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# Old Hagar's Secret

BY MRS. M. J. HOLMES

Author of "For a Woman's Sake," "Love's Triumph," "Purified by Suffering," "A Grass Widow," "Woman Against Woman," Etc.

"But I shall like her, I know," said Theo. "She has a beautiful name—Jennie Douglas—much prettier than Rose Warner, about whom Maggie talks to me so much."  
A gathering frown on her grandmother's face warned Theo that she had touched upon a forbidden subject, and as Mr. Douglas manifested no desire to continue the conversation, it ceased for a time. Theo wished she "could see Jenny Douglas," and George wondering what she would say when she did see her! For a few days longer he lingered, and ere his return it was arranged that early in July Theo should be his bride. On the morning of his departure, as he stood upon the steps alone with Madam Conway, she said: "I think I can rely upon you, Mr. Douglas, to carry either letter, note or message from Maggie to that young Warner. I've forbidden him my house, and I mean what I say."

"I assure you, madam, she has not asked me to carry either," answered George, who, though he knew perfectly well of the secret correspondence, had kept it to himself. "You mistake," Warner, I think," he continued, after a moment. "I have known him long, and esteem him highly."  
"Tastes differ," returned Madam Conway, coldly. "No man of good breeding would presume to cut up my grandfather's coat, or drink up my best wine."  
"He intended no disrespect, I am sure," answered George. "He only wanted a little fun with the stars and stripes."  
"It was fun for which he will pay most dearly, though," answered Madam Conway, as she bade Mr. Douglas good-by; then, walking back to the parlor, she continued, speaking to herself: "Stars and stripes! I'll teach him to cut up my blue bodice for fun! I wouldn't give him Margaret if his life depended upon it," and sitting down, she wrote to Arthur Carrollton, asking if he really intended visiting America, and when.

## CHAPTER XIII.

During the remainder of the spring, matters at the old stone house proceeded about as usual, Maggie writing regularly to Henry, who as regularly answered, while old Hagar managed so adroitly that no one suspected the secret correspondence, and Madam Conway began to hope her granddaughter had forgotten the foolish fancy. Arthur Carrollton had replied that his visit to America, though sure to take place, was postponed indefinitely, and so the good lady had nothing in particular with which to busy herself, save the preparations for Theo's wedding, which was to take place near the first of July.

Though setting a high value upon money, Madam Conway was not penurious, and the bridal trousseau far exceeded anything which Theo had expected. As the young couple were not to keep house for a time, a most elegant suite of rooms had been selected in a fashionable hotel, and, determining that Theo should not, in point of dress, be rivalled by any of her fellow-boarders, Madam Conway spared neither time nor money in making the outfit perfect. So, for weeks the old stone house presented a scene of great confusion. Chairs, tables, lounges and piano were piled with furs, on which Anna Jeffrey worked industriously, assisted some-

times by her aunt, whom Madam Conway pronounced altogether too superannuated for a governess, and who, though really an excellent scholar, was herself far better pleased with music and satin bows than with French idioms and Latin verbs. Perfectly delighted, Maggie joined in the general excitement, wondering occasionally when and where her own bridal would be. Once she ventured to ask if Henry Warner and his sister might be invited to Theo's wedding, but Madam Conway answered so decidedly in the negative that she gave it up, consoling herself with thinking that she would some time visit her sister and see Henry, in spite of her grandmother.

The marriage was very quiet, for Madam Conway had no acquaintance, and the family alone witnessed the ceremony. At first Madam Conway had hoped that Mr. and Mrs. Douglas, senior, together with their daughter Jenny, would be present, and she had accordingly requested George to invite them, feeling greatly they could so much to see them, she said to Mag, "And know whether they are worthy to be related to the Conways. But of course they are as much so as any American family. George has every appearance of refinement and high breeding."

"But his family, for all that, may be as ignorant as Farmer Canfield's," answered Mag, to which her grandmother replied: "You needn't tell me that, for I'm not to be deceived in such matters. I can tell a glance if a person is low born, no matter what their education or advantages may have been. Who's that?" she added quickly, and, turning around, she saw old Hagar, her eyes lighted up, her lips moving with an incoherent sound, not easily understood.

Hagar had come up to the wedding and had reached the door of Madam Conway's room just in time to hear the last remark, which roused her at once.

"Why don't she discover my secret, then," she muttered, "if she has so much discernment? Why don't she see the Hagar blood in her? For it's there, plain as day," and she glanced proudly at Mag, who, in her simple robe of white, was far more beautiful than the bride.

And still Theo, in her handsome traveling dress, very fair to look upon, and George Douglas felt proud that she was his, resolving, as he kissed away the tears she shed at parting, that the vow he had just made should never be broken. A few weeks of pleasant travel westward, and then the newly-wedded pair came back to what, for a time, was to be their home.

George Douglas was highly respected in Worcester, both as a man of honor and a man of wealth; consequently every possible attention was paid to Theo, who was petted and admired until she began to wonder why neither Mag, nor yet her all-discerning grandmother, had discovered how charming and faultless she was!

Among George's acquaintances was a Mrs. Morton, a dashing, fashionable woman, who determined to honor the bride with a party, to which all the elite of Worcester were invited, together with many of the Bostonians. Madam Conway and Mag were, of course, upon the list, and as timely notice was given them by Theo, Madam Conway went twice to Springfield in quest of a suitable dress for Mag. "She wanted something becoming," she said, and a delicate rose-colored satin, with a handsome overskirt of lace, was at last decided upon.

"She must have some pearls for her hair," thought Madam Conway, and when next Maggie, who, girl-like, tried the effect of her first party dress at least a dozen times, stood before the glass to see "if it were exactly the right length," she was presented with the pearls, which Anna Jeffrey, with a feeling of envy at her heart, arranged in the shining braids of her hair.

"Oh, isn't it perfectly splendid!" cried Mag, herself half inclined to compliment the beautiful image reflected in the mirror.

"You ought to see Arthur Carrollton's sister when she is dressed, if you think you look handsome," answered Anna, adding that "diamonds" much more fashionable than pearls.

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