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May 17th, 1900.

RIGHTED AT LAST

BY MARY CECIL HAY

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

(Continued.)

"I cannot think," rejoined Honor, sadly, "why Lawrence should ever dream—"

"He never does," was the sharp retort. "Lawyers never dream; they are far too clever. By the way, Honor, tell us—just to amuse us—what your Leon-witted guardian says of us. Begin with Selina."

"What could he say of her?" answered Honor, smiling, though she did not like the question, "but that she was most amiable?"

"Bah! To say a woman is amiable is to deny her any character at all, to make her at once a nonentity in mind, body and estate. Go on. What does he say of me? I know. I have heard him say that I am a snappish vixen, and a selfish dabbler in other people's affairs."

"He has not said that to me," said Honor, gently.

"The old lady's eyes softened a little, but there was certainly no softening in her next speech.
"I dare say he is saying it now to somebody. At any rate, I heard him say it to Theodore Trent. What a good thing it would be if we had her here now, to nurse Selina! She would be a nice one by a sick-bed, eh? I should like to take an Asmodean flight now, and look down through one or two roofs."

"Why?" asked Honor, in wondering amusement, while even Mrs. Disbrowe, having caught the quick words, smiled a little.

"Now, then, child," retorted Mrs. Payte, without answering the last question, "what are you poking about for? It is no use putting things ready to her hand—either books, or flowers, or scent. Bless you, Selina never raises a finger to help herself! What in the world is it you are looking as if you wanted now, Selina?"

"Nothing," said the sick lady, in her low, soft tones, and with no appearance of resenting the harsh questions of her companion.

"Nothing!" echoed Mrs. Payte, with supreme contempt. "Mysterious nothing! How shall I define thy shapeliness, headless, placeless emptiness? Some poet or professor says that, and I am no wiser than he, and cannot give you what I cannot define, and what has no shape, nor base, nor place. Where are you going, Honor?"

"I shall not be many minutes," the girl said, as she looked round, to be sure that the invalid could miss nothing. "I am only going to see Marie."

"Don't be long. Don't waste your time there."
The little kitchen, where Marie lay on the poor couch before the fire, was clean and neat in its bareness, and the French girl's pinched face lay upon a snowy pillow. The pillow was a present from Honor herself, but the whiteness and purity of everything were Marie's own.

"Have you had any dinner, Marie?" asked Honor, gently drawing the fine lace-work from the girl's wasted fingers.

"I did not want any to-day. Miss Craven; and I did not care to leave my work."

"You work too constantly," said Honor, as she laid it aside. "Your father tells me you are at it at five o'clock in the morning, and never leave off until bed-time. It's too much, Marie. Now chat with me while I get you a cup of tea."

Moving brightly about the little kitchen, Honor prepared the meal with a deftness which put a happy amusement into the sick girl's tired eyes; and watching her, and listening to her, as Honor led her on to do—she forgot her pain and weakness, and even her constant labor and poverty. So when the tea was ready at last, and Honor sat

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at the table and waited on her, chatting as if she would not give time to think, Marie caught herself now and then actually laughing.

"Does Mrs. Payte's servant help you a little now?" inquired Honor, when at last she rose to take her leave.

"Yes, she does, indeed, Miss Craven—a little. She is growing rather kind to me; but Mrs. Payte—is she not odd? I can never understand her."

"No, it is not easy, indeed," smiled Honor. "When will your father be home, Marie?"

"Oh, he is away, Miss Honor. Did you not know?"

"Indeed, I did not."
"I thought you would, Miss Craven, because he was sent for by Mr. Keith a week ago."

Marie made a pause here without knowing it, wondering at the softened brightness of Honor's eyes.

"A week ago, Miss Craven, he read an advertisement for a photographer's assistant, a long way off—more than thirty miles—and father fancied he might do, because he understands his work so well; so we managed to get the money for his railway ticket, and he went. They told him, before they asked him a single question, Miss Honor, that he was too old; and so he walked home, for he had no other ticket. It was quite the middle of the night when he came in here, so jaded and white I hardly knew him, and his boots all worn to the ground."

"Then where is he now, Marie?" asked Honor, her eyes dim with pity.

