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THREE DAUGHTERS OF THE UNITED KINGDOM

BY MRS. INNES BROWN

CHAPTER V.—CONTINUED

Lady de Woodville gave instructions to her men servants to have the whole of the luggage conveyed to the Station Hotel...

Thankful for the assistance of Louise in a good and refreshing wash, the girls were soon seated with their friends round the dinner table.

The meal was a merry one. Beatrice, as she sat between her mother and brother, looked excited and extremely happy...

"Lord Grantham, my lady," and Beatrice rose joyfully to greet her sister.

"Great Scott!" were his first words, as he held the girl at arm's length and looked admiringly at her.

"Allow me to introduce you to Beatrice's little friends," spoke Lady de Woodville.

"Miss Mary Blake and Miss Margaret FitzAlan." Both girls rose and bowed, which greeting Lord Reginald acknowledged graciously.

He was as like his handsome mother in appearance as he well could be; both were tall and erect, with fine aristocratic features.

The conversation thus interrupted by the entrance of Lord Reginald Grantham, was soon resumed.

"Turning to the gentle girl on his right, Reginald asked, 'If she was not very delighted to leave the Convent and enter the pleasant world again?'"

"Indeed, I am so sorry to leave it, that if it were possible, I would return tomorrow."

"How pretty she is," he thought. Then he frowned, as he said rather impatiently, "I cannot understand how it is that nuns conceive so imbued their pupils with such absurd notions."

"Indeed they have not, Regie," replied his sister, with a merry shake of her head.

"Oh, I doubt not but that they are angels; yet I do hope that after you have seen a little of the world, Miss Blake, you will find much in it worthy of your admiration, if not of your affection."

Mary smiled, and her eyes looked up shyly from under the long fringed and drooping eyelids, but she made no reply.

Several times after this Reginald endeavored to draw the girl into conversation, but his attempts were useless.

appointed, he turned to his mother and inquired what her arrangements were for the night.

"I shall remain here with these young ladies. Beatrice wishes to see as much of her little friends as possible; and Miss FitzAlan's maid not having yet arrived, I feel bound to wait and see that she has a safe escort on her long journey tomorrow."

"How good of you," said Madge warmly. "Mother will be so grateful to you."

"Really Miss FitzAlan improves on acquaintance," thought the Countess. "I should not be surprised if she has a great deal in her, her face is so very expressive."

Dinner over, the Countess withdrew, and the young ladies followed her into a private sitting-room, which, compared with the bare boards at the Convent, appeared very cosy and comfortable.

Madge and Louise were seated together, talking and laughing. They were but boy and girl, and having been the constant companion of her own brother, Madge possessed an instinctive knowledge of the subjects upon which boys liked to talk.

"My father was a general in the army, and gave his life for his country, and it has always been my wish to follow in his footsteps; but whenever I mention the subject, auntie frets so, and raises a hundred and one foolish objections to my plan, that I am puzzled to know what to do."

"The army, Mr. Louis!" answered Madge, with all her soul in her eyes. "Oh no, no! you must not dream of that. Think of your auntie, think of dear Marie! To whom can they turn but you for help and comfort?"

"I will give up all thought of the army, Miss Madge, if you really think it my duty to remain near my aunt and sister."

"Indeed I do," answered the girl fervently, and in her eyes the strange light still burned. "Don't you agree with me, Madge?"

"It is one of my dearest wishes," replied his sister, "that Louis may leave us."

"Then let us say no more about it," said the boy; but he felt and knew within himself that Madge's eyes had conquered him and won the victory.

"O Madge!" interrupted Beatrice, "do let mother hear you sing one song; never mind the music, dear; sing just anything you can remember."

"Oh, please do!" chimed in Marie. "I shall close my eyes and think I am back again at dear old St. Benedict's, and who knows when we may hear you again?"

Madge looked towards Lady de Woodville, who smiled and said—"Indeed, Miss FitzAlan, if you are not too tired, it will afford me great pleasure to hear you."

Thus urged, Madge rose, accompanied by Louise, who endeavored to arrange the somewhat old-fashioned-looking piano and stool according to her taste.

"Oh, please do!" chimed in Marie. "I shall close my eyes and think I am back again at dear old St. Benedict's, and who knows when we may hear you again?"

"Indeed they have not, Regie," replied his sister, with a merry shake of her head. "Neither do they endeavor to do so to any of the girls. But," noticing Marie's confusion, "the nuns are so sweet themselves that we should be most heartless did we not love them very dearly."

"Oh, I doubt not but that they are angels; yet I do hope that after you have seen a little of the world, Miss Blake, you will find much in it worthy of your admiration, if not of your affection."

Mary smiled, and her eyes looked up shyly from under the long fringed and drooping eyelids, but she made no reply.

"I'm nigh distracted with all the jostling and row I've been through this day, and now you've the impudence to try for to stop me. I tell you I will see her, and that at once."

"The Countess looked at Madge, who recognizing the voice of her mother's faithful servant, rose, and moved swiftly to the door.

