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The Sound of Wedding Bells

Won After Great Perseverance!

CHAPTER XI.

"Changed! Am I changed?" exclaims Dulcie, straightening her back and smiling with an air of surprise and pleased satisfaction. "You notice it, do you?"

"Yes," says Edie. "You are quite different from what you were when you first came. You are more like the rest—Maud, and the rest of them. You said you hated fancy work."

"So I do! So I did, I mean," says Dulcie, correcting herself, quickly. "I did, but you see the example of my betters—"

"That's nonsense," cuts in Edie, shrewdly. "It isn't because of that. What is it?"

Dulcie smiles at her.

"Oh, but it isn't nonsense," she says, her eyes lighting up with a spark of the old mischief-loving spirit. "I am like the savage you read about in Maud's missionary tracts. I am being civilized."

"I wish you had remained as you were," grumbled Edie, ruefully.

"So do I!" assents Dulcie, with alacrity; then she bites her lip. "I mean that, of course, I don't."

"Do you mean to say that you like working impossible flowers in impossible colors on oatmeal cloth, and moping about mamma with her interminable county history, and trudging round with Maud and the basket of tracts?" asks Edie, open-eyed and incredulous.

Dulcie smiles, showing her white, even teeth.

"Those who don't want to hear—ahem!—perversions of the truth, shouldn't ask questions, Edie," with a laugh that belies her serious tone.

"Then, if you don't like all that kind of thing," says Edie, persistently, "and I know you don't, why do you do them? And," with an air of conviction, "you don't do them very well. Look what a mess you have made of that antimacassar; it's all wrong, and I've seen you hiding a yawn behind your hand, while you have been listening to mamma, big enough to swallow her; and Maud says you don't really take any interest in the poor." Dulcie opens her eyes with dismay.

"Oh! Indeed," she exclaims. "And who told you that? Maud, did she? or did you make it up? You are a very clever little girl."

"I'm almost as old as you are," retorts Edie, with a laugh.

Dulcie pitches the antimacassar to the further end of the sofa, and leans back, with her arms behind her head.

"Look here, Edie," she says, staidly. "I'll tell you a secret—or you know it already. I don't care for crewel work; your mamma's long-winded stories of the local aristocracy bore me to death; and I consider 'the poor' a set of imposters, who whine a 'God bless you' over Maud's packets of tea and flannel petticoats, and light their pipes with her tracts."

"I knew it! I knew it!" exclaims Edie, with delight.

"But," continues Dulcie, solemnly, "a sit is impossible 'to be good' without taking round the basket, breaking one's back at crewel work, and listening to county histories, and as I have promised to be good, I mean to do and suffer the same to the end."

"Promised!" says Edie. "Whom did you promise?"

Dulcie looks at her from under the sweeping lashes—which a certain person declares are the longest and blackest in the world—and says demurely.

"Edie, I promised an aged grandmother on her death-bed that I'd reform and be a good girl when I reached the age of twenty-one, and—"

Edie laughs with sheer enjoyment.

"That's more like your own true self, Dulcie, I don't believe a word of your old grandmother. You took that out of a tract. I believe you are making fun of us all, and—"

"Hush!" says Dulcie, warningly. "Here is Lady Falconer. Where is that wretched—I mean beautiful—antimacassar?" and she seizes that useless piece of fancy work and bends over it with simulated absorption.

It is five o'clock, the afternoon tea hour, and punctual to the minute, Lady Falconer enters for the cup of the beverage which certainly does not cheer her, though it does not inebriate.

She glances at Dulcie suspiciously. She is always watching her, as if she expected her to break out into the can-can, or some similar extravagance, and chides Edie.

"What are you doing, Edie, my child? Why are you not practicing? I am sure Miss Dorrmore does not want her attention distracted when she is at work."

Edie rises from her knees with a little, smothered sigh, and wanders obediently to the piano, and Lady Falconer stands over Dulcie and looks down disdainfully at the antimacassar.

"Isn't that a little wrong?" she says, critically.

Dulcie looks up and eyes the abhorred piece of monstrosity with affected interest.

"I am afraid it is," she says. "I must ask Maud."

"Any one can see that it is wrong," says Lady Falconer, coldly. "The sunflower is the wrong shade."

"Is it?" says Dulcie, despairingly. "I've picked it out three times. Perhaps there might have been one sunflower in the world like it, then it would be all right, wouldn't it? and after all, it doesn't matter, does it?"

"Doesn't matter?" echoes Lady Falconer, with a stony stare.

"I mean," says Dulcie, hastily, "that as it's for an antimacassar, people will sit with their backs to it, and won't notice; and, if it's very bad, why, it can be turned face downward."

Lady Falconer eyes her—if peering under thick eyelids with unconcealed irritation and contempt can be called "eying"—for a minute, then goes to the chair, and Dulcie bends over the sunflower disheartened and more disgusted than ever. Then in comes Maud, prim and self-constrained, and takes her place at the table with the air of one who was about to concoct a subtle poison rather than harmless tea, and the ceremony commences.

