

# A PRECIOUS INHERITANCE.

CHAPTER VII.

The Senior Partner.

'By the way, George, this Theo will just suit you, who are fond of aristocracy. She's proud as Lucifer, thinks because she was born in England, and sprang from a high family, that there is no one in America worthy of her ladyship's notice, unless, indeed, she chances to have money. You ought to have seen how her eyes lighted up when I told her you were worth two hundred thousand dollars. She told me directly to invite you out here, and this, I assure you, was a good deal for her to do. So don't you best attire, not forgetting the diamond cross, and come for a day or two. Old Safford will attend to the store. It's what he was made for, and I like it. But as I am a Warner, so shall I do my duty, and warn you not to meddle with Maggie. She is my own exclusive property, and altogether too good for a worldly fellow like you. Theo will suite you better. She's just a aristocratic enough in her nature. I don't see how the two girls come to be so wholly unlike as they are. Why, I'd sooner take Maggie for Rose's sister than for Theo's.

'Bless me, I had almost forgotten to ask if you remember that stiff, old English woman, with the suffocated air, who came to our store some five years ago, and found so much fault with Yankee goods, she called them? If you have forgotten her you surely remember the two girls in flats, one of whom seemed so much distressed at her grandmother's remarks. She, the distressed one, was Maggie; the other was Theo, and the old lady was Madam Conway, who, luckily for me, chances at this time to be in England, buying up goods, I presume. Maggie says that this trip to Worcester, together with a camp-meeting held in the Hillsdale woods last year, is the extent of her travels, and one would think so to see her. A perfect child of nature, full of fun, beautiful as a Hebe and possessing the kindest heart in the world. If you wish to know more of her, come and see for yourself, and it is very doubtful whether even I can do it peaceful, for that old Hagar, who, by the way, is a curious specimen, gave me to understand when I lay on the rock, with her sitting by as a sort of ogress, that so long as she lived no city chap with strajped pants (do, pray, bring me a pair, George, without straps!) and sneezing mouth was going to fool with Maggie Miller.

'So you see, my mouth is at fault again. Hang it all, I can't imagine what ails it that everybody should think I'm making fun of them. Even old Safford matters about my making mouths at him when I haven't thought of him in a month!

Present my compliments to the old gentleman, and tell him one of 'the boys' thinks seriously of following his advice, which you know is 'sow our wild oats and get

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wife. 'Do pray come for I am only myself without you.'  
'Yours in the brotherhood,'  
'HENRY WARNER.'

For a time after reading the above, George Douglas sat wrapped in thought, then bursting into a laugh as he thought how much the letter was like the jewel that he had heard of. He was like the jewel that he had heard of, a fellow who wrote in his pen as easily and leaning back in his chair as long and silently, not of Theo, but of Maggie, half wished he were in Warner's place instead of being there in the dusty city. But as this could not be, he contented himself with thinking that at some time not far distant he would visit the old stone house — would see for himself this wonderful Maggie — and though he had been warned against it, would possibly win her from his friend, who, unconsciously perhaps, had often crossed his path, watching him jealously lest he should look too often and too long upon the fragile Rose, blooming so sweetly in her bird's-nest of a home among the tall trees of Leominster.

But he need not fear for her, for it is over now. She has refused me, this Rose Warner, and though it touched my pride to hear her tell me no, I cannot hate her for it. 'She had given her love to another,' and Warner is blind or crazy he cannot see it. But it is not for me to enlighten him. He may call her sister if he likes, though there is no tie of blood between them. I'd far rather it would be thus than something nearer; and slowly rising up, George Douglas retired to dream of a calm heavenly face, which but the day before had been bathed in tears as he told to Rose Warner the story of his love. Mingled, too, with that dream was another face, a laughing, sparkling, merry face, upon which no man had ever looked and escaped with a whole heart.

The morning light dispelled the dream, and when in the store old Safford inquired 'What news of the boy?' the senior partner answered gravely that he was lying among the Hillsdale hills, with a broken leg, caused by a fall from his horse.

'Always was a careless rider,' muttered old Safford, mentally deploring the increased amount of labor which would necessarily fall upon him, but which he performed without a word of complaint.

The fair May blossoms were faded and the last June roses were blooming ere George Douglas found time or inclination to accept the invitation indirectly extended to him by Theo Miller. Rose Warner's refusal had affected him more than he chose to confess, and the wound must be slightly healed ere he could find pleasure in the sight of another. Possessed of many excellent qualities, he had unfortunately fallen into the error of thinking that almost any one whom he should elect would take him for his son-in-law. And when Rose Warner, sitting by his side in the shadowy twilight, had said, 'I cannot be your wife,' the shock was sudden and hard to bear. But the first keen bitterness was over now, and remembering 'The wild girls of the woods,' as he mentally styled both Theo and Maggie, he determined at last to see them for himself.

