

week, is allowed, meeting expenses for car-fares, luncheon, etc. The course lasts four weeks. The first sifting of applicants is at the company's employment bureau. Girls of the high-school grade are preferred; with only a grammar-school training their minds are not sufficiently developed, as a rule. Alertness and discriminating capacity are essential. At least half the class usually drops out in the first week—rejected as not up to the mark. The course is purely technical: lectures and examinations that impart a thorough knowledge of the whys and wherefores of the work, together with daily switchboard drill, under conditions that reproduce nearly all possible situations in actual practice. A competent principal, a cultivated and pleasant-spoken young lady, is in charge; her assistants, stationed at the desks

behind the students at the switchboard, play the parts of subscribers and give the calls that comprise everything common to actual experience. Among them comes emergency work: demands for doctors, ambulance, fire alarms, and police. Tests of temper and patience are included—fault-finding, scolding, and abuse are realistically simulated. When the novitiate is over and the girl is assigned to some exchange, she takes up her task as a fairly skilled operator, needing only experience.

Altogether the position of telephone operator offers an attractive calling for young women—well paid, agreeably circumstanced, and with assurance of promotion for faithful and competent service. The telephone girl who does not marry, therefore, has no reason to look apprehensively to the future.

SELF-ABNEGATION

BY DOROTHY CANFIELD

NOTHING could have been more complete than the contrast between Susan Somerset's old life in her brother's home and the new life in her husband's. It sometimes seemed to her that the whole thing was incredible, as if she must have changed places with her brother, she received from her husband so exactly the same services she was used to giving Peter. She ascribed it to the difference in their training. Peter had always been the only man in a New England household of women, and he expected as matter of course to be considered first and waited upon by whatever petticoated creature happened to be nearest him.

One by one the aunts had died, the cousins had married or gone away, and Susan and Peter were left alone in the big house, so that it fell naturally to Susan's lot to make up to Peter for the absence of the others. She had never thought consciously of it, taking it as the inevitable course of nature that everything should be as Peter wished it, with no regard for her. Peter did not like onions, and so she never cooked them, although she was very fond of them.

Peter did not like the sun shining in the windows, his eyes not being very strong, and so the shutters were always closed, although to Susan, alone day after day, the yellow glow would have been a cheering companion. Once in a while, when Peter was at work in a field far from the house, she ventured to throw open the shutters and bask in the warmth, but she always took pains to close them before the time for his return, lest he cast one of his sharp words at her. Peter liked "boiled dinner," and they had it always for Thursday, although Susan disliked the smell of boiling cabbage so that she never could eat anything on that day. Peter took pride in the fire and spirit of his young horses, and they always drove to church behind a prancing, curvetting pair whose antics made the timid Susan sick with apprehension, while the staid old farm-horses, whose quiet jog would have been so inexpressibly soothing to her, ate their hay in the barn.

It must not be supposed for a moment that Susan resented any of this; she never once even thought of it, in her entire devotion to her brother and in her absorbing desire to do her duty by him.

She accepted the terrors of the ride to church quite as she accepted the horrors of a thunder-storm when she found herself alone in the big house. There was as little thought in one case as in the other of rebelling against the inevitable.

It was a perpetual amazement to her to see how differently her husband looked at things. During their brief engagement she had not noticed the change so much; but he could stay but a short time on his visit East, and insisted on marrying her and taking her back to Montana with him. On the way there Susan was like one in a dream. Jack was so surprisingly, so overwhelmingly kind to her! She was almost afraid to express a wish, it met with such an instant compliance; but the whole journey was so new an experience to the untraveled New England girl that she hardly realized that any of it was real.