"Now, Miss Honor," the girl said, in a brighter tone, "he is at Westleigh Towers. Mr. Keith seemed to have heard of his disappointment, though father himself did not know how, and the very next day he sent for father to go over there with his camera, as he wanted several photographs taken, and father was to go prepared to stay for a time. Oh! Miss Honor, he was just like a boy that day, and—and yet was ashamed before me of being so happy, because—poor father—I was not going. As if it was not more to me than going myself, for him to go! Miss Honor," added the girl, presently, seeing the tears slowly gather in Honor's beautiful eyes, "father sent me a likeness of Mr. Keith. Perhaps he ought not to have done it, but he did; he knew I should not show it about, but keep it sacredly, and value it, so he sent it. Will you see it, Miss Craven?"

"No thank you, Marie," said Honor, quietly.
"Oh, do!" urged Marie, drawing the photograph from between the leaves of a book which lay beside her on the couch and unfolding it from its silver paper. "Do look, Miss Honor. I think father has taken it beautifully."

So Honor took the picture in her hands, but it was many minutes before the figure grew distinct before her misty eyes. The photograph had evidently included Royden without his knowledge. He was sitting in deep thought, his eyes fixed gravely on the fire, his dogs lying about the rug at his feet.

To one who did not know him, it was the photograph of a very handsome man, thoroughly artistic in the unconscious grace of attitude. But to one who knew him, it was far more than that. To Honor, the face, in its thought and patience, and yet in its power and strength, for that minute seemed to be really with her.

"Well, Honor, how much longer are you going to stay here?"
She gave back the likeness with a stifled sigh, yet was glad to be called away before she could speak of it.

"I am coming, Mrs. Payte, in one minute."

"The little old lady was pausing at the kitchen door, evidently considering that to tread beyond the threshold would contaminate her, and holding her handkerchief to her nose, as if the air of the clean little room were poisonous.

"That lazy girl always detains you when you come here," she grumbled, holding her shabby brown dress about her ankles, lest the floor should sully it. "She never exerts herself for any one; why should you exert yourself for her?"

"Mrs. Payte," cried Honor, her eyes brilliant with sudden passion, "you are unjust, and I will not listen to such words of Marie in her helplessness and her pain. She never detains me. I stay here because I like to stay. I am very glad when I can stay with her, and it does me good, because she is so patient and so gentle. She would exert herself for every one, if she were able, and be far more useful to me. If I were ill, than ever I have been to her."

The little old woman in the doorway had dropped her dress, and was breathing the plebeian air in gasps. She had seen a flash of Honor's anger before, but never passionately roused as now. And to hear her class herself so humbly with that poor creature! How beautiful she looked, too, with one hand lying gently on the head of the sick girl!

"You don't look at all likely to be ill," chuckled the old lady, "so how can we judge? Are you coming away now?"

"I will follow you," said Honor.
Left again, she stooped beside the couch and comforted Marie, who was trembling still in her nervous fear.

Then, when she had brought a smile at last to the pallid, troubled face, she rose to go. Mrs. Payte met her fiercely in the doorway of Mrs. Disbrowe's room.

"Do you recall all you said to me before that woman?"

"I am very sorry I spoke so hastily," said Honor; "but I cannot recall a single word I said."

"Very well," retorted the old lady, turning swiftly away, "don't! Are you going home now?"

"Not unless you wish it. I have an hour's liberty still. Will you let me stay?"

"Oh, stay, by all means, or I shall be favored with Selina's groans all evening. What does the doctor say about the girl down-stairs? Will she get well?"

"I fear not," said Honor, pitifully. "He says she needs care and rest, and ease and nourishment; and all these things, we know, are beyond her reach."

"He orders her port wine, I suppose, and beef and mutton—doctors always do when their patients are poor. If you can stay, child, I'll put on my shawl and make a call or two."

"Honor," said Mrs. Disbrowe, smiling, when the little lady had bustled out of the room, "hard as she is herself, she takes care that her servant shall help that poor girl; and now, I dare say, nourishing things will be sent in to her. Edna is very strange, but I understand her."

(To be continued.)

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