Accordingly, on the last day of June, he started for Hillsdale, where he intended to remain until after the Fourth. To find the old house was an easy matter, for almost every one in town was familiar with its locality, and toward the close of

the afternoon he found himself upon its broad steps applying vigorous strokes to the ponderous brass knocker, and half hoping that the summons would be answered by Maggie herself. But it was not, and in the bent, white-haired woman, who came with measured footsteps, we recognize old Hagar, who spent much of her time at the house, and who came to the door in compliance with the request of the young ladies, both of whom, from an upper window, were curiously watching the stranger.

'Just the old' with one would expect to find in this out of the way place, thought Mr. Douglas, while at the same time he asked 'if this were Madam Conway's residence, and if a young man by the name of Warner were staying there?'

'Another city beau!' muttered Hagar, as she answered in the affirmative, and ushered him into the parlor. 'Another city beau; there'll be high carryings on now, if he's anything like the other one, who some mighty nigh turning the house upside down.'

'What did you say?' asked George Douglas, catching the sound of her muttering, and thinking she was addressing himself.

'I wasn't speaking to you. I was talking to a likelier person,' answered old Hagar, in an undertone, as she shuffled away in quest of Henry Warner, who by this time was able to walk with the help of a cane.

The meeting between the young men was a joyful one, for, though George Douglas was a little sore of the subject of Rose, he would not suffer a matter like that to come between him and Henry Warner, whom he had known and liked from boyhood. Henry's first inquiries were naturally of a business character, and then George Douglas spoke of the young ladies, saying he was only anxious to see Mag, for he knew, of course, he should dislike the other.

Such, however, is wayward human nature, that the fair, pale face and quiet, dignified manner of Theo Miller had greater attractions for a person of George Douglas' peculiar temperament than had the dashing, brilliant Mag. There was a resemblance, he imagined, between Theo and Rose, and this of itself was sufficient to attract him toward her.

Theo, too, was equally pleased; and when that evening, Madam Jeffries faintly interposed her fastidiously imparting authority, telling her quondam pupils, it was time they were asleep. Theo did not, as usual, heed the warning, but sat very still beneath the vine-wreathed porch, listening while George Douglas told her of the world which she had never seen. She was not proud toward him, for he possessed the charm of money, and as he looked down upon her, conversing with him so familiarly, he wondered how Henry could have called her cold and haughty — she was merely dignified, high-bred, he thought, and George Douglas liked anything which savored of aristocracy.

Meanwhile, Henry and Mag had wandered to a little summer-house where, with the bright moonlight falling upon them, they sat together, but not exactly as of old, for Maggie did not now look up into his face as she was wont to do, and if she thought his eye was resting upon her, she moved uneasily, while the rich blood deepened on her cheek. A change has

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ALL DRUGGISTS

come over Maggie Miller: it is the old story, too — old to hundreds of thousands, but new to her, the blushing maiden. Theo calls her nervous — Mrs. Jeffrey calls her sick — the servants call her mighty queer — while old Hagar, hovering ever near, and watching her with a jealous eye, knows she is in love.

Faithfully and well had Hagar studied Henry Warner to see if there were aught in him of evil, and though he was not what she would have chosen for the queenly Mag, she was satisfied if Margaret loved him and he loved Margaret. 'But did he? He had never told her so,' and in Hagar Warner's wild dark eyes there was a savagism as she thought: 'He'll rue the day that he dares trifle with Maggi Miller.'

But Henry Warner was not trifling with her. He was only waiting a favorable opportunity for telling her the story of his love, and now, as the sit together in the moonlight, with the musical flow of the millstream falling on his ear, he essays to speak — to tell how she has grown into his heart; to ask her to go with him where he goes; to make his home her home; and so be with him always; but ere the first word was uttered, Maggi asked if Mr. Douglas had brought the pictures of his sister.

'Why, yes,' he answered. 'I forgot to bring them. Here it is,' and taking it from his pocket he passed it to her.

(To be continued.)

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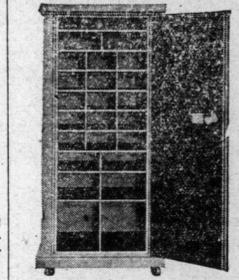
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