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**RIGHTED AT LAST**

BY MARY CECIL HAY

Author of "The Arundel Motto," "Nora's Love Test," "Back to the Old Home," Etc.

(Continued.)

"Dear me, dear me!" grumbled Mrs. Payte, moving restlessly about. "How silly of the child to run off in that way, with no water-proof or galoches, or umbrella."

One or two laughed, recalling the picture of Honor, as they saw her last, in her pretty summer dress, and with the bright sunshine around her; but others were too much vexed to smile.

"Where did you see her last, Phoebe?" inquired Lady Somerson; and every one waited to hear the answer.

"I saw her last at one of the side-entrances," explained Phoebe. "I knew she was going about the park to hide from Lawrence, and Lawrence came up just then and asked her where would she go, and she said nowhere; and as soon as ever he was gone, saying he would be back in a minute, she ran off. Afterward he came back, and went to find her; but I don't think he has, Honor is so quick."

"Miss Owen, if you will kindly tell me which are Miss Craven's shawls and umbrella," said Royden, turning over a pile of wraps which lay in the hall. "I will find her."

"I think," introposed Theodora, in a raised, distinct tone, "that we can safely trust Honor to find her way here. She knows the park well, and you do not, Mr. Keith."

But Royden answered lightly that he was used to finding his way, and donning his loose overcoat, and carrying a closed umbrella and the blue water-proof which Phoebe had given him, he started. He had a strong idea that Honor would be taking shelter in the hollow oak on the outskirts of the park, and though he had no motive for the surmise, he was not mistaken. In the sombre gloom within the hole of the great oak he saw the girl's bright face looking out, with a doubtful expression, as if the enjoyment of the position were somewhat questionable, but yet to be staunchly maintained. Royden, smiling at the wet figure in its heavy frame, handed her the cloak, and told her she might venture to the house in that and under the umbrella.

"I am not coming," she said; "I am thoroughly soaked. I was wet through before I could reach this shelter, and I shall be scolded and laughed at."

"Let me help you on with your cloak," was Royden's only response, as he held it at the opening of the tree. "No one will see anything but the cloak. May I come in?"

"No," said Honor, drawing back. "I won't be seen. Go back to your tea, Mr. Keith; and presently, when you are all busy starting, I will slip up and take my place; then I shall escape—"

She stopped suddenly; but Royden guessed what she wished to avoid. It was not difficult for him to imagine either Miss Haughton's corrections, Miss Trent's sneers, or Miss Owen's exclamations.

"Very well, I will wait for you here," he said, coolly.

So, leaning against the tree in silence, he waited, while she grew uncomfortable in her snug retreat, and, from being amused at seeing him there in the rain, grew vexed, without understanding that this vexation was another name for anxiety.

"Your hat is spoiling, Mr. Keith," she said at last, with a sense of injury upon her.

"Is it?" He took it off and examined it leisurely, while the rain fell heavily and slowly upon his uncovered head—such a handsome head!

"It will bear a little more," he added, replacing it.

"I wish you would go back," she began again, presently; "I'm quite comfortable, but you are not."

"I think I have the better position," maintained Royden, coolly. "Your atmosphere has a mustiness about it which I do not envy."

Another pause. "Do go!" exclaimed the girl, pettishly. "Everybody will be wondering where you are, and there will be such a fuss."

"I like a fuss," said Royden, quietly; "and so do you."

"Indeed I don't!" asserted Honor, in hot haste. "I cannot bear a fuss. What do you mean, Mr. Keith?" she asked, venturing forward a little in her den. "What makes you say I like a fuss?" "I see you do."

"You are very unjust!" cried Honor.

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rousing herself into a state of wrath which she all the time knew to be utterly childish. "You say it just because you want to be in the house. Please to go."

"I will," said Royden, calmly, "when I want to be in the house."

"You are quite wet," cried Honor, calming down a little, and feeling very small and powerless to impress him in any way with her own anger.

"Yes. Are you as wet?"

"Oh, much wetter, of course. You have an overcoat. I have nothing over this thin dress."

A look of anxiety, swift as thought, passed over Royden's face; but his next words were rather more leisurely even than they had been, and therefore, of course, more successful.

"The others will be amused, Miss Craven, to see you in there. Mr. Haughton is coming toward us now. Don't stir yet. Captain Trent is walking in this direction, too. Now you may enjoy the pleasure of a fuss."

Without another word, Honor stepped from the hollow tree—her blue cloak falling to hide the limp appearance of her dress and spoiled hat—and coolly Royden took his place beside her.

"How do you feel now?" he inquired presently, glancing down upon her. "Hungry, thank you."

"I wish he hadn't come," she said to herself, petulantly; "I would rather any one else had found me."

Yet, when she joined them all, under a heavy fire of sympathy and astonishment and blame, she looked up into Royden's quiet, amused face—so variable in a woman's mind—wished they had all treated the matter just as he had treated it.

"Oh, Honor, I'm so glad I did not come!" exclaimed Phoebe, ruefully.

"So am I," returned Honor, pleasantly, as she looked from Phoebe's showy dress down to her own wet garments.

"This sort of thing adds considerably to the expense of a picnic," observed Jane Haughton.

"Don't take any more notice, please, Jane," whispered the girl, in real and earnest entreaty, as she took her tea standing in her cloak; "my dress was not new, and I dare say it will wash."

"Come, Honor," put in Lawrence, "I must put you on more than the cloak."

