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**Love in a Flour Mill,
OR,
The Romance of Two
Loyal Hearts!**

CHAPTER XII.
"Right!" said Vane, with a nod.
"I want a cook. I'll take him on. We
sail on to-morrow's tide. Is the no-
tice too short?"
"Not at all," said Ronald. "I shall
be glad to be on the move. Where
are we bound for?"
To his surprise, Vane coloured,
frowned, and stared at his pipe.
"Look here, Des—Carew, do you
mind if I don't answer that question?"
he asked, with extreme gravity. "I'd
rather not tell you. Neither the cap-
tain nor the crew know; no one
knows but myself. If you insist upon
my telling you—well, I'm afraid we
shan't come to terms; but, if you
wait until we've got out in the Chan-
nel, I'll tell you not only the place
we're bound for, but why we're going
there."

"Right!" responded Ronald. "I'm
quite satisfied. Tide turns at six,
doesn't it? I and my man will be
here on the quay then."
They shook hands, and Ronald re-
turned in high spirits to the board-
ing-house. He got hold of Smithers,
took him into the square, and told
him of their good fortune. Smithers
was quietly delighted.
"I was certain something would
turn up, sir," said Smithers; "and
this seems to be just the sort of thing
to suit you."
"And you too, I hope," said Ronald.
"Anything that will suit you will
suit me, sir," returned that cheery in-
dividual. "I haven't been to sea be-
fore, as the puppy said when they
threw him into the river, but I once
lived next door to a man whose
uncle's daughter married a bo'sun, so
that I may say as I know something
of seafaring—and I've been down to
Greenwich on a penny steamer and
wasn't sick; so I dare say I shall get
on all right. Anyhow, I can smoke,
and, so far as I've seen, that's the
most important part of a sailorman's
duties. Where may we be going to,
sir?"
"I don't know," replied Ronald,
with a laugh, and expecting Smithers'
enthusiasm to vanish; but Smithers
re-echoed the laugh, and threw up his
head with the optimism characteris-
tic of him.



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"Well, sir," he said, "there's worse
places than that, as the boy said when
he found himself in the jam cupboard.
Six o'clock? Right you are, sir. I'd
better go and tell Mrs. Podford, and
pack up."
He went off briskly, humming "A
Life on the Ocean Wave," and walk-
ing with the suggestion of a sailor's
lurch in his gait.

CHAPTER XIII.
The books Evelyn had brought her
opened a new world to Cara. She
devoured them eagerly. A volume
stood beside the hopper, and she read
as she worked; read by the light of
the lantern late into the night in her
little room; read in the morning as
early as the light would permit her.
Hitherto the monotonous routine of
her daily work had, if not contented
her, sufficed her; but these books re-
vealed to her the fact of a wider life,
of keener pleasures than those of a
walk across the moor, an unconscious
study of Nature in all her moods.
And, strange as it may seem, she un-
derstood and appreciated all that she
read; for she was endowed with a
keen intelligence, a natural acute-
ness, a receptive mind, and an imagi-
nation which was her Southern birth-
right.

From the moment she turned the
pages of the first volume, she seem-
ed to have stepped into fairyland; for
the characters in the book were so
novel to her, the scenes depicted so
far outside her experience, that they
were surrounded by the glamour of
romance. She wondered what it
would feel like to meet such people
as she read of, to see the things the
books described; she grew wistful,
dreamy; and very often she stood
on the brow of the hill and looked
down at the village below with a new
interest, a vague longing to see more
of the world of which she had read.

The flowers Evelyn had given her
stood in the little jug on the rough
box which formed Cara's dressing-
table; and as her eyes wandered to
them or she bent over them lovingly,
she wondered how soon it would be
before Evelyn Desborough came
again. She had not long to wait; for
three days after her first visit Evely-
n drove up in the jingle. Cara
heard her and ran quickly to the door,
but paused before she reached it, and
opened it and went out slowly; but
there was a dash of colour in her
face and her eyes were bright.

"Here I am again!" said Evelyn,
with her irresistible smile, as she held
out her hand, which Cara took, after
wiping hers on her apron. "I have
brought you some more books; though
I suppose you haven't read the oth-
ers?"

"Yes; every one," said Cara.
"Really!" exclaimed Evelyn, with a
laugh. "How quickly you have got
through them! I hope you liked
them?"
"They were beautiful," said Cara.
"I will get them and give them back
to you." She brought them, carrying
them carefully. "I have kept them
clean; but there may be a little flour
on them."
"That will not matter," said Evely-
n. "Here are the others. I have
brought you one or two volumes of
poetry, for I thought you would like
them. All Italians like poetry; and
you are Italian, are you not? You do
not speak with so strong an accent as
your father. I suppose that is be-
cause you were brought up here?"
"I suppose so," said Cara indiffer-
ently, as if the matter were of no con-
sequence.