After they had settled down in the bright new Montana town, in the comfortable house Jack had bought, and the familiar business of housekeeping began, the reality of the difference between her husband and her brother was borne in on her. Jack had grown up on the frontier among men, and it seemed like a daily miracle to his superstitious admiration of women that he had been able to persuade the shy and flower-like Vermont girl to share his life. He looked at her adoringly as she moved about the pretty rooms, occupied with her careful reproduction of New England housekeeping, and felt a passionate desire to think of more services he could do her. Her surprise at his kindness touched his tender heart, and stirred him to wrath against the absent Peter. "Great Scotland! Your brother must be a hog and no mistake!" he exclaimed, in the unreserved Montana fashion which Susan found so disconcerting.

This was apropos of a conversation on the subject of boiled dinner. Susan had prepared one for him, and he enjoyed it vastly, as he did all of her cooking, although he was disturbed by her eating nothing. Little by little he extracted from her the confession that it made her sick to cook cabbage. In a fury of indignant tenderness, he cried out, "Why in thunder did you cook it,

then?" And Susan, as a matter of course, "I thought you might like it. Peter does, and we always had it Thursdays." Jack jumped up from the table, snatched the dish of cabbage and bore it outside to the chicken-yard, where he scattered it far and wide. On his return he said, with mock roughness, "If ever I see another bit of cabbage in this house, I'll get out my gun and shoot the dishes off the table." Later, as he smoked his pipe on the veranda, he gave vent to the sentiment on Peter's character recorded above.

After that he took to investigating his brother-in-law, and was always discovering new horrors. "Say, a man like that would get strung up to the first tree handy if he lived out here." This was his final verdict. At first Susan defended Peter, but so quickly do ideas change and so relative are all values that she soon fell into Jack's way of thinking of him as some sort of dreadful domestic tyrant, and remembered her life in West Milton as an experience in purgatory.

All but the climate! The New England girl, used to fresh mountain air and frequent rains, pined and faded in the parching alkali winds of Montana. Her pretty color left her and her springy step. She had frequent and terrible nervous headaches, grew listless, and sometimes peevish. Her husband was in an agony of apprehension and remorse, and devoted himself to her night and day, absenting himself from his business to wait on her and shield her from every care. In her nervous condition her fear of thunder-storms increased to a morbid dread, and at the least cloud in the sky Jack would close his office, leap on his horse, always standing ready, and gallop madly to his house, to be there and comfort Susan. He tried in his rough and blundering way to keep the cares of housekeeping from her, and often tied an apron about his big square body and washed the dishes, taking great pains not to rattle them and disturb the restless and fretful woman in the next room.

It was, indeed, in an effort to achieve the impossible—to secure a servant in that frontier country—that he undertook the expedition which proved fatal to him. He had heard of a Chinaman, forty

miles away, who was said to know how to cook, and he had ridden furiously in that direction with the determination to "bring the Chink home if it took a gun." No one ever knew what happened—perhaps simply that accident incredible to Western horsemen, a fall from horseback; but his broncho came back to town with an empty saddle, and the searching party found his body lying at the bottom of a gully.

Susan was completely prostrated by the blow, and was scarcely conscious of what was done for her. Of the funeral, of the long drive to the railway station, of the interminable journey back to West Milton, she retained only the vaguest impression of misery. She did not even notice that when Peter met her at the station it was with the steady old farm-horses, or that the shutters throughout the house were thrown wide open to admit a flood of sunshine.

Peter was shocked to see his sister so changed and broken. Living alone had done much to alter his ideas of things, and all the kindness and affection lying in the depths of his nature were stirred to life at the sight of the pale, languid woman, who had gone away from him a blooming girl. Indignation at the West in general, the arid, blighting West, and at Jack in particular for taking her there, glowed in his heart. Moreover, he was moved by the despairing sorrow of the widow to try and stand in her husband's place. And so it happened that Susan scarcely realized that Jack's boundless devotion was no longer about her. She was very ill for a long time, when Peter nursed her incessantly, learning to know the absorbing interest of combating illness. Then during her convalescence she was so weak that he was obliged to do everything for her. It was quite as hard in the little New England hill town to get any "help" as it had been in Montana, and Peter put to good use the knowledge of housekeeping which his solitary life had given him. He took pride in showing Susan how well he could cook and wash dishes, and one day he brought in on her tray a dish of boiled onions—an act which a white-winged angel could scarcely have surpassed in disinterested devotion.

