He was feeling his way cautiously, yet with certain familiarity among the silver birch trees. His hand, white and ethereal in the moonlight, fascinated Avis and she watched it moving from tree to tree.

Was Feeling His Way Cautiously.

He was making his way slowly but surely toward the deep pond. The white calm of his finely chiseled face was now clear in the light. There was a world of interest, of exquisite finality there, as if in his human blindness he had found a far greater outlook, an expanse of vision rare to the open eyes. There was no hope in the face—only a quiet surrender to a greater power.

"He must be walking in his sleep," thought Avis and realizing that she must stop him before he reached the edge of the pond. The shock of icy water might prove fatal. She rose stealthily and quietly so as not to frighten him, and gently as a lily brushing its mate she slipped her hand around his arm, then turned him from the pond.

Against her arm she felt the man's heart quicken its beat.

"Who is that?" he asked quietly.

"You are walking straight into the water," Avis said, conscious that her voice was struggling with emotions.

This man was blind—blind to all the beauty of this moonlit world! Blind—and little over his first youth! And the laugh that sprang from his lips was boyish, actually boyish.

Avis shrank from her own petty inferiority. Her scanty, meager troubles stung her consciousness into utter shame. She suddenly hated Arnold with a hate that flung a huge carpet over her former love and smothered it for all time. She hated herself, too, for the moment of weakness she had allowed his desertion to give her. In vivid flashes these truths flung themselves before her.

But the blind boy was speaking and Avis heard him with startling clarity of brain. It seemed as if her heart had been thrown wide open swiftly—that he might enter.

"I thought I knew every inch of this wonderful place. As a kiddie every tree and every curve of the wee lake was familiar to me. Funny—if I had bumped off here—after going right through the great war."

Half consciously Avis drew the boy's arm nearer her side. They had blinded him, then, those beasts of the enemy country.

"If they had only blinded me before," he said, as if he had sensed her thought, "only a scant half hour so that I could have remembered my pals as I saw them dashing headlong over the top, full of life, manhood—the bravest and finest pals God ever put breath in." He drew a breath and ceased speaking, but his silence was more terrible to Avis than a vivid word picture, for while his body had tautened she knew that he was racked with inward sobs. He was struggling to forget that flash of wreckage penned within his brain just before sight had been snatched from him.

Stealthily, like prisoners escaping from crushing confinement, the tears squeezed through Avis' eyelids and splashed down over her hands.

"But don't you think I'm a quitter," the man finally was saying. "I am thankful to have known so brave a set of men, honored for having fought beside them. And if the good Lord wills that I am never to see again—well, I certainly have my imagination left. I have had visions, dozens of them scrambling across my brain and crowding to get out. Some day, when I have learned to use a typewriter, I will put them down in story form and perhaps make something worthy of my life—why, my dear," he broke off and spoke softly, "you are crying—why do you weep?"

The gentleness of his voice set Avis to crying afresh.

"Surely you are not sad on my account," he continued, as if speaking to a very small child. "I have seen all the beauty of the world—the sun rippling on this lily pond, the lovely smile on beautiful lips, the love shining in true eyes—all these things I have seen and there is nothing can rob me of memory—they are still as vivid before my brain as if the eyes could rest upon them. I am sorry I mentioned the grim destruction of battle—I need not have pained you." He paused for a moment as if seeking words that should not cause further sadness. "I do not lament the sightlessness of my eyes. Perhaps had I been able to see the beauty of the world I might have forgotten, in my happiness, the pals that died—died that the world might remain—beautiful."

"Oh, God!" Avis shrank from the turmoil of her own shame. "This blind, utterly blind boy is helping me—me, with all my perfect faculties, to find life wonderful. He whose eyes are sightless is teaching me to see; he whose body is frail is upholding me, and his slim, white hands are guiding me into a new light."

He had slipped his arm further within hers now and was walking gently along the edge of the pond. His unconscious abandon of her care, his footsteps ready to follow where she would lead had a marvelous effect on Avis. That piercing grief over self melted out of her brain and left a wonderful desire to live and live worthily. The gentleness of the blind stranger and his quiet submission to tragedy or perhaps his complete surrender to a power beyond the physical swept Avis into a state that bordered very nearly the domain of a great love.

She knew that a mysterious light was even then casting its first pale rays across their path, that out under the moon and the barren trees and the weird loveliness of the lily pond she and the blind boy had found a world of happiness undreamed until then by either of them.

"The warm tear drops are not falling on my hand now," he was saying softly. "I suppose those tiny stars in the big, blue dome above us have twinkled all the sadness from your heart."

And Avis answered as if they had known one another many years, her voice betraying an emotion quite foreign, so gentle and true it was.

"No, not the stars, blind boy—but you, just you."

He quivered and remained very still, as if over his entire life a great wave of warmth were spreading.

And lest the moment be fraught with too much emotion, Avis laughed softly. "I am going to get a typewriter tomorrow and begin taking down your stories as soon as my fingers will obey your voice."

"I thought war was a tremendous experience, but it must have been only a stepping stone to this greater one," was what the blind boy said.

Good Headwork.

"That shifty promoter charged with violating the 'blue sky' law was promptly acquitted."

"He was guilty, too, but he escaped punishment because he was smart."

"In what particular?"

"He hired the lawyer who wrote the law to defend him."—Birmingham Age-Herald.

Time Is Money.

Factory Superintendent — What's this? A demand from all the men for eight hours overtime at double pay?

Casey—Sure. Didn't we all turn out to the boss' picnic Sunday afternoon?—Judge.

SIDE FLARE FROCK

Garment Is Regarded as Dominant Note of Spring Styles.