"I don't want more," said Honor, shrinking from his touch. "Oh, Lawrence, how I do hate to be taken care of in this way," she added, as he hovered about her. "I like to be forgotten. It is such a relief that nobody knows or cares anything about one."

Not by very many was Honor the only one who, in impatient youth, was felt this strongly, because the care they received was not the care they loved. And they do not think that there may come a time when all such random words will sting with a deep, reproachful memory.

"You shall have a dress of mine when we reach Deergrove, Honor," said Theodora, looking very placidly on the girl's limp figure. "Oh, Mr. Keith, see

now wet your hat is; it left quite a little pool when you took it up. That's through Honor—how vexatious!"

"Most vexatious," assented Royden, looking critically down upon the wet hat. "As an Englishman, this disaster touches me in a sensitive spot."

"Are you really an Englishman?" inquired Theodora, evidently glad of this vent for a little of her overflowing but suppressed curiosity.

"Is it not proved by my anxiety for my hat? Hat-worship belongs to no other nation. Don't you notice in England how a man's first and deepest care is always bestowed upon his hat?"

"Especially in church," added Mr. Haughton, sippantly. "Before he seats himself he breathes into it a prayer for its safety—and that's about the only time he looks really devout through the service."

"But, though you may be really an Englishman, Mr. Keith," persisted Miss Trent, "you must have been very much abroad."

"Yes. Don't you think, Miss Craven, that your hat is in as bad a plight as mine? It does not look nearly so tall as Miss Owen's now."

"Phoebe thinks a hat cannot be too tall for her," remarked Mr. Haughton, superciliously.

"Very wise, Miss Phoebe," said Royden, gravely. "Paddy's tall hat was the means of saving his life, if you recollect. A bullet passed through the top of his high hat. 'There,' said Paddy, complacently, as he examined the hole, 'if I'd had a low hat, that bullet would have gone right through my head.' We should always choose tall hats, shouldn't we, Miss Owen?"

No suspicion crossed the mind of any one of his reasons for talking thus.

"Honor," said Mrs. Payte, when the rain was over, and the carriages were coming round to the door in the gathering twilight, "take this large shawl of mine; I have wraps enough. You are coming with us in Mr. Keith's dog-cart—you and Mr. Romer. Lady Sourerson and Mrs. Romer are snug together in the Somerson carriage, and we go so stealthily behind those beautiful

and then," added the little lady, betraying her motive, you can stop at the Larches and change your dress."

"Oh, no," said Honor; "I—"

"You dare not venture—eh?" inquired the old lady shrewdly.

"Theodora says she will lend me a dress," amended the girl.

"Yes, so she will," remarked Mrs. Payte, dryly, "and a nice baggy old thing it will be. Don't I see how she is enjoying the idea of it, even now? She won't let you rival her to-night, be sure, child. Never mind, there's a beauty—"

"Mrs. Payte," put in Theodora, appearing at that moment, and graciously addressing the little old lady, of whose very existence she had all day endeavored to be unaware, "would you not like to change places with me for the drive to Deergrove? You will meet the wind in the seat you occupied in coming, whereas mine is a sheltered seat."

"This is a thoughtful idea of yours, Miss Trent," returned the old lady, meditatively, "nevertheless, I like the seat I occupied in coming."

"But you would be so comfortable, mamma says, in our carriage."

"I shall be comfortable in Mr. Keith's—thank you."

"It is so chilly to-night," urged Theodora. "Had you not better change your mind?"

(To be continued.)

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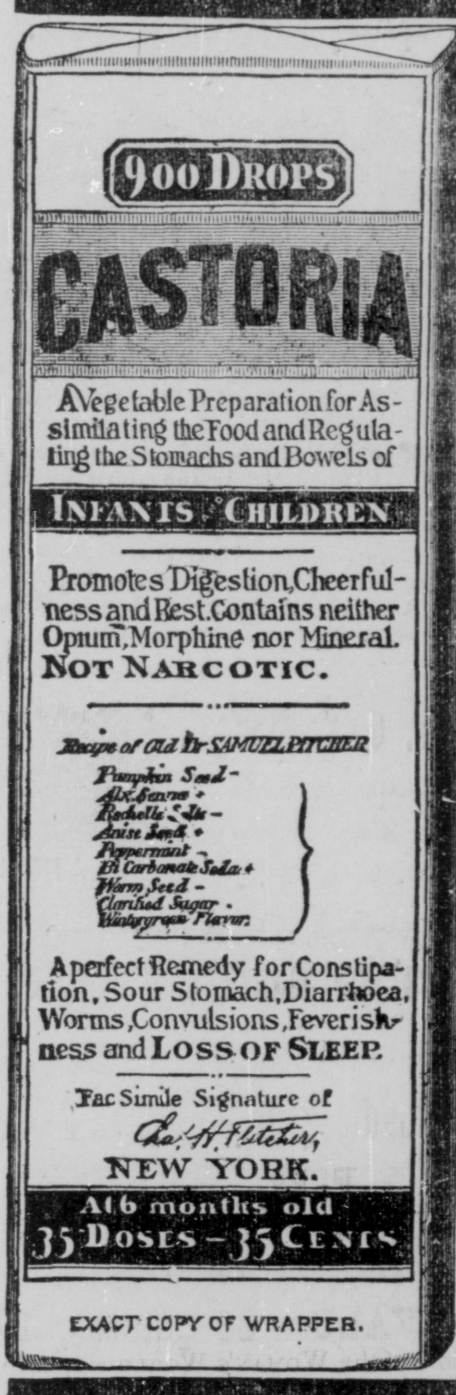
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