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BY MARY CECIL HAY

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



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"You know it all, then, Honor?" he asked, his lips stiff and dry. "Of course Slimp went to you at once with his own story?"

"He came to me this afternoon; I hope it was at once, as you say, because it will not be well to lose time, Lawrence."

"Time—I have no time left me," he muttered, doggedly; "Slimp will have bruited my affairs all over Kinbury before this time to-morrow."

"He is to do nothing until this time to-morrow," Honor said; "then he will come to know my decision."

"On—? Your decision—?" questioned Lawrence, hurriedly. "Has he been offering you the task of—?"

"Never mind what he offered," put in the girl, quietly; "his offers, as well as his motives, are too despicable to occupy us for a moment. In his selfish haste he has done what both you and I may some day thank him for doing. When he comes to me to-morrow, Lawrence, I hope that you yourself will see him. It will be kind of you to spare me another interview with him, and, besides that, he will understand better from you how unnecessary his interference will be."

"The little dastardly thief!" muttered Mr. Haughton, between his teeth; "it is he who has been the one to tempt me and to lower me to this pass."

"A poor tempter," said Honor, in quiet scorn.

"Ay, poor enough; but it is impossible to do business for years with a wily, double-natured sneak, and not find his guidance grow easy, whether one stands up against it at first or not; especially," he added, with a flash of honesty, "if one's own disposition is to grind, and save, and—speculate."

"It must have been that," interposed Honor, with a glance of puzzled anxiety; "for you were never extravagant or reckless in your expenditures."

"No; I have no pleasure in spending on myself—or on any one else," he answered bitterly. "You know—for you often said it in old times, Honor—that I saved my money just like old Myddelton. That it was which brought on the passion of speculation; and see how it has ended. I am a ruined man, and my only chance of even personal safety is cut off now by a traitor, who has been my abettor and encourager all along; and who turned my ruling passion—avarice—to all his own base ends."

"Why talk of him?" said Honor, gravely. "Think of what you yourself wish to undo, Lawrence."

"It is too late," he said, and put one hand before his eyes.

"No, not too late, Lawrence, nor is there any risk for your personal safety, as you say. You will be able to leave England when you choose, and with your name unscathed. Tell me if I have done what is right. It was so hard for me to know, because you—and then Mr. Stafford—have managed these things for me, and left me ignorant. Give me your advice now, Lawrence. Will you have this uncrossed cheque upon my banker here, and take the money yourself to Kinbury to-morrow, or will you have this crossed cheque, and pay it in to your account at Kinbury? Only tell me which, and the sum is left for you to add."

"I—I cannot," faltered Lawrence, brokenly.

"Yes you can," she answered, with her pretty smile; "you will not let a silly pride come between you and your old ward. We have no need of a lawyer's help, have we?"

"No need," he answered, in the anguish of many mixed feelings; "but I cannot take it. Oh, Honor! you do not know the half of my deception."

"I think I do," she answered thoughtfully; "I think that Mr. Slimp would rather tell me more than less."

"I must tell you, and tell you all," he protested.

"Very well, Lawrence, but not until to-morrow; when you come to-morrow you shall tell me all. Then justice will have been done to those who have been wronged or are poor."

"Honor," he cried, moving in sudden haste from the position he had so closely maintained, "how can I bear this—to rob you even more than I have done? I cannot. I will go away. I will go to-night, as I always meant to do. If they capture me—if, led on by my own clerk, they bring me back to face the law—it will be simple justice, after all; while this—no, I cannot do you such a wrong."

"The wrong has been done to others, Lawrence," said Honor, sadly; "what I ask is that you will repair it, as far as you are able."

"As I am able," echoed Lawrence, bitterly. "No, it is you who would save me from disgrace and publicity, and I cannot take more from you, Honor. I will leave England to-night."

"Not to-night," she said, with gentle kindness, as she put the cheque into his hand; "I shall not persuade you against going, Lawrence, because you may think it best; but you will not go under fear of pursuit, leaving those wrongs unredressed, and bearing the terrible consciousness of having injured those who trusted you."

"But it is done."

"Yes, it is done," she answered sadly; "but we can make amends. All must have what is due to them; and, Lawrence—my dear old guardian—you can go then with a name which is not hated and dishonored."

