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A Millionairess;

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Countess Westerleigh

CHAPTER XXX.

"No one could be that," she said emphatically. "And now, dear, shall we look at our lessons? We shall just have time before papa wakes from his doze, and comes in trying to look as if he hadn't been asleep."

Nora took up a book from the table and read aloud, and Milly, holding her hand, listened with half-closed eyes, murmuring a correction now and again, but not very frequently, for Nora had made great strides since Milley hal helped her.

Milly had been surprised when Nora had confessed that she was only then learning to read and write; but, with the truest tact, the kind-hearted girl declared that she was glad of Nora's ignorance, as it would afford her the best of all amusement to help. So that every spare hour, when they were not riding in the big barouche drawn by a pair of fat sleepy cobs, or walking—Milly rode in her chair—in the square, the two girls spent, the one in teaching, the other learning.

"How quick you are," said Milly, "and how few mistakes you make; and when you do, somehow it seems not to be a mistake; and you way of pronouncing is better than mine. That's because your voice is so good. Papa says that the voice is the truest test of refinement, and of course he is right; you would never get a common person totalk like a lady—I mean in the same voice."

"But I am a common—quite a common—person," said Nora with a smile.

Milly laughed and shook her head on the satin cushion.

"That is not true, at any rate Nora," she said. "But never mind; go on. What a pretty story it is! I love love stories, don't you? I suppose that is because I shall never know what love—that kind of love—means. We all like to hear about the unknown and mysterious." She sighed a little, but not discontentedly, and after a pause went on in a soft half-sleepy voice: "Do you believe that men and women ever love as the people who write books say they do?"

"I don't know," replied Nora, in a low voice and with dreamy eyes.

"For instance, the heroine of the story you have been reading goes through fire and water for the sake of the man she loves. Do you think you could do that?"

Nora started slightly and bent over the book.

"Yes," she said, reluctantly; "I think so."

Milly opened her eyes and looked at her musingly.

"Yes; I think you could," she said. "You have got just the face and eyes these novel people have. Do you know, Nora dear, that while you have been reading, I have been imagining you as the heroine? I used to try and put myself in the place of the girls in the stories, but it's easier to put you there. Are you laughing at me as usual?"

"Just a little," said Nora, with a smile.

"Well, you may if you like; I don't mind. No; you shan't read any more. Help me to the piano and I will play for you to sing. That will bring papa in. He always comes in when he hears your voice.

Nora took the slight figure up in her arms and carried it to the ingeniously constructed music-chair at the piano, and Milly struck a few chords and began the accompaniment. She played exquisitely, with the most delicate and unerring sympathy, and Nora, who had at first shrunk from singing, had quickly grown accustomed to doing so.

She had not been singing very long before the drawing-room door opened and Mr. Lester came in.

He stood for a moment looking at the two girls—at Nora, rather—thoughtfully; then he crossed to the fire-place, and with his hands behind his back stared as thoughtfully at the carpet, as if he were working out a difficult problem. When the song was finished he clapped his hands gently.

"Bravo! bravo! Your voice will get stronger every day, Miss Nora," he said.

"That's because she gets stronger herself," said Milly, promptly, and with an affectionate nod to Nora. "She can lift me now as easily as you can, papa; can't you?"

"Not quite," said Nora, with a smile. "But I am stronger and better, and I should be very ungrateful if I were not," she added in a low voice.

Mr. Lester knit his brows and looked from her to Milly.

"You two seem very happy together," he said; and inconsequential as the remark seemed, there was something in his manner of making it which caused both girls to look at him expectantly.

"Of course we are," said Milly. "We are like two sisters, only more so. We have sworn an eternal friendship, haven't we, Nora? At least, I have done all the swearing, for Nora isn't one of the demonstrative sort. Happy! I'm happy, at any rate. Why, think of it, papa! You know—or, rather, you didn't know—how dull it used to be for me; and now I have always some one to keep me company; and you don't know what capital company Nora is. She isn't always as quiet as she is when you are present. I think you are just a little afraid of him, aren't you, dear?"

"A little, perhaps," said Nora, with a smile that belied her words.

Milly laughed.

"You can't think how nice it is to have some one to drive out with, to walk beside me in the square, to sit and talk and read with; and best of all—to love!"

Her sweet voice dropped, and she held out her arms to Nora.

"Carry me back, dear."

Mr. Lester strode forward and took her up in his arms.

"I meant Nora," she said, with gentle willfulness.

"I know dear," he said. "But you must put up with clumsy me sometimes. Why"—he paused as he arranged her pillow, and seating himself stroked her hair—"why, suppose anything should happen to tear Nora from you—"

Milly interrupted with a laugh:

"That would be dreadful, so dreadful that it couldn't happen; could it, Nora?"

"No," said Nora, in her direct fashion.

Mr. Lester looked at her under his bent brows.

"Don't be too sure," he said, gravely.

Nora, quick to take alarm, turned pale, and looked from one to the other, and Milly raised her head with an anxious expression in her large eyes.

"What do you mean, papa?" she demanded.

Mr. Lester laid his hand upon her arm soothingly.

"Don't get excited, dear. All sorts of things might happen to separate you."

Milly's breath came fast, and she looked appealingly at Nora.

"But—but she has promised me," she said; "she has promised never to leave me unless she married, and she says that will never be," she added, artlessly.

"I was not thinking of marriage," he said, still soothingly, "but of other contingencies."

Milly dropped back on the cushion.

"What a long word! Lawyers love long words, don't they, papa? 'Contingencies!' As if we quiet people, buried away in Elm Square, knew anything about contingencies! Don't pay any attention to him, Nora dear. Let us talk about something else. We went shopping to-day, sir, and you will have some tremendous bills to pay. There were such lovely things, and I bought ever so much! I should have bought more if it hadn't been for Nora's example and precept. You have no idea how economical she is."

Nora laughed.

"Milly forgets that I have not a rich papa," she said.

(To be Continued.)

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2 & 4 Water St. East,
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LONDON, To-day.

Sir Edward Grey in a speech at Berwick, explained what the Government is willing to concede to satisfy Ulster was a sort of Home Rule within Home Rule, giving Ulster control of her own educaton, police, and matters of that kind. It would thus seem clear that in his recent announcement of policy with regard to Home Rule in Ulster, Asquith had no intention of offering even temporary exclusion of Ulster from operation of Home Rule Bill.

MEXICO CITY, To-Day.

The Mexican Minister of the Interior was asked if the few votes cast in the Presidential election on Sunday in the city of Mexico might be taken as an indication of how much voting had been done elsewhere in the Republic, and if it looked, in view of the small number of votes cast, as though the elections would be declared null by Congress. The Minister replied that the question which will decide the legality of the elections, apart from the absence of fraud, will not be whether the majority of voters in each electors casts their vote; it being immaterial, for instance if only 10,000 people in the Capitol voted, the essential thing is that returns come in from a majority of electoral districts, and that elections held there have been fair, even though only a small proportoin of voters may have availed themselves of the privileges of voting.

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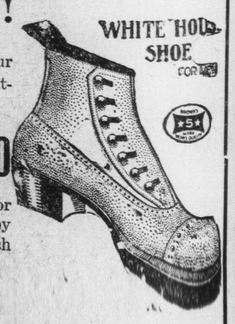

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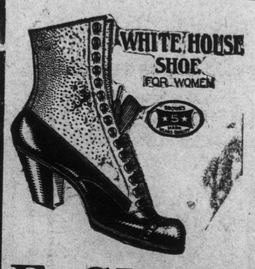

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