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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.

"I should have thought you old enough to know a true gentleman when you met him," observed Honor, with provoking gravity. "And, if he really is come to woo Theodora, what shall you do?"

"Why?" he asked, his tone a trifle harsh, either in anger or self-consciousness.

"Because you are to marry her, you know."

"Do not say 'you know,' Honor; it is unnecessary and inelegant, and I do not know, though you do, it would seem."

"Of course I do; everybody knows it."

"Of course I could win her if I chose," mused Hervey, complacently, "if that is what you mean by everybody knowing I am to do so."

Honor's laugh rang fresh and clear on the night air, and naturally it roused Captain Hervey's languid wrath.

"It is most childish to laugh at nothing, as you do, Honor."

"Only yesterday you told me it was childish to laugh at everything. You are inconsistent, Hervey, if you guide me in opposite directions."

"If Mr. Keith wins Theodora and her fortune," remarked Hervey, presently, with an idea of stern retaliation, "what will Lawrence Haughton do? Because everybody knows, as you say, that Lawrence is to marry a rich wife if he marries at all."

No answer, so he put the question direct.

"Do you think Haughton will marry a rich wife?"

"I hope he will."

"Why?"

"Because," she answered, with a tightening of her lips, "he won't be at all happy if he does—men never are who marry for money—nor will she. It is you who are laughing at nothing now, Hervey."

"Your notions of the world seem to be gleaned from novels. Why do you not wish he would marry a penniless wife, just to spite Jane?"

"Because—Jane would break the heart of the penniless wife."

"Honor!"

"Yes, I'm here."

"Why, you have tears in your voice! Are you so unhappy at the Larches?"

"I was not thinking of myself," returned Honor, hastily.

"Don't grieve for Phoebe," said Hervey, in a tone of relief, "she doesn't feel these things. It is far harder for you, Honor, to bear the love of the man you scorn, than it is to her to bear the scorn of the man she loves—poor girl!"

"Hervey, how dare you speak so?" cried Honor, passionately. "You know nothing about this—about Phoebe or about me. I will not allow you to talk so to me of my cousin, or of myself. Do not ever again pretend you can teach me how to be a gentleman, for you do not know yourself how to be a gentleman. Go back! I'm quite safe. I would rather not have you."

"My dear Honor," he began, in his most plausible tones, "you should try not to be so hasty. Why should I not

mention what, to use your own words, everybody knows? Phoebe makes no secret of her infatuation for Lawrence, and Lawrence makes no secret of his infatuation to her, so why should I? You make no secret of your indifference to Lawrence, and he certainly makes no secret of his infatuation for you, so why should I?"

"It is most ungenerous," said Honor, hotly; and then she maintained perfect silence for the rest of their walk.

The Larches was a sombre, red brick house, standing a little way from the road, and separated from it by half a dozen yards of brick wall between two white gates at either end of the curved drive which passed the front door. At this door Honor stood in the darkness, wondering rather anxiously who would let her in. Hervey had left her at the gate, but though she didn't know

it, he was lingering there, waiting to see her safely in the house. He had not long to wait; the door was opened promptly to her summons, and he saw her enter the lighted hall.

"It was Haughton himself who let her in," muttered Captain Trent as he walked away. "She will be vexed if no one else has waited up for her; and certainly it cannot be by Phoebe's own choice that she has left Haughton to do it alone."

He hastened on now, "whistling as he went, for want of thought," and by this time Honor and Mr. Haughton had entered the warm and lighted drawing-room.

"Every one gone to bed?" she exclaimed, a note of keen vexation in her tone. "Why did not Phoebe sit up for me? She promised she would, and I am as early as Jane bade me be."

"I told Phoebe to go to bed," returned Mr. Haughton, gently taking off the soft white shawl which Honor had worn under her dark cloak. I chose to wait for you, and I did not need any one to keep me company."

Honor glanced at him for a moment as he stood in the full light, and then she quietly pushed away the chair he had drawn up to the fire for her.

Honor's guardian was a man of forty, a little above the middle height, but so broadly built that he looked below it. His hair was thickly streaked with gray, and his moustache gray, too—was heavy and coarse; his face, habitually shrewd and callous, and his eyes habitually keen and restless; for any other expression which might be upon his face to-night, or at other times when he was alone with Honor, was not its customary one. He was a powerful man, both physically and mentally; a man who seemed to have his passions and his words completely under his control, and who, if he had not, might be, perhaps, a dangerous man to thwart or anger. His clients spoke of him as a safe and self-concentrated lawyer, as hard to understand as to bend; a clever fellow, whose soft, white fingers could unravel, in that constant silence of his, the most intricate knot in law. But there was one inmate of his house who knew him in two characters, and who put no trust in either.

"I have coffee ready for you, Honor," said Mr. Haughton, taking the coffee-pot from the fire and carrying it to the table where stood one solitary cup; "I know it will refresh you after your walk."

"Thank you," said Honor; but her voice, for all its gentleness, was utterly indifferent, and Lawrence Haughton noticed this.

"Have you had a pleasant evening?" he asked, rather nervously pursuing his unwonted and womanish task.

"A little better than usual," she said, quietly; "but I am very sleepy, Lawrence. May I go to bed?"

"Just wait until you have drunk this coffee, dear. I made it myself on purpose for you, and I have kept it hot, and fancied you would enjoy it."

He had come up to her then, with the cup in his hand, and she could not turn away. She took it with a little laugh, fresh and sweet.

"You look odd at that task, Lawrence. Why did you attempt it?"

"Because it was for you," he said, with a subdued eagerness in his tone. "There is no task I would not attempt for you, Honor."

"I hope there is," she answered, very gently; "and please let Phoebe keep her promise next time, and sit up for me, Lawrence."

"Any one but me," he said, a dark flush rising in his face; "yet my only pleasure through this day has been the anticipation of these minutes, when I should have you here to talk to me and look at me, as you rarely do when you have others to see or speak to."

There was silence between them then, while he tried to school his tones to easy indifference such as hers, and while she wondered childishly whether her guardian's culinary achievement was known to his sister, whose one strong idea was that it was he who ought to be waited on by all the household.

"Who was at Deergrove to-night, Honor?"

Lawrence was standing against the

mantel-piece, watching the face of the girl beside him; and it seemed as if, when she answered the question, his gaze grew more intent and even stern.

"Only one gentleman—Mr. Keith. He is staying at the Royal Hotel in Kinross now; he has been visiting Sir Philip Somerson at the Castle. I do not know whether he stays for the shooting or because he likes the neighborhood. Do you know him, Lawrence?"

"As much," returned Mr. Haughton, apparently making an effort to speak easily, "as I do any other idle young fellow who comes to stay in the town for a time, professionally for the Abbotsmoor fishing, or shooting, or what not—that is all."

"I will say good-night now, Lawrence."

He put down the empty cup and then took her offered hand. "Good-night," he echoed; "how you hasten to utter it! Nothing I can do or say ever tempts you to linger with me. My beautiful child, my favorite, if you would only consent to learn one lesson from Phoebe."

"I am too old to learn," said Honor, defying the pain which such words always gave her, in spite of their frequency. "Oh, Lawrence, I wish you were as sleepy as I am! You would hurry me off, and I should be so grateful to you afterwards."

(To be continued.)

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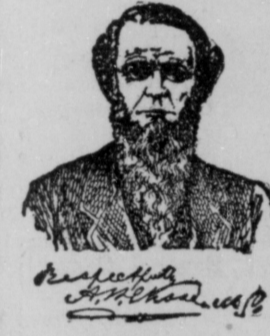
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