Outfit May Be Made to Combine Satin Taffeta, Velvet and a Sheer Material.

The frock shown in the sketch while designed for present season wear, really is an intimation of the silhouette that is now regarded as the dominant note of spring styles. In other words, says a fashion authority, frocks showing a side flare, extreme or moderate, with distinctly flat front and back effects, will hold the center of the sartorial stage. The tendency is to feature a side fullness rather than a flare, as there is a generous use of material without wiring or other artificial reenforcement. The result is the fullness described, in many cases a sort of bunching of the fabric by means of plaits and gathers.

The frock sketched may be made to combine satin or taffeta, or even velvet and a sheer material, such as georgette, chiffon or net, and it would be quite smart for afternoon wear.

Present season frocks worn by Americans generally show long sleeves—that is, except the frocks designed for evening or dressy afternoon wear. According to all indications, however, the prejudice that has existed in the minds of American women against the display of a long expanse of bare arm, except in the evening or in the privacy of the home, has at last been dispelled, and next spring will see women wearing wool frocks of the tailored or semi-tailored type, equipped with sleeves that are well above the elbow.

It is also announced that plaids will have a very strong run of favor in tailored street apparel in the spring. Many very smart and also very striking plaid wool fabrics are being brought out to meet this demand. Or perhaps the demand has been created to take care of the handsome plaids that have already been woven. In any event plaids are to be worn, and they will not at all, as is usually the case, be confined to garments for the members of the younger set.

Frock Featuring Moderate Side Flare.

FIND MANY USES FOR SATIN

Fabric Affords Most Fetching Costumes That Make Strong Appeal to Milady's Heart.

Satin is quite the most fetching thing imaginable. That collar is undeniably striking; the sleeve treatment is most unusual, and there's a delightful ripple to the skirt. The collar is nothing more than an inoffensive roll at back, but it crosses and then lengthens considerably in front. Why, it extends all the way down to the hip line. A rounded snip of the scissors in an otherwise prosaicly tight-fitting sleeve will achieve this sleeve novelty. The charming ripple of the skirt is secured by being more generous with the gathering at the sides than at front or back and then curtailing the length to either side slightly. In black and white the model would be compelling.

A Negligee Easily Made.

Here is quite the easiest made negligee imaginable. It goes something like this: One length of material over each shoulder tacked back and front to form a V-neck. Just at the termination of the V there appears an inverted tuck gathered to secure fit at a slightly raised waist line. The sides are seamed well up to the waist, then onward they are left open to provide the garment with a modishly comfortable sleeve. Really it is the simplest thing imaginable, and the most fetching when completed.

Abbreviated Sleeves.

Both dinner and evening gowns have sleeves which are hardly more than caps.

OLD ROSE SHANTUNG COSTUME

© Western Newspaper Union.

Of delicately colored, beautiful old rose Shantung silk is this charming "Palm Beach" outfit. The blouse is plum-colored satin brocaded with silver, while cords of silver emphasize the waistline of both the blouse and the coat.

HOW TO CLEAN YOUR SILKS

Remove Grease Spots by Holding Over Fire; French Chalk and Pressing Recommended.

A good way to get grease spots from silk, writes a correspondent, is to hold the spotted part over a warm fire, not hot enough to burn the silk, but hot enough to melt the grease; put a piece of blotting paper over the spot and then put a warm iron on the blotter.

A good method for cleaning black silk is this: Mix strong coffee and ammonia. Brush the silk thoroughly and then rub the liquid on with a soft cloth. Wind around a board to dry.

French chalk will remove some spots from silk. Rub the chalk thoroughly in the garment and let it stay there for a day or so. Then brush it out with a velvet brush.

Water spots can sometimes be removed by pressing the silk on the wrong side, with a piece of thin muslin between the iron and the silk.

If silk has lost its body and stiffness follow the method of a renovator: Boil an old, clean kid glove in water and sponge the silk with the somewhat sticky liquid resulting.

Whenever silk is pressed a sheet of tissue paper or a piece of thin muslin should be spread over the silk to prevent glazing. The silk should be placed with its right side toward the board, ironed on the wrong side.

SCARF MAY SUPPLANT CAPE

New Dress Accessory Promises to Gain Popularity as Sporting Garment for Spring.

Although the sweater manufacturers have not as yet given much publicity to the garment, the success which has attended the launching of the scarf cape is regarded as an omen that this new dress accessory will become very popular. As a rule, the scarf is made of brushed wool. Light tans and greens are considered the leading colors. By arranging the scarf properly, it becomes practically a garment in place of a cape. A wide sale is promised the novelty as a sporting garment for skating and other winter sports. It is also being ordered for retail sale in the early spring.

Trinket for the Workbasket.

A quaint and useful little novelty for a workbasket can be made with a tiny doll, half of a colored birthday candle and a quarter of a yard of baby ribbon. It represents a dressed doll, whose skirt of wax is meant to serve a familiar purpose in the workbasket. Melt the candle in a small tin and pour it while hot into a thimble. When the wax is almost hard, press the tiny doll into it, feet first, and hold it there until the wax hardens. Next, place the thimble in hot water for an instant, and pull until the molded wax comes out wrapped round the doll in the form of a skirt. To finish the trinket, cross the ribbon over the doll's waist and tie it at the back.

If You Want a Straw Hat.

So used have we become to seeing straw hats in midwinter and furs in summer that we think nothing of it when the smart hat shops offer straw and sports things in midwinter as the only things entirely new. A new hat is of rose colored hemp, faced with rose georgette, and attractively embroidered in wool and silk.