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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.)

There may be these quantities among replied Lawrence, looking into the girl's eyes, "but there is neither of them in you, Honor."

"They belong to the very name of Myddelton," returned Honor, with a lot, vexed blush, for nothing distressed her more than such a speech in the presence of his sister and poor little Phoebe, "and he sees how we all hate each other in our hearts, and he knows we shall hate each other until Lady Lawrence's will is read, when we shall immediately concentrate all our hatred upon her heir."

"It's all Gabriel Myddelton's fault," sighed Phoebe, that these dreadful things are laid to our charge; but, Honor, you know very well that it is only the Trents who hate—"

Phoebe broke off abruptly in her speech, for Mr. Haughton had left the room, and she had something far more important to urge upon Honor than any want of affection in the Trents.

"Go now," she whispered across the table; "remember your promise, Honor."

Honor put her chair back into its place against the wall—according to one of Jane's most strictly enforced lessons—and left the room, too.

In the hall, as she paused in her extreme unwillingness to enter Lawrence's study, Phoebe rushed out to her, almost breathless in her eagerness.

"Make haste, Honor," she cried, pushing her cousin toward the door of Mr. Haughton's study, "he may go off in a hurry. Why should you dawdle, when you know he will do it for you? This is too unkind of you, Honor."

"Take your hands away; leave me to open the door myself," said Honor, with a quick catch of her breath; "I will not be dragged to do what I have promised."

When Honor entered the room, her guardian was locking the drawers of his writing table. He had taken the key from the last and put the bunch into his pocket before he saw her or heard her quiet tread. Then he stepped back to the chimney-piece and looked at her with a pleased smile—quite willing, evidently, that she should detain him as long as she chose.

"Please, Lawrence," the girl began, simply, "will you let Phoebe have a little money this morning?"

"No, I have told Phoebe a hundred times that if I go on permitting her to overdraw her allowance, she will grow more and more extravagant, and will not be able to extricate herself."

Honor could not see that his impatient retort was chiefly evoked by his sudden disappointment in finding that it was for some one else's sake that she had sought him; she only saw that he looked firm in his refusal.

"I have told her this a hundred times," he repeated; "and I will not trouble myself to tell her again. She is absurd and wasteful in her expenditure. Tell her to do as you do; you have the same allowance, and you always look—"

Jane says if there were another per-

son in the house like me she would be driven wild."

"A pretty safe speech," sneered Lawrence; "the if is a huge one. Jane's reason for the feeling, poor old girl, is not inscrutable, though. You forgive those speeches, Honor," he added, in another tone, "when you remember how jealously she guards my affection? You can understand why she is harder to you than to Phoebe! She is not afraid of Phoebe's ever supplanting—"

"Phoebe is a great deal smaller than Jane; why should Jane be afraid?"

"Laughing, always laughing," muttered Mr. Haughton, "is life to be always a jest for you?"

A soft, quick shadow fell upon the girl's face. She was but eighteen, and an orphan. Into no mother's listening ear and loving heart could she whisper the doubts, and hopes, and longings which troubled or cheered her. Upon no father's arm had she leaned through all her girlhood; no father's strong and steadfast love had guided and taught her. And beyond! What awaited this girl whose generous aims and impulses were all thrown back upon herself in this cramped home? What awaited her beyond? Was life to be all a jest? No wonder that such a swift, sad shadow fell upon her face like a foreboding.

"Let Jane say what she will, Honor," spoke Lawrence, extending his hand to her. "You shall be denied nothing while I am master here."

"I was not thinking of Jane's speech," she said, rousing herself from that moment's inexplicable sadness, and moving a little back from the outstretched hand. "Will you give Phoebe the money please, Lawrence?"

"No," he answered, angrily, but very slowly, as he gazed into her face; "but I will give it to you, if you like."

"I do not want it," began Honor, in haste, but he went on after her interruption, as if he had not hesitated.

"You may do as you like with it, of course; spend it for Phoebe, if you choose, or give it to her to spend. I do not care what is done with it afterward. How much is it to be? Is this enough?"