Dulcie hates five o'clock tea; she is strong, healthy, and possessed of an appetite which many a crutch and tooth-pick young man would give his crutch and tooth-pick for—and they seem to be the most valuable possessions of the modern young man—and a five o'clock tea utterly destroys the appetite; she regards it with suspicion and distrust, notwithstanding which, however, in her resolve to do good and do as "good" people do, she takes the cup which the sedate footman brings her, and sips it reluctantly. It is a relief when Aunt Fernor appears; she likes the five o'clock tea, but would infinitely prefer it in her own room, to which she flies

whenever she can get a chance. In her secret soul the poor lady is overwhelmed by the state and grandeur and stiffness of Holme Castle, and is sighing for the modest little room in Caroline Street, Bloomsbury. Lady Falconer, with her thick eyelids and haughty stare, her black satin dress, and aristocratic manners, awes and terrifies her, and but for Dulcie, she would fly to Caroline Street and be happy in her own way, as of yore. She comes in now, with her deprecating little smile, and sits on the edge of her chair, bolt upright, as she had been taught to do years and years gone by, and murmurs little "Yeses" and "Noes" to Lady Falconer's uninteresting remarks, while Dulcie watches her pityingly. Hugh seldom puts in an appearance at five o'clock; he knows the ordeal of the tea-pot too well to face it without due cause, and the ladies sit up and sip their gentle stimulant in stately quietude for some minutes, then Lady Falconer says:

"At what time do you expect them, Maud?"

Dulcie pricks up her ears.

"About dinner-time, mamma, a little before, I hope; I have put dinner off an hour." Maud is the nominal housekeeper at the Castle. "I hope Lucy will not catch cold, the evening air is very chilly."

Dulcie looks up with a suppressed interest.

"Is Miss Fairfax coming?" she asks.

Lady Falconer nibbles her piece of bread and butter before replying.

"We hope so," she says, stiffly, and with a sardonic smile. "We hope to see her and Sir Archibald Hope this evening."

"Oh," says Dulcie, and a faint, a very faint color tinges her cheek, "so Sir Archie is coming, is he?"

"Sir Archibald Hope," says Maud, drawing out the full title as a rebuke to Dulcie for shortening it. "wrote to say that he would be here this evening. He is an old friend of ours."

"Yes," says Dulcie, with an inward smile as she remembers how earnestly the said Sir Archie begged her to procure him an invitation. "I have met him, you know," she says.

"So you said," responds Maud, coldly. "I will remember him, no doubt!"

"Remember him!" exclaims Dulcie, with a stare, then she smiles dryly. "I think I shall if I make an effort—I mean—hastily—that of course I shall."

"Have you got your list for to-morrow, Maud?" asks Lady Falconer, after a solemn pause.

"Yes, mamma, nearly everybody has accepted."

Dulcie looks up again, and Maud, meeting the questioning glance, feels constrained to explain.

"We have asked a few to dine with us," she says; "to meet Sir Archie and Miss Fairfax," she adds, as if anxious to make Dulcie understand that they are not asked on her account.

"That will be very nice," says Dulcie. "Sir Archie likes plenty of amusement." There is a hackneyed stare and a dry cough from Maud at the presumption of this assertion, but Dulcie does not notice it. "If there is anything I can do," she says, cheerfully, "anything in the way of arranging flowers—I'm considered rather good at that—or anything of that sort."

"Thanks, never mind," says Maud, icily. "The servants generally do that sort of thing."

"Oh, do they?" says Dulcie, not at all overawed. "I should scarcely think they had taste enough. Sir Archie says it is a gift. I used to slip down at the hotel in Rome a few minutes before the table d'hôte, and arrange the flowers in the epergnes; the servants simply threw them in—'chucked!' Sir Archie used to say, and it was a very good word."

(To be Continued.)

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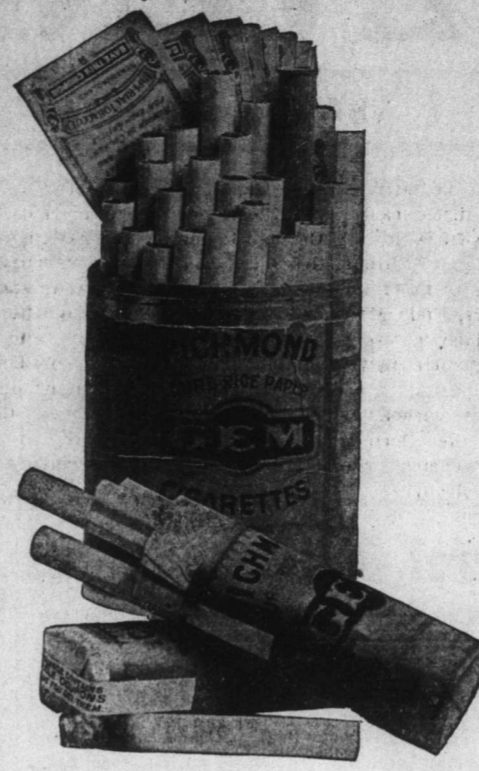
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War News.

Messages Received Previous to 9 A.

BRITISH OFFICIAL.

LONDON Oct. 5. (Official.) No important infantry fighting occurred on the battle front to-day. Our troops have consolidated their positions. There is nothing to report from the remainder of the front. The number of prisoners taken since yesterday morning amount to 4,446, including 1,140 officers.

WAR SUMMARY.

British Front in France and Belgium, Oct. 5. (By Associated Press.) The sun this morning was shining through the crisp October air on an unwavering line of victorious British troops along the new defence, which they reached in yesterday's drive. The night had brought virtually no change in the situation and the British were rapidly consolidating the positions that were the fruit of one of the most important conquests of the war. The night was comparatively calm so far as the infantry was concerned. The enemy, however, concentrated an intense artillery fire on the entire battlefield and during yesterday afternoon and evening massed their shattered troops at various places for counter attacks. These were attempts born of desperation and in almost every case the rushing waves of German infantry were caught in heavy artillery fire before they reached their objectives. German artillery fire was particularly heavy up to midnight along the line just north of the Menin Road in vicinity of Polderhoek. In the afternoon and evening the enemy launched no less than five counter-

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