He stood unmoved while she laid the paper in his hand, but she knew that this was the chill of agony, not indifference.

"If," she said, with a great effort to speak cheerfully at last, "if Lawyer Haughton chooses to wind up his affairs and go abroad, what wonder need it cause? Such things are almost of common occurrence now."

"I can—I can sell my practice then," said Lawrence, with a sudden break in his memory. "If I wait in England to undo this evil, then the practice will be worth what it was before, and I shall not be utterly penniless."

"That will be pleasant," she answered, with a smile. "You will come to-morrow, Lawrence, and tell me if all is safe and well. Now I must go."

"But," he said, with a change from his short-lived excitement, "you could not do this, Honor, if you knew what had been my last effort at degradation—you who always thought so kindly of Gabriel Myddelton, and through all, believed him innocent."

"I do know," she said, quietly, when he paused.

"Slimp told you that, too, did he?" Lawrence Haughton cried. "And did he tell you how I, like others, had been a blind fool all along, and that Gabriel Myddelton was innocent?"

"Yes, he told me that, and he told me—the struggle it cost her to say those words as she had said the others, was most pitiful—that you were mistaken when you thought that Gabriel Myddelton had come home as Royden Keith."

No answer; and she made the words a question, raising her eyes longingly to his.

"Was that true, Lawrence?"

"I suppose so; but heaven only knows," he answered pettishly. "It has been a studied belief of mine for two years. How can I root it out so suddenly?"

"But if he had been our cousin Gabriel, would you not immediately have recognized him?"

"It is more than twelve years since I saw Gabriel Myddelton," Lawrence answered, moodily, and unconsciously betraying his own doubts. "But remember, Honor," he added, hurriedly, "that if he does prove to be Gabriel Myddelton, and is innocent, or even if Gabriel eventually turns up, you have nothing to fear. Old Myddelton's money was willed to you, and no man on earth, even being a Myddelton, can claim it from you. Remember that, Honor, my—"

But a sense of the fitness of thing was able just then to restrain even Lawrence Haughton. He could not see her face plainly now, for the twilight had deepened to the first darkness of the summer night, and the window was narrow and its panes not overclear, but he spoke with a change of tone.

"Honor, forgive me; and you will remember what I say, if I am not here. There is no flaw in Lady Lawrence's will, and old Myddelton left her the power of bequeathing his wealth, without any restrictions."

"Yes," she said, absently, as she offered him her hand, "I remember."

He held it tightly in his own, while the old passion, rising with a greater strength than ever, wrote its lines upon his hard, stern face; and while he crushed back with a violent effort the pitiable confession which rushed with almost conquering force to his lips.

"I shall see you to-morrow," he whispered, "for the last time; and it might have been that—!" Then he broke utterly down, and it was some minutes

before he regained mastery over himself.

Not another word could he utter, as he took Honor down and put her into the carriage, not even in answer to her kind good-bye; and when she had driven out of sight, he was still standing there upon the pavement where she had left him, lost in a deep, regretful dream.

In spite of that cheery look and smile, Honor's heart was very heavy as she drove home—and through all this doubt would force itself: Was she fulfilling well the trust which her great wealth had brought her? Only her own heart could answer the question which it asked, but she knew that no such hesitation could have stayed her in this visit to her old guardian.

It was quite early in the afternoon of the next day that he came to Kensington; and, in spite of the weight of shame which bowed him down, when he begged her to let him tell her of his delinquencies and debts, she saw a marked change in him, which reminded her of one or two far-back days in her old home, when Jane and Phoebe had been away, and he had tried to make his favorite happy without vexing her by any sign or uttered word of love.

She interrupted him continually when he declared, with a morbid self-torture, on the failure of so many of his speculations, which, as she had rightly guessed, had been maliciously exaggerated by Mr. Slimp; and they spent a not unpleasant time together before the time for the clerk's visit.

"You will come upstairs, Lawrence, won't you, when he is gone?" Honor said, when she rose to leave the room at Mr. Slimp's hour. "I shall wait for you. Phoebe is shopping. I shall be quite alone."

(To be continued.)

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