Susan was suffering from one of her "nervous spells" at the time, however, and only noticed them to remark, fretfully, that there was too much salt on them.

That little scene came up before her with remorseless distinctness a few months later as she stood, haggard and anxious, with a crowd of village women waiting for the news from a wrecked train on which a number of West Milton men were returning from the county fair. "If only I'd thanked him for the onions!" she cried aloud again and again, straining her eyes down the track, ominously black in a starless night. No one noticed the grotesque exclamation, each one being absorbed in her dismay and woe. Indeed, when the station-master drew her on one side, and told her that he had just heard by telegraph that Peter's dead body had been found, there was no one to support her or to go back with her to the desolate house. The whole village was desolate and filled with the sound of weeping. Not a person felt the impulse or had the strength to seek out the woman they had come to know as selfish and self-centered. Those who thought of her said it was a deliverance for Peter from the life of ceaseless self-abnegation he had led since his sister's return from the West.

No one said that more constantly or more severely than Susan herself as she sat in the silent rooms of the big house. Her isolation and the shock of her grief swept away all minor considerations, and she faced the facts of her life with a vision wonderfully purified and discerning. She went over to herself the history of her relations to Peter, and puzzled herself sick in the endeavor to see the true meaning of them. She remembered what he had been before her marriage—the thoughtless and incredibly selfish recipient of another's very life; and she saw that she had made him so; that in her way she had been as utterly selfish as he, fostering every evil quality in him to feed her own mistaken and self-righteous passion of devotion. She remembered what he had been since her return; the boundless wealth of kindness and entire self-forgetfulness which her incessant and

exacting demands had uncovered in him; she saw again the contrast between her own fretful and discontented face and his, glowing for the first time in his life with the joy of self-sacrifice—and she wondered at the meaning of human relationships. She realized that she had made both Peters what they had been. The first one she had shut into an intolerable prison of self-seeking while she reveled in her own debauch of self-abnegation. The second she had set free into the joyous world of forgetfulness of self, and she discovered to him the inestimable pleasure of service.

But her own life! What that had been in this second phase! She thought of herself with horror. Drearly she went over and over the times when she had not thanked Peter, when she had taken his loving care, ungratefully, for granted. And yet, by that very means . . . She sat lost in a maze of speculations as to the astonishing ways of this world.

A knock sounded on the door. After

all these days of solitude, she was startled by a summons from the outside. Some one tried the handle and pressed on the locked barrier. She turned the key, opened the door, and confronted her brother Peter, pale, with a bandage about his head, but alive and in the flesh. He looked at her with the strange eyes of one who has gone to the gate of death. "Here I am, Susy," he said, with a little smile that quavered off at the sight of her shocked and amazed face. "The doctors thought it was all up with me, but I guess I'm a pretty tough nut to crack." He swayed uncertainly, and put out his hand to the side of the door. Susan did not stir to help him, in spite of the wild burst of joy at seeing him which swept over her. A feeling deeper even than that held her motionless. Confusion and perplexity unutterable looked from her white face. "Oh! oh!" she cried, "what shall I do *now*?" And she stood gazing at the man, with a problem centuries old clouding her eyes.

THE MOTHER-HEART

BY MYRTA LOCKETT AVARY

No child can ever be so dear to me
 As thou wert, sweet;
 And yet all childhood is more dear to me
 Since I have kissed thy feet,
 My babe—who bode with me so brief a space
 Yet left upon my life forevermore
 The glory of God's grace!

Thy childless mother, little son, I cry
 To childhood motherless:
 "Lo, here am I! My heart is open wide
 To welcome and to bless!
 One stands within, invisible but sweet,
 True to his post.
 He calls the children to me from the street,
 Himself their host."