He had taken two sovereigns from his purse, but he held the purse still open.

"Phoebe only wished for one," said Honor, in her proud, quiet tones.

"I did not ask Phoebe," returned Mr. Haughton, closing the purse, and once more holding his hand toward Honor, with the money in it; "take them, Honor. Of course Phoebe bade you ask, but come at whose bidding you will, you know that I never could refuse a request of yours. Some day, perhaps, the favors you come to ask will be for yourself, as they used to be in old times. Take it. Why do you wait so long?"

Slowly and daintily, with barely a touch of her soft, white fingers, she took the gold coins from his palm.

"Thank you, Cousin Lawrence."

"Cousin Lawrence!" he echoed angrily. "You are skilled in wounding, Honor, and I am a stone, of course, and cannot feel or see. I am not supposed to know that you avoid touching my hand, when you do it with such gentle grace. I am not supposed to know that you shrink from any obligation to me, when you thank me so prettily. Cousin! Bah! that one word is hateful to me from your lips!"

"Is it?" asked Honor, gravely. "Would you have me say Uncle Lawrence? Would this sound better: Thank you, Uncle Lawrence?"

"Is that all the payment you will give?" inquired Mr. Haughton, his anger giving way to amusement, as it generally did when he talked with her. "Yes, that's all," she answered, speaking to him just as she used to do when she was a child, and had not learned the secret of why it was she to whom he always listened, and she whose company he always sought. "Phoebe will repay her own debts."

"I will not thank from Phoebe," he interrupted, moodily. "Let her have her ribbons and flowers and foolery, and be content. Do not send her with her gushing thanks to me. What is it? What makes you look so hurt and proud? The old story, eh, of my duty to Phoebe as her guardian—of my unkindness—of her wasted affection, may be? I do not know; I am not to blame in the matter; you can testify to that, Honor. Do not turn away. Listen for one moment, my little favorite. You can set everything straight. Phoebe shall have what she likes, dresses and feathers to satiety—anything, if you will give me what I want."

"I could not, Cousin Lawrence," said Honor, with a demure shake of her head, "because what you want is a contented mind."

Then she gave him her bright little daring nod, and, leaving him, ran upstairs with the news for which Phoebe was so anxiously waiting.

"We'll walk into Kintbury this afternoon and buy the dress," exclaimed Phoebe, in a rapture of delight; "and we shall be able to make it ourselves to-morrow, and so can spend all the extra money on trappings."

"Yes," said Honor, kindly, knowing on whom the cutting and the trimming, and the chief work would fall; "yes, we can do it to-morrow, and have it all ready for Thursday morning; and on our way home this afternoon we will call at East Cottage. Now I am going to see if I can help Jane."

CHAPTER VI.

When Miss Owen's all-important purchases were made, Honor made one which excited Phoebe's curiosity amazingly. Yet it was only a packet of wools of various shades and colors, and a roll of fine canvas.

"Why carry it?" Phoebe asked, as Honor took her parcel in her hand. "Let it be sent with the other things."

"No," whispered Honor, "it is not large enough to be inconvenient—I wish it were."

On their way home the girls stopped before a low, white cottage, standing in a long garden, where flowers, fruits and vegetables grew promiscuously.

"Oh, do not go in here," exclaimed Phoebe, pettishly. "Mrs. Payte is such a disagreeable old woman, and Mrs. Disbrowe so dull and depressing. Come along, Honor; they haven't seen us."

Honor had unfastened the gate by this time.

(To be continued.)

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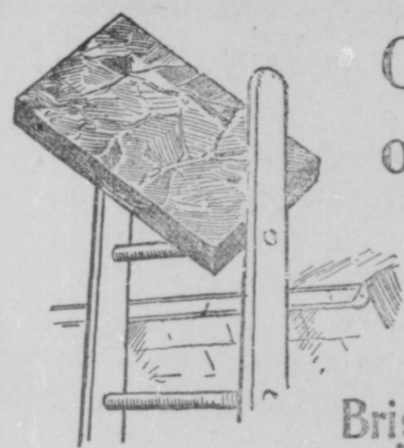
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