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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.)

"Perhaps old Myddelton's money has that to answer for," said Honor, in a tone of deep consideration.

"Why, Honor, you baby!" remarked Theodora, "you speak as if this rubbish were true. Mr. Keith, you will not be so silly as to try any number, will you?"

"I cannot settle to anything," said Royden, with gravity, "until I know my motto. Please, Mrs. Payte, give me number five."

"Yes, you can have five," assented the old lady, drawing out a crimson paper; "but—let me see, I can scarcely detect the meaning of this. It is Byronic—'Manfred,' I fancy."

"I feel the impulse, yet I do not plunge; I feel the peril, yet do not recede; And my brain reels, and yet my foot is firm."

"Why, Mr. Keith," cried Theodora, a few minutes afterward, "how silent you are over your motto! It might be your destiny for the grave look upon your face."

"Now, Mrs. Payte," exclaimed Theodora, "please read Mr. Haughton's."

"Will you choose your number, Lawrence?" asked Honor, rather enjoying the idea; and at her words he chose it.

"Number six, if I really am to choose."

"Number six," repeated Mrs. Payte, musingly, as she slowly—very slowly—opened a green paper. "Dear me, this is all that's said on number six."

"Love he comes and love he carries, Just as fate or fancy carries— Longest stays when sorest children, Laughs and flies when pressed and bidden."

I have heard that verse before, so have you, of course. Well, is that all?"

"I am going to choose a number for Mrs. Payte herself," said the rector, laughing; "and by that we shall judge how true her axioms are. Now, Mrs. Payte, I choose four for you; please read it."

The old lady opened a brown fold of paper, and bent to read, with her eyes full of laughter.

"This is rather trying," she said, looking sharply up into the surrounding faces. "This is what it says:

"Whether she knows the thing or no, Her tongue eternally will go, For she has impudence at will."

To begin with, it is a distortion of Gay's lines, which were originally applied to the masculine gender; and, to end with, its inapplicability is as apparent as in the other cases. For goodness' sake, burn the creature, some of you!"

"Mrs. Payte," asked Honor, a suspicion darting across her mind, "are the numbers really there?"

The old lady raised her head, and eyed Honor sternly.

"Of course they are there. Take it and see."

She was quite right; the verses exactly answered to the numbers every one had chosen; and it never entered into Honor's head to conjecture when the pencilled figures had been added over the quotations. "Thank you," she said, handing back the toy; "it is very odd."

"Honor" interposed Theodora, evidently tired of the subject, "we are going to dance now. You are fond of performing dance music, so I suppose you will play first."

Honor took her seat at the piano, and at once struck up a waltz. Mr. Keith, as in duty bound, offered his arm to Theodora.

On and on went Honor, until her

fingers ached; then she stopped with a waltz, smiling to picture the sudden stop; but Theodora and her partner were the only two who had kept up as long as the music.

"How spiteful of you!" whispered Miss Trent, coming up to her alone. "You stopped on purpose, because I was enjoying it."

"I thought every one was enjoying it—except me," said Honor, naively; "but my wrists gave way."

"Will you dance now, Miss Craven?" Theodora turned, her eagerness evident through all her studied composure.

"You will offend Honor, if you take her away from the piano, Mr. Keith. Her musical strength lies in dances."

"And in singing as Marguerite," added Royden, with a smile into Honor's eyes.

"Oh, I did that very badly," said Honor, turning swiftly away; "I will do this better."

And without another moment's pause, she played the opening bars of the Lancers. Then followed other dances, and still Honor was allowed to keep her seat at the piano. Once or twice Lawrence, in his stiff, stern way, proposed that some one else should take a turn; but not very eagerly, for he did not care to dance, and he could be more sure of having her near him when she played. Once or twice Captain Trent sauntered to her side, and whispered what a cool thing it was of Theodora; but he had not the courage to venture this remark to Miss Trent herself, so its only effect was a comical expression from Honor, as she played on. Once or twice the rector took Phoebe to the piano, and proposed a division of labor, but Honor knew how Phoebe bungled over dance music, and she only nodded smilingly, and still played on. And once Mr. Keith, in the hearing of all the room, inquired coolly if it was not the turn of some one else to play.

