

**PILGRIMAGE.
HONEYCOMB**

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Pilgrimage. Honeycomb by Dorothy M. Richardson

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CHAPTER I

I

WHEN Miriam got out of the train into the darkness she knew that there were woods all about her. The moist air was rich with the smell of trees—wet bark and branches—moss and lichen, damp dead leaves. She stood on the dark platform snuffing the rich air. It was the end of her journey. Anything that might follow would be unreal compared to that moment. Little bulbs of yellow light further up the platform told her where she must turn to find the things she must go to meet. "How lovely the air is here." . . . The phrase repeated itself again and again, going with her up the platform towards the group of lights. It was all she could summon to meet the new situation. It satisfied her ; it made her happy. It

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was enough; but no one would think it was enough.

But the house was two miles off. She was safe for the present. Throughout the journey from London the two-mile drive from the station had stood between her and the house. The journey was a long solitary adventure; endless; shielded from thoughts of the new life ahead and leaving the past winter in the Gunnersbury villa far away; vanquished, almost forgotten. She could only recall the hours she had spent shivering apathetically over small fires; a moment when she had brought a flush of tears to her mother's eyes by suddenly telling her she was maddeningly unreasonable, and another moment alone with her father when she had stood in the middle of the hearth-rug with her hands behind her and ordered him to abstain from argument with her in the presence of her mother—"because it gives her pain when I have to show you that I am at least as right as you are"—and he had stood cowed and silent. . . . Then the moment of accepting the new post, the last days of fear and isolation and helplessness in hard winter weather and the setting off in the main line train that had carried her away from every-

thing—into the spring. Sitting in the shabbily upholstered unexpectedly warm and comfortable main line train she had seen through the mild muggy air bare woods on the horizon, warm and tawny, and on the near copses a ruddy purpling bloom. Surprise had kept her thoughtless and rapt. Spring—a sudden pang of tender green seen in suburban roadways in April . . . one day in the Easter holidays, bringing back the forgotten summer and showing you the whole picture of summer and autumn in one moment . . . but evidently there was another spring, much more real and wonderful that she had not known—not a clear green thing, surprising and somehow disappointing you, giving you one moment and then rushing your thoughts on through vistas of leafage, but tawny and purple gleamings through soft mist, promising . . . a vision of spring in dim rich faint colours, with the noisy real rushing spring still to come . . . a thing you could look at and forget ; go back into winter, and see again and again, something to remember when the green spring came, and to think of in the autumn . . . spring ; coming ; perhaps spring was coming all the year round. . . . She looked back, wondering. This was not the first time that she

had been in the country in March. Two years ago, when she had first gone out into the world it had been March . . . the night journey from Barnes to London, and on down to Harwich, the crossing in a snowstorm, the afternoon journey across Holland—grey sky, flat bright green fields, long rows of skeleton poplars. But it was dark before they reached the wooded German country—the spring must have been there, in the darkness. And now coming to Newlands she had seen it. The awful blind cold effort of coming to Newlands had brought a new month of spring; there for always. . . . And this was the actual breath of it; here, going through her in the darkness. . . . Someone was at her side, murmuring her name, a footman. She moved with him towards a near patch of light which they reached without going through the station building, and in a moment the door of a little brougham closed upon her with a soft thud. She sat in the softly lit interior, holding her umbrella and her undelivered railway ticket in careful fingers. The footman and a porter were hoisting her Saratoga trunk. Their movements sounded muffled and far-off. The brougham bowled away through the darkness softly. The lights of

the station flickered by and disappeared. The brougham windows were black. No sound but the faint rumble of the wheels along the smooth road. Miriam relaxed and sat back, smiling. For a moment she was conscious of nothing but the soft-toned, softly lit interior, the softness at her back, the warmth under her feet and her happy smile; then she felt a sudden strength; the smile coming straight up so unexpectedly from some deep where it had been waiting, was new and strong and exhilarating. It would not allow itself to dimple; it carried her forward, tiding her over the passage into new experience and held her back, at the same time; it lifted her and held her suspended over the new circumstances in rapid contemplation. She pressed back more steadily into the elastic softness and sat with bent head, eagerly watching her thoughts . . . this is me; this is right; I'm *used* to dainty broughams; I can take everything for granted. . . . I must take everything absolutely for granted. . . . The moments passed, carrying her rapidly on. There was a life ahead that was going to enrich and change her as she had been enriched and changed by Hanover, but much more swiftly and intimately. She was changed

already. Poverty and discomfort had been shut out of her life when the brougham door closed upon her. For as long as she could endure and achieve any sort of dealing with the new situation, they had gone, the worry and pain of them could not touch her. Things that rose warm and laughing and expanding within her now, that had risen to the beauty and music and happiness of Germany and been crushed because she was the despised pupil teacher, that had dried up and seemed to die in the English boarding school, were going to be met and satisfied . . . she looked down at the hands clasped on her knees, the same hands and knees that had ached with cold through long winter days in the basement schoolroom . . . chilblains . . . the everlasting unforgettable aching of her sore throat . . . things that had made her face yellow and stiff or flushed with fever . . . gone away for ever. Her old self had gone, her governess self. It had really gone weeks ago, got up and left her in that moment when she had read Mrs. Corrie's letter in Bennett's villa in the middle of a bleak February afternoon. A voice had seemed to come from the large handwriting scrawling across the faint blue page under the thick neat