

A True Diamond

CHAPTER V.

A WILD COLT.

Toney jumped up and was all life again, and walking softly she made advances to a young thoroughbred; who was, like Toney herself, feeling that life is after all a very pleasant possession. There are a few brings born with a strange power over animals, which power, like other gifts, is not to be acquired, and has never been satisfactorily explained. Toney could not learn her notes, but she could ride any horse, and what she could do for that silly tea-party that I have to attend."

In a few minutes Toney was having a glorious gallop on the bare-backed colt round the outskirts of the park, keeping, from motives of prudence, well out of sight of the house. Suddenly she came to a low fence, and the temptation was too great to resist.

"Now, Beauty, over, and don't jerk me off, or I shall never forgive you."

In another moment Toney and the colt, without having parted company, landed on a smooth grass road, leading apparently to another park. At that moment, from another side path, a young man on an old hunter stopped her progress.

"By Jove!" was his exclamation, and Toney, red with her exertion, looked up, somewhat displeased, to see before her a young man, good-looking man, whose sun burnt countenance spoke plainly of foreign climes.

Beauty was too much excited to wish to pause in his novel occupation, so without another word Toney turned his head and repeated the jump over the fence. This done with the agility of a wild animal, she swung herself down and Beauty continued his gallop alone.

"By Jove!" repeated the young man, walking his horse up to the fence. "Do you know that you were trespassing by jumping over this fence?"

"No, how should I know it?" said Toney, sitting on the top of the post, and immediately beginning to stroke the hunter's nose. "I'm just a stranger here, giving myself a little shake up in this dull park."

"Dull park! A stranger?" ("A very extraordinary specimen" he muttered under his breath.)

"I imagine you are a stranger too or you would have heard about Lady Dove's kindness."

"Well, I am and I'm not a stranger. This is my property, and my name is Lewis Waycott."

"Not half a bad name," said Toney, beginning to pant less audibly; "but it wasn't polite of you to stop me. I thought I had found a way out of this hole."

"Ho! Why Sir Evas Dove's park is the largest in the county," and the young man laughed. "Mine is not half the size, but I'm really sorry I stopped such an amazon. You had it saddle, I see!" and Lewis Waycott fairly laughed.

"Toney, was however, not going to be laughed at.

"I suppose a horse wasn't born with a saddle on as you English people seem to believe. Still, I didn't know this was anybody's property. I'm sorry I went on." Her face was again all smiles, and Lewis Waycott thought he had never seen any one so original before. He longed to ask her name.

"Please don't mention it. If this

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ALL DRUGGISTS 11-42

property is not big enough for you, pray come into mine, only the Waycotts and the Doves are not bosom friends."

"Family feud?"

"Well, not exactly; but my father and Lady Dove had words, and Toney laughed aloud.

"I've had words with her too; but I only came yesterday, and that she thinks I'm not much of a young lady."

"Not an ordinary young lady, perhaps," suggested Mr. Waycott, hiding a smile.

"Have you got any poor relations, Mr. Waycott?" Toney's abrupt changes of conversation were often rather puzzling.

Lewis Waycott tried to think if he had or had not.

"Well, I don't know, I'm sure. Most people have. My Aunt Della, who is going to live with me, is not rich."

"That doesn't seem quite the same thing. Well, you see, Mr. Waycott I'm a poor relation, and I've been trying hard to think what I could do to earn a living. But in this dull park they don't want anything that I can do."

Toney spoke quite earnestly. "I should fancy Sir Evas has enough money for many relations," he said.

"Pups said that, and somehow I ought to have had some too. I for get why we didn't; but Pups thought I had better come here till I was old."

However, Aunt Dove thinks an education is not quite up to the mark."

"It is beyond it as to riding."

"Yes, and if Aunt Dove wanted to learn to ride, I could earn my board and keep, couldn't I, by teaching her?"

"I think you could! Forgive me laughing! I was thinking Lady Dove would not trust herself on that colt."

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"Yes. Yes, but Uncle Dove I rather jolly, only—What an odd name for a horse! What do you call him?"

"Sultan."

"That isn't very original. Our best was called Ketchup. He'd catch up any horse—except a trained hunter or course. Oh, if he were here!"

Well, good-bye. I'll try and not trespass again. I can't think how I shall ever keep myself fenced in at all here. Aunt Dove's made a time-table for me."

"Oh, dear, has she? She is a brave lady."

"She should not, should she? How ever shall I remember it? But Mr. Hales is to finish my education."

"Poor Hales! I beg your pardon, but I think you had better not finish it might only spoil the beginning."

"Pups was a little sorry about the is more she could tame, for the time being, any animal who came within reach of her magnetic influence. She crept up to the young horse Indian fashion, then she managed to touch it, then to stroke it. She rubbed her bright curly hair against his beautiful neck, and in a quarter-of-an-hour the conquest was completed."