"If I offered to play, explained Theodora, in a low tone, "Honor would not let me. She objects to dancing in boots that are not her own."

"I see," said Royden, with a quizzical gravity in his eyes.

But in another moment he was to see quite the opposite side of the picture. Little Mrs. Payte marched up to the piano, and declared, in a tone which there was no gainsaying, that Honor would much oblige her by resigning.

"I never heard such ugly things as these times of the present day," she said. "Let me show you what was called dance music when I was young."

Honor rose with evident relief and pleasure, but first she looked questioning into the old lady's face.

"Are you sure, Mrs. Payte, that you do not say it because I have looked tired or discontented?"

"Sure," she rejoined, tersely, and sat down at once.

Lawrence rose from his lounge from behind the piano.

"You will dance with me, Honor?" "Yes," she said, so brightly and so readily that Royden "saw" a little more clearly still through the excuse of the boots.

"Honor, how odious this music is!" observed Theodora, pointedly, when the waltz was over. "I cannot dance to it."

"Can you not? Oh, I can."

Mrs. Payte was far more determined about not giving up her occupation at the piano than even Honor had been. She sat there, tripping through the old-fashioned airs, with her wrists very much elevated, and her fingers very tight upon the keys; but no one save the daughter of the house uttered a word against the performance.

"I can dance merrily to those quaint old airs, can't you?" asked Honor, appealing daringly to Theodora. "And I never knew any one keep better time than Mrs. Payte. How kind it is of her."

And Honor evidently felt every word she said, for, in all her happy excitement and restless enjoyment, she never forgot to thank the old lady, and offer earnestly to relieve her.

"Go on," nodded the little pianist, working away, indefatigably. "I like it. I don't intend to be turned out in favor of your new-fangled style. Go on."

Honor indeed went on, and the brighter and merrier she grew, the more coldly supercilious were the glances bestowed upon her by Miss Trent; the more appalling was Miss Haughton's gaze of disapproval; the more Lawrence expanded in smiles; the more Hervey caught himself up in his corrections; the more Phoebe raised her eyebrows with mild astonishment; the more Mrs. Trent made languid remarks of displeasure at "girls who let their spirits run away with them"; the more Lady Somersson smiled behind her hand-screen, following with her eyes the light, restless figure, which was so beautiful, despite its ill-fitting dress; and the more Royden Keith studied, with quiet amusement, the changing face of this girl, who seemed as yet to possess so little knowledge of the world which had set its seal upon his thoughtful face.

"You do not often see girls make themselves ridiculous, just as Honor

does to-night, do you, Mr. Keith?"

Theodora had paused beside him as he leaned against the chimney watching the dancers—watching one especially, as Miss Trent plainly saw. He looked down and answered her, his eyes growing full of fun as their intentness vanished; he looked down and answered her truthfully, but as he would rather have died than answer her, if he could have foreseen how and when she would report and distort his words.

"Very seldom."

"That is what I cannot understand in Honor's nature," continued Theodora, placidly insinuating the wide contrast in her own; "her perfect incapacity for any serious thought and feeling. She is rather pretty, and, as Hervey says, she is amusing sometimes; but she is not at all one you could fancy at the head of an establishment, or, indeed, moving in any wider range of society. As mamma says"—Theodora was gaining courage from the uncontradicting face—"any man would be unwise to bestow a strong affection upon Honor, if he expected depth of affection in return; do you think so, too?"

"That it would be unwise for some men to bestow a strong affection upon Miss Craven? Yes."

It was at this moment, just as Theodora smiled assent to his words, that Honor herself came up to them, with Lawrence following her to entreat her hand for the next dance.

"Honor, you are making yourself rather oddly conspicuous, are you not?" inquired Theodora, in a waltz-whisper. "We are wondering to see you."

Honor glanced up into Royden's face with a gaze of swift and pained inquiry, while the soft pink deepened in her cheeks.

"Honor bright."

(To be continued.)

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