

Angelica*

THE ROMANCE OF A GIRL WHO WANTED TO GET SOMETHING
OUT OF LIFE

By Elisabeth Sanxay Holding

XXV

ANGELICA'S new business suited her exactly. It absorbed her mind, and it trained and shaped and educated her to an extraordinary degree. Her bravado vanished when she no longer felt herself inferior; now that she was openly acknowledged to be a clever and rising young woman, she had no need of her old-time self-assertion. She thrived in an atmosphere of praise. Miss Sillon and Miss Devery loved her and her brilliant hats. They lauded her, petted her, and took all possible means to advance her interests, because they liked her, and because her interests and theirs were inseparable.

Miss Devery, who was the artistic member of the firm, went outside in a purple linen smock one morning and put a crape paper hat on the peacock. As often as the rain soaked it, or the wind tore or carried it off, she fastened on another. It was very odd and whimsical, and it suited the unique character of their shop.

This unique character was their chief stock in trade, and they both knew very well how to use it to advantage.

"The awfully chic, exclusive thing has really been overdone," Miss Sillon told Angelica. "All the people with money are crazy now for anything they imagine is artistic and quaint. They think it shows that they're artistic to like such things; and just now, of course, it's *the* thing to be artistic."

She was a complete contrast to the dimpled, red-haired Miss Devery, with her air of polite amusement. She was a short, energetic, very dark little body, lively, talkative, and witty.

"I'm a perfect dressmaker," she told Angelica. "God made me so. Just to

look at me makes people turn red with shame and make up their minds on the spot to have something nice and new and trim."

Angelica acknowledged that never had she seen a better-dressed woman, or a neater one.

"I dye my hair and lace as tight as I dare," Miss Sillon continued, "but I do it with pride and vainglory. I boldly call it a duty. I tell these silly women it's the most important thing in life to keep oneself looking one's best, and they always agree. Not one of them ever had the sense to inquire what it's done for *me*. Here I've been looking my best for forty years, and look at me, still digging away for a living, while these wretched, slovenly little chits with holes in their stockings and all their buttons off are settled down with fine husbands and babies and everything else they want! Look at Devery—sloppy kid! She's never without a man hanging about after her."

Devery smiled.

"They're mostly bad ones," she said. "Dishonorable intentions, sometimes, but generally no intentions at all. I don't get no 'forrarder,' Sillon. But this Angélique—she's the one! She's just made for a millionaire's bride."

Miss Sillon turned to stare at her.

"Devery," she said suddenly, "she's not quaint enough. Get to work and make her quaint!"

"That I can't do. She's not built along quaint lines; but I'll make her bizarre."

So Miss Devery set to work. She designed and made for Angelica an extraordinary dress of dark red jersey cloth that fitted her like a snake-skin, as she said. It was entirely plain and severe, with long sleeves and a skirt reaching to her ankles.

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