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## Carmichael.

BY ANISON NORTH.

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CHAPTER II.—Continued.

To this dissertation—and it was seldom my mother spoke at such length, except when launched on a "moving" subject—Mrs. Might had listened sitting bolt upright, smelling salts in hand, in an attitude of severe censure against delinquent house-keepers in general, and Mrs. Torrance specifically.



"That's just it, Mrs. Mallory," she said when my mother had finished, with a solemn jerk of approval that sent her purple ribbons a tilt, "but he's used to it, poor man! I don't know what on earth Matilda Torrance 'ud do if she hadn't a string o' young ones to blame all the short-comin's on. For my part, I say apologisin' 's like puttin' gold 'n' diamonds in a pig's snout; it only makes the ugly thing behind it all the uglier. It was never the way o' the Greens to apologise, nor, 'n' tapping her salts-bottle, 'to need apologisin', so far's I know, 'n' if I kin manage it, it'll not be the way o' the Might's neither."

By this time, my mother, feeling that she had been, perhaps, too severe, was prepared to retrench. "After all," she said, "mebbe there's some excuse for Mrs. Torrance. It's easier fer you 'n' me to talk, Mrs. Might, that isn't blessed with so many to work fer."

But Mrs. Might tossed her head again, with a less-assenting sniff. "No excuse at all, Mrs. Mallory, no excuse at all! It all comes of famblies, such famblies! It was never the way o' the Greens to hev' famblies, but when—people—has—them," marking off each word with a tap of her forefinger, "people has a right to bring them up proper, 'n' show them how to keep things in their proper places 'n' times, not willipity-wollop every way. I'm not sayin' that big famblies isn't sometimes more valuable than small ones like yours, Mrs. Mallory," with an air of having given much consideration to the subject, "in times o' war, fer illustration, or when big transcontinental railways hes to be built, but fer all ordinary occasions, Mrs. Mallory, famblies has their disadvantages. If Matilda Torrance 'ud spend more time on cleanin' 'n' thrift, 'n' less on nursin' babies 'n' ironing frills 'n' trumperies fer them, it 'ud be tellin' her something."

So saying, Mrs. Might leaned back, in a seemingly conscious satisfaction of having settled at least one important subject.

But my little mother, who, however much she might think a great girl like me should be able to stand on her own feet, had a warm spot for wee, helpless babies, shook her head timidly, as though half afraid to disagree with Amanda Might.

"Still," she said, "the poor wee babies lookin' up into yer face, 'n' cooin', 'n' knowin' their mothers first of all! I don't think, Amanda, that Matilda Torrance 'ud be willin' to give up any o' them—disadvantages '—now."

And then Amanda Might did a strange thing. She let her smelling-salts bottle fall on the floor and roll under the stove, and she went over and looked out of the window so intently that I followed her to see what she could be looking at. But

there was no strange sight, beyond the lilac bushes, not even the doctor's buggy nor the minister's wife. Then, in a moment, she went back and sat down in her chair, leaning very much toward my mother.

"I sometimes think," she said, "I'd ha' liked to hev' jist one—one child o' my very own, to love 'n' care fer, but don't ye tell it as long as ye live, Alice Mallory!"

But dear me, how I have been rambling on! and how very far from my return home on that mild June evening! It seems so easy, in thinking of those old times, to go on describing this old friend and that, and interpreting each, sometimes by the light of later years, and a broader wisdom. To return, then—and this time I must not wander. When Jap and I burst into the kitchen that evening, my mother looked up from turning the last pancake on the hissing pan.

"Love us all!" she exclaimed, in her easy way, which made even her exclamations seem more like remarks than exclamations. "What a noise! Where on earth hev' ye been, Peg Mallory, all this time?"

"Back in the bush with Dick, mother. We went after a bird that looked all gold, 'n' I thought it was an angel. But Dick he thought it was a golden eagle, 'n' we went to see if we could find its nest o' golden eaglets. 'N' we were going to sell the golden eaglets fer a lot o' money, 'n' I was going to buy you a silk dress, maybe."

"Silk dress! Tush!" said my mother, ignoring the imaginativeness that could see angels and golden eagles in the sunlight on a bird's wing. "Don't you go to thinkin' about silk dresses. That's enough fer ne'er-do-wells like the—all fer style, spend the money, never mind how comes it."

"Like who, mother?"

"I didn't say like nobody."

"Like the Torrances?" I queried.

My mother looked at me in easy reproach. "You're gettin' too sharp fer your years, Peg," she said. "Who ever spoke o' the Torrances! Here, take up the pancakes fer your father, 'n' call Miss Tring, 'n' don't let me hear o' ye traipsin back to the bush again when ye ought to be helpin' your mother get tea."

I began taking up the smoking cakes, but did it mechanically. Mechanically, also, I "called" Miss Tring, the gentle, pale-faced teacher who lodged with us; for the reference to the bush had brought foremost in my mind again the question of the cut timber, and the wonder as to whether we, too, like the Jamiesons and the Carmichaels, were to have a raising.

No sooner, then, were we seated at the table and had well begun on the cakes and syrup, than I brought forward the important query:

"Father, are we going to build a barn this year?"

My father half raised his brows.

"Why, no, child. What put that notion into your head?"

"Oh, it was only wood you cut, then," I returned, disappointed.

"Wood! Where? I cut no wood last winter."

"Well, then, somebody did," I declared, decisively, "for I saw the stumps, all new cut, right in the edge of our bush."

My father laid down his knife and fork with a puzzled air.

"Where? What are you talkin' about?" he said, in his short, half-anxious way.

"Why, a lot of trees cut, just inside our fence, across from where Carmichaels cut theirs," I replied.

Instantly my father's face darkened with the cloud that, when it appeared at all, lay not only upon him, but upon all of us, for my father, many as were the virtues that he possessed, had not yet learned that one of holding himself in leash for the well-feeling of others.

Seeing it, I glanced quickly and half fearfully to my mother, and saw that she too was watching him with a

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