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CHAPTER V.
A WOMAN'S WILL.

The Warren, as Miss Rebecca Goodman's estate was called, was the first on the list.

The squire had not seen Rebecca since Hugh's departure. He had felt too sore as yet to look upon the woman who had unintentionally caused the separation; but he was now glad of the excuse for calling on her.

Miss Rebecca Goodman, who was, with all the rest of the people of the place, rather afraid of the squire, received them rather uneasily. She was a pale, slight little woman, with timid, frightened eyes and a manner at once conciliating and gentle—a good little being, but not the woman to win the heart of such a man as Hugh.

"So this is Miss Grace," she said, stooping to kiss that young lady, who took the caress rather frigidly and stared about her with her dark eyes in a curious manner.

"Yes, Rebecca," said the squire, with something like a smothered sigh, "this is my niece." Then turning to Grace, who was now scrutinizing the pale face before her with unblinking minuteness: "This lady is a great friend of mine. You must love her."

"Perhaps she won't love me," said Grace, rather pertinently.

"Oh, yes, I will, my dear!" said Miss Rebecca, very much startled, and taking her hand. "We shall be very great friends, squire, I have no doubt."

"Hem!" said the squire, in his short way, feeling rather doubtful for his part of any one being able to stand Grace except himself.

"How is the gout?" asked Rebecca.

"Pretty well, I thank you," said the squire—his usual answer. "I hope your cold is better?"

"Thank you, yes," replied Miss Rebecca—her usual answer, also.

"Well," said the squire, after a little more small talk of a very broken sort, for both were thinking of the forbidden topic, "we must be going, Compe, Grace."

But Grace had taken up her position at the table and, without lifting

her eyes from a large book of illustrated travels, refused to go.

"I don't want to go, Uncle Harry," she said, quietly. "I'd rather stay here."

The squire sighed. He didn't want to fight the usual battle before Rebecca.

"But you don't know whether the lady will have you," he said.

Grace looked up into the timid face of Rebecca and answered, confidently:

"Oh, yes, she will, Uncle Harry! Won't you?"

"Yes, my dear," said Miss Rebecca. "Let her stay the day with me, squire."

"But I wanted to take her to the Brantons, and her ladyship's."

"I won't go," said Grace, in parenthesis.

"Take her to-morrow," said Rebecca; and the squire, very much put out, trudged away without her.

When he had gone Miss Rebecca walked up to Grace and, putting her arm in a feeble, timid sort of way that the young girl quite appreciated, said:

"Well, my dear, do you like pictures?"

"Some of 'em," said Grace. "These are rare fine ones."

Miss Rebecca was shocked.

"You—you shouldn't say that," she said.

"What?" asked Grace, looking up with a frown of astonishment.

Miss Rebecca, who had not seen her face to so much advantage before, stopped in her intended reproof and looked away with a sigh. The dark frown was too much like Hugh's for the poor thing's equanimity.

"What's the matter?" said Grace, upon whom nothing, not the most fleeting expression, was lost. "What did you sigh for? Did I say anything wicked? Because I always am—so Mr. Dewlop says."

"Who is Mr. Dewlop?" asked Rebecca, avoiding her question.

"He's the tutor. He's gone now. I'm glad of it. I hated him."

"Hush!" said Rebecca. "You mustn't

say that. It's very wicked to hate any one."

"But I can't help it," said Grace, nodding her head decidedly. "It ain't wicked if you can't help it. I hate everybody a'most."

"Oh, that's very wicked!" said Rebecca, feeling a sort of womanly pity for the poor, untalented child. "Suppose every one hated you; how miserable you would be!"

"So they do!" said Grace. "Mr. Dewlop hated me—I'm sure he did—the folks down where we lived hated me, and they called me tomboy. Mrs. Lucas—well, she'll hate me in time. Oh, everybody hates me!"

"What, the squire?" asked Rebecca, gently. "Think, Grace; your uncle does not hate you, and I don't hate you."

"Don't you?" said Grace. "Well, I like you for that."

"Oh, you don't hate me?" said Rebecca, smiling, but so sadly and mournfully that Grace, turning from her beloved picture-book, kissed her, and then, with a frown, said:

"What makes you look so sad? Has your mother died?"

"Yes," said Rebecca, flushing; "but long, long ago."

"And your father?" asked Grace, drawing a little closer.

"Yes, he is dead," said Rebecca, quietly.

"My father and mother are dead, too," said Grace, dropping her eyes thoughtfully and drawing nearer to Rebecca. "Haven't you any brothers and sisters?"

"No," said Rebecca.

"Are you all alone in this big house?" asked Grace, opening her eyes.