"Now, Beauty, you'll give me a good canter; it will be a bottle of tonic, and Aunt Dove will be forgotten. It will shine, but he saw it wouldn't do. I

fell asleep so often over it, and he thought any further trial would bring on catalepsy."

Before Lewis Waycott could answer, Toney had jumped off the post and was running across the park with the swift easy motion of a trained runner, which very few girls acquire. After watching her for a little while Lewis laughed again.

"Well! Lady Dove must have found her match. A poor relation, indeed! What a good joke!"

CHAPTER VI.
TEA AT HOME.

Lady Dove was always "at home" to her friends on Friday at tea time. Some of the boldest called it a "Friday penance," for she was, except on special occasions, by no means a pleasant hostess, being able to say very disagreeable things; at the same time easily taking offence if the neighbourhood neglected her. Sir Evas, on the contrary, was a general favorite, and for his sake and also for many social and political reasons, a good many guests drove over on Friday afternoon to drink tea with Lady Dove at Aldersfield House. If there was one thing more than another which poor Miss Crump disliked, it was this same Friday reception. The poor companion was in this assembly neither fish, flesh, nor fowl, to use an expressive simile. Few people said more than "thank you" to her if she handed them some tea; and as she was never introduced, some of them barely knew her name, and half thought she was a lady-like-looking housekeeper. Others, who knew said, "That poor, dull-looking companion," and that was the end of their meditations about her.

It so happened that this special Friday was the first of April, and so lovely a spring day as it is possible to conceive. The birds were joyous; the trees were tinged with green and red, and the spring flowers a delight to those who had eyes to see them. The visitors made up their minds that though Lady Dove's drawing-room was not the most amusing place to be found, still the drive was a lovely one. It was really a treat to drive through the park, and they might meet many of their friends there. Little did they guess that there would be to-day a novel element in the dull house.

Lady Dove did not expect the Vicarage party to come unasked, now and then they received a formal invitation, and though Mr. Hales was far too good and great a man to notice little insults, his sister did not take it so quietly. The little note had come to-day, and the young Vicar asked if his mother and his sister would accompany him.

"Ah, poor Evas!" said Mrs. Hales smiling; the smile which made her son happy. "let me come with you very often it is not as bad as one imagines."

"There is no one quite good enough or worthy to receive you, mother!"

"What nonsense you talk, Cecil. We shall have a lovely walk; besides, I am rather curious to see our mad Australian again, and it makes Silvia miserably shy to sit under Lady Dove's satire."

At Aldersfield Hall there was another person anxious to see more of the new-comer.

"Aunt Della!" exclaimed Lewis, addressing a widow lady when he came into lunch, "are you going to call at Aldersfield House to-day?"

The cousins, about whom Lady Dove had spoken, were two pretty ladylike

girls, both very musical and addicted to much violin playing. Aunt Honoria, the maiden aunt, who directed the household, and who was Lewis' right hand, heard the question.

"Pray, Della, don't spoil your visit here by going to Lady Dove's 'at home,'" said Miss Honoria Waycott. "She is a very disagreeable woman, and none of her people like her. For my part, I give her my mind whenever I see her; but it upsets me for the day."

Lewis laughed. He was a young man who enjoyed the society of women whether they were old or young. He was chivalrous by nature, and even the spilling life which had been his had not spoiled him. He had been left an orphan when a boy of fifteen through the result of a railway accident in which both parents had been killed. His Aunt Honoria had tried to bring him up as well as she could. She was a clever, original woman, and her nephew was devoted to her; but he usually managed to get his own way with her. His Aunt Della, who had lately lost her home and her money, was gentle in manner; but she, too, had a firm will of her own, and it was the signs of this will which Lady Dove disliked. She hated Lewis' father, a man of determined will and of opposite politics, and she was quite willing to pass on her dislike to the son.

It was only now that the Waycotts had at last been able to make up their minds to return to the family place. Lewis had never really forgotten that accident and its results. Bright and cheerful though he was outwardly, he was subject to sudden fits of depression when he recalled the terrible scene. He had, by mere chance, come late for the train, and had jumped into another carriage, meaning to join his parents at the first stopping place. As it was, he never saw them alive again. His aunt had done all she could to replace his parents; but the lad of fifteen had adored his bright, pretty mother, whose idol he was, and no one had ever really taken her place in his heart.

Now it was from a strong sense of duty, and also owing partly to a letter written to him by Mr. Hales, that he had made up his mind to return. The village was owned by the Waycotts and Doves, and the two squires had never been able to live at unity together. Mr. Hales represented the young man that his agent was neglecting his interests, that the poor were suffering, and that it was his duty to look into his own affairs.

"What business is it of Mr. Hales?" Aunt Honoria said sharply. "You do all you can, Lewis, and it would be very painful to live in the old place again."

"Hales says I ought."

"I don't wonder Lady Dove can't get on with such a man."

(To be continued.)

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