

cause you are working yourself up to a senseless state of excitement about literally nothing."

"Is it *nothing* that for the first time in my whole life I should be madly in love with the only man I . . ."

"I don't want to hear any more of that ridiculous nonsense. You are too young to know your own mind and. . ."

Recklessly, passionately Elspeth flung her last bomb:

"What of you then? You didn't think *you* were too young to marry at my age. *You* went ahead and did as *you* liked, and I can do the same."

"Ellie, I want to go to sleep. You forget that I am a working woman."

"Who started this anyway?"

"Never mind that. Lie down there. We'll talk this over to-morrow."

**B**UT when to-morrow came, the clock pointed to 8.30 when Mrs. Maitland awoke, after a few hours sleep snatched toward morning. Elspeth lay with her flushed cheek turned into the pillow. The turbulent emotions of the night were all sunk into the deep sleep of health and youth, and her mother, with a sigh that had in it an element of compunction—after all, she should not have taken the child seriously she told herself—bent above her to drop a kiss upon the petulant young lips, ere, too late for breakfast, she hurried out for her day's work.

That day was long and hot. Part of the time her head ached and all day long she thought of Elspeth—Elspeth, sharp tongued and hot hearted. After all, her side to the question has to be considered. To her at least her love affair was a serious matter. She felt that she had handled the situation very badly. She should have kept her head and not allowed the child's extravagant expressions to offend or hurt her. Her self reproach was followed by an attempt to formulate some plan by which she might bring about a change in their mode of living. That was it—a change. They both needed it. They needed to break away from the habits and ties that chained them down like galley slaves. Elspeth was entitled to a real home, such as other girls had, and not the makeshift careless establishment over which there was no real head, and which floundered like a crazy derelict perilously near to the rocks. And Elspeth was entitled to a real mother. Not this business machine that could only throw to her a few snatches of her time. No wonder they had drifted so far apart that the girl preferred to pour her confidences into the ears of a stranger rather than

her mother's. It was her own attitude, not Ellie's, that was to blame for their estrangement. Her nature was the antithesis of her daughter's. Shy, guarded, reticent, she held everyone at arm's length. But her little daughter—that was not right! They should not be so far apart; she should have affected some of that buoyancy of spirit so peculiar to her child, and which she sadly lacked. She wondered if it was because of her long life of work. She had been working now for seventeen years. That was quite a record. She took the full blame for Elspeth's angry retorts, her insolence, even her outbursts of temper. Elspeth had never been properly "raised". Her mother excused or drew a veil over each and all of her defects. She told herself that it was a career in itself to be a mother. She had stolen the greater or part of herself from Elspeth to whom it rightfully belonged and given it to an office—a mechanical business that ran along from day to day and year to year, built up and cultivated and toiled over for just one purpose, the unlovely pursuit of the everlasting dollar.

**O**F what are you thinking?"

The question came from the desk adjoining her own. For some time, her employer had been engaged in the pleasing study of Mrs. Maitland's lovely profile, pink ear and flushed cheek.

She came back to earth with a sigh, and met the quizzical glance with a troubled one.

"I was just thinking," she said, "that I'll have to quit."

He was moved enough to stare at her with dropped jaw. She had always been an enigma to him, this pretty woman content to labor along from year to year, without any of the pleasures or compensations that should have been the portion of one such as she. He knew of Elspeth, and surmised that "that girl" was the reason why her mother had never married, nor permitted herself even the friendship of a man. Once or twice Elspeth had come to the office, and there was that about her thorny little personality which apprised the employer of her mother that she was violently opposed to any one encroaching upon her mother's thought or time besides herself. Once he had escorted Mrs. Maitland home, after some night work at the office, and ascending the little steps to the house, he had made a slight motion to follow Mrs. Maitland into the house, when Elspeth, behind her mother's back, had deliberately closed the door in his face. It was such a quick act, so final and eloquent of the girl's opinion of him, or for that matter, any man who might be interested in her mother. Elspeth's attitude was similar to that she took about her mother's clothes and personal pos-