"Yes," said Rebecca, who had never felt her loneliness so much as at this moment.

"Ah," said Grace, "you must be dull at times; but you've got some nice picture-books!" and, evidently thinking that they went far to compensate, turned to the book again.

Rebecca rose and going to a large cabinet took from it a pile of books.

"Here," said she, "are some more. You may have them all if you like."

Grace pounced upon them eagerly, but turned away after a slight examination with an air of contempt.

"They're all rubbish," she said; "there ain't a travel book among 'em. I like travels and adventures, fights and hunting. Oh," she continued, "I'd give anything to see all the fine countries in this book"—striking the book with her little, clinched fist and lifting her head eagerly—"I'd give the world to see a lion and a tiger and an elephant! Wouldn't you? But I never shall—before Rebecca could reply—"I never shall. Only boys and men go to them out-of-the-way places. No girls do. I hate girls! I'd like to be a boy. Oh, I'd like to be a boy!"

Miss Rebecca looked more shocked than ever.

"My dear—my dear!" she exclaimed.

"But I should! I should," repeated Grace, stamping her feet and raising her flashing eyes undauntedly. "I'd give everything to be a man and to do as I like. I'd leave the Dale and take ship for foreign places. I'd work my heart out to fight a lion and build a house in the forest; I'd like to live, like Robinson Crusoe, on an island all by myself, and fight the savages and—oh, I wish I was a boy! Boys can do everything. Girls can do nothing. Don't you wish you was a boy, ma'am?"

Rebecca shook her head.

"No, my dear," she said; "they have their troubles as well as women," and she thought of the poor outcast wandering she knew not where. The reply was beyond Grace, and she returned to her book, Rebecca sitting beside her and answering to the best of her ability the torrent of questions that Grace poured out upon her.

Presently the book was exhausted, and Grace looked round for further amusement.

Rebecca, responding to the book, rose and went to the piano.

"Can you play?" she asked Grace.

"No," said Grace, emphatically.

"That is a pity," said Rebecca.

"Why?" asked Grace, opening her eyes.

"Why?" repeated Rebecca, rather nonplused. "Why don't you like music, my dear?"

"I don't know," said Grace.

And it was the truth, for the unfortunate man who had attempted to teach her music had utterly neglected to arouse her love for it by playing to her.

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Grace, resting her elbows upon the piano, leaned her head upon her hands and fixed her eyes upon the lady's pale face.

Rebecca was fond of music and played well.

"Go on," said Grace, imperatively, as, after playing one of Mozart's sonatas, Rebecca paused.

Smiling at the tone of the request, she opened a collection of simple ballads and sang one—a pathetic old thing that had been a favorite of Hugh's, who could always be got to listen to it when other things failed to charm.

Rebecca, who had not a powerful or particularly good voice, sang well enough to enrapture this uncultivated specimen of humanity.

When she had finished, Grace remained silent for a moment, then burst into tears.

This unexpected turn dismayed simple-minded Rebecca.

"Oh, my dear!" she commenced, rising and drawing the child toward her; but Grace did not like to be pitted and stamped her feet.

"Go on!" she cried, drying her tears and frowning. "I'm not crying. Why don't you go on? I like it, I like it."

Rebecca, as much afraid of her passion as her tears, turned over the book and, thinking to please the singular girl, handed it to her, saying:

"There, my dear, choose a song for yourself."

Grace, though she knew not a note of music, took the volume gravely and commenced reading the titles.

Presently she stopped and uttered an exclamation, pointing to the name "Hugh Darrell" written on the top of one of the songs. It was one he had given to Rebecca, and, as an additional favor, had written his name across it.

Now, as Grace pointed to it, Rebecca turned rather pale and trembled.

"Who's that?" asked Grace. "Hugh Darrell—that must be Uncle Harry's son. It is, isn't it?"

"Yes," said Rebecca.

"Did you know him?" asked Grace.

"Yes," again replied Rebecca, striking the keys with trembling hands.

"What was he like?" asked Grace.

"How old was he? Was he good-looking, strong, and brave, as a man ought to be?"

"Yes," said poor Rebecca. "He was the handsomest man—boy—in Dale, the bravest and best in England."

"And he died," said Grace, thoughtfully. "Everybody seems to die that I like."

"But," said Rebecca, startled out of her tears, "you never saw him."

"No," said Grace, "course not; but I like him, though. How long ago did he die?"

"Oh, long, long ago!" said Rebecca; and fearful, lest any other question should break the back of her endurance, she rose hastily, and taking Grace's hand, said:

"Come, my dear, come, and let me show you the Warren."

(To be continued.)

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