"Isn't it a lovely afternoon?" said
Evelyn. "I want you to go for a drive
with me." Cara looked before her
doubtfully, and then at her rough, be-
floured attire. "There is no wind, the
mill is not working, so that you are
free," urged Evelyn. "It will be beau-
tiful driving across the moor, and I
will not keep you longer than you

like. Do come, Cara!"
Even if she had not been longing
to go, Evelyn's tone would have been
irresistible; and, murmuring, "I will
not be many minutes," Cara ran up to
her room, her face still flushed, her
heart beating fast at the prospect of
so novel a pleasure. She was indeed
only a few minutes; and when, in her
flair serge coat and skirt, she ap-
peared in the doorway, she looked so
pretty, so graceful, that Evelyn felt a
feminine thrill of admiration.

"Oh, I forgot to give you these flow-
ers," she said, as Cara stepped into
the jingle.
"I'd like to have them with me,"
said Cara, taking the flowers eagerly,
and raising them to her face. "Those
you gave me the other day are not
dead yet." She paused a moment.
"Whenever I look at them I think of
you."

Evelyn flushed with pleasure.
"You dear girl!" she said. "How
beautifully you said that. Now,
that's Italian! An English girl would
have been too gauche—I mean shy
and reserved—to have said anything
half so pretty."

Cara lifted her wonderful eyes, and
looked at Evelyn thoughtfully.
"You are English," she said; "you
are not shy."
Evelyn laughed.
"Oh, but I am sometimes. But I
don't feel as if I could be with you;
for we seem to understand each oth-
er. We both love books and flowers;
and I dare say there are other things
we have in common."

Cara's dark brows drew together;
she shook her head, and glanced at
Evelyn, in her face, her hat, her
clothes, the perfectly gauntleted
hand.

"Do you mean that we are alike?"
she asked gravely. "That is not
true; we are very different. You are
a lady, and wear beautiful clothes. I
suppose you are very rich. I am the
girl at the mill, and poor; there is a
great difference between us. I won-
der you came to see me and brought
me books and flowers. I suppose it is
just because you are kind."

Evelyn knew that an evasive an-
swer would be worse than unsatisfac-
tory. She was silent for a moment;
then she said:

"Of course, I know what you mean,
Cara. Yes; we are differently plac-
ed in life; and I have more of the
good things of this world than you
have; but, after all, there is not so
much difference as you think. We
are both women—girls, rather—and,
just beneath the surface, I imagine
all girls are very much alike; and
I'm afraid that my kindness, as you
think it, was not disinterested. To be
quite candid—and it is very difficult
to be anything else with you, Cara,"
she put in, with a laugh—"I felt
drawn towards you the first time I
saw you. It was not only because
of the plucky way in which you stop-
ped the horses, but because—upon my
word, I can't explain the feeling!—
let us say that I took a fancy to you.
I do not know many girls of my own
age; we have not many friends, vis-
itors to the Hall, and I suppose every
girl hankers after the friendship of
other girls. But don't let us worry
about it. We are friends, are we
not? You will share my books with
me, and we will go for walks and
drives together; and you must let me
talk to you as if we had known each
other for a very long time."

Evelyn had not intended to say all
this; indeed, even as she said it, she
was surprised at the warmth of her
expressions; but there was something
about this strange girl, whose beauty
was instinct with such dignity and
self-respect, that carried Evelyn be-
yond herself; so much so that she

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was not repelled by the silence with which Cara met Evelyn's overtures of friendship. They drove across the moor and descended the hill to the road. Cara looked about her with interest.

"I have not been here before," she said.
Evelyn gazed at her with astonish-
ment.
"What a little hermit you are!" she said. "Do you not go down to the village?"
Cara shook her head.
"No," she replied. "I do not often go away from the moor; my father does not wish me to, and I do not mind. I have seen the people of the village, and I do not care for them."
"No," said Evelyn. "Some of them are quite nice people. But," she added, looking thoughtfully at the girl's almost statuesque face, "I think I understand—I mean, why you do not care for them. They are so very English, our Devonshire people; and you are somehow different. Do you speak Italian, Cara?"
"Oh, yes," replied Cara, with slight surprise. "I speak it with my father sometimes, though he does not like me to do it often; he likes me to be as English as possible."

"Do you remember Italy, the place you come from?" asked Evelyn.
"Just a little," Cara answered. "But only a very little. I do not know the name of the place; I have never thought of asking. It seems as if I had lived here all my life."
"Do you not remember your mother?" asked Evelyn, after a pause, and in a lower voice.
"No," said Cara; "she died when I was quite a little baby."
Evelyn put out her hand and laid it softly on Cara's.

"I too have no mother, Cara," she said.
Almost unthinkingly Evelyn had driven in the direction of the Hall, and presently they came within sight of it.
Cara gazed at the great house, and she said gravely:
"What a beautiful place!"
(To be Continued.)

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