"I'm here, Mary!" she cried. "Poor soul, how tired you must be! The woman made no reply, but pushing defiantly past Lady de Woodville's servants, who, on seeing Madge, stood back and offered no further resistance, she seized the girl by both hands and dragged her into the room to the better light.

"Ay, it's you safe enough," said Mary, as she looked hard at the girl; "but Lor', miss, how you have grown! and you be the livin' picture of your own grand father. My poor lady will be sore and proud of you. I'll warrant!"

Of the old Methodist type, Mary Medcalf was a tall thin woman, perfectly straight up and down; in fact, nothing so well expressed her symmetry and proportions as the old Yorkshire saying, "Why, then be as straight up and down as a yard of pump water!"

"So am I," replied Madge fervently. "How I did love him!"

The evening wore on, and the Countess, feeling certain that the young ladies were tired, ordered Louise to show them to the room which had been prepared for them.

"No, no," Ulysses contradicted. His eyes were on Elite. "By-by, 'Tite, mind Sester, Adieu."

"Elite was gazing about her in wonder, but did not hear. She was watching toward the chapel, holding to Mary's hand, and did not once look back."

The following days passed slowly for Ulysses. He rose at five, drank strong, black coffee, milked the cow, and drank more coffee with boiled milk.

Ulysses checked intruding loneliness with thoughts of Elite—the pretty Elite—learning more lessons and prayers, safe with the good Sisters. Soon she would come home.

On Saturday afternoon he cut holes in the shoes where they pinched his feet, and plodded into Evangeville to see Elite, but the convent children were away on a picnic, Elite with them.

Ulysses sat on the porch one evening, his bare feet on the rounds of his chair, his great copper-colored hands supporting the back of his head as he leaned against the wall.

Ulysses was the soul of cleanliness. In his first leisure moments he had him whitewash the house and fence. She hung the chairs on the wall while she mopped the yellow cypress floor and strewn over it a carpet of glistening white sand.

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watched the man in plain livery attending to her wants, and feeling that the waiter had fulfilled his mistress's orders concerning her.

"Have you every thing you wish for, madam?" asked the affable jackanapes, in a mock-serious and deferential tone.

"I have," responded Mary shortly. "That's a weight off my mind," said Stimpson quizzically. "Perhaps I may go now."

"You may," said Mary, with a severe nod of her head, "and stop there till I ring for you."

Madge being present, the man made no reply, but she saw his features relax into a broad grin as he hastily left the room.

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"Ulysses Moncoaux." He swirled his hat by the stiff peak and shifted his weight from one foot to the other.

"I live five miles—work pump in rice field. I going sand at my widow seester. She live far—Opelousas. She came stay at my house, I bring Elite home. Huh, Elite?"

Elite smiled. "Yes, Dada. When Aunt Odette comes, I go home."

Elite, she speak the American nice," informed Ulysses with pride. "She go to school. I not read, me. Elite, she smart. She read Second Reader—read nice piece 'bout one gout that lay the eggs of gold, and 'bout big bean he grow high, high to the sky.' Ulysses measured as far as he could reach upward with his right hand.

"We will keep her," the Sister of Charity told Ulysses. "Take her to the chapel, Mary. It is time for prayer."

"Elite, she good," her father praised. "She say plenty prayer."

"Perhaps Elite will want to live here and not go back home," Mary suggested.

"Non, non," Ulysses contradicted. His eyes were on Elite. "By-by, 'Tite, mind Sester, Adieu."

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At first Ulysses seemed dazed, not comprehending the visitor's words. He placed his hand behind his ear to hear better. When his slow intelligence took in the meaning, he glared like a wild beast fighting for its young.

"Non, non, she ma bebes, I got nobody. I work hard. He buffeted the air as if pumping furiously. "I go bring 'Tite tomorrow. I want hear Elite read more, and sing like the mockingbirds. I get my seester, Odette. She come far—from the Opelousas. She watch Elite."

"You are taking a selfish view, Mr. Moncoaux," resumed the reduced voice. "You must not think of yourself. Think of your child's welfare. She will travel and see all the cities and wonders of the country. She will never have to work. She will learn to play the piano. She will study singing from a master."

"Non, non, Elite ma bebes," Ulysses repeated doggedly. "I am willing to pay you a large amount of money for this child. You will not have to labor so hard, and you can live in a better house."

"Mrs. Whittington learned toward Ulysses. She had played her highest card.

He shook his head and smiled. "Non. Money not buy ma bebes—mon bijou! Ma 'p'tite Elite!"

The Sister of Charity entered the argument. "The priest, the Sisters, all think this is a splendid chance."

Mrs. Whittington clasped her hands in front of Ulysses. "Can't you see the child will be happier in the life I will make for her? Besides, she wants to stay."

His face blanched to a sickly yellow. "Elite—"

"Is perfectly happy and contented," finished the mayor's wife. "Ulysses caught his breath as if he had a sudden, cutting pain.

"Maybe I shouldn't want—keep Elite. She deserves the good things. Mon Dieu!" He moistened his dry lips. "I come see Elite Sundays," he finished pitifully.

"No. I realize that I am making a hard thing, but that must be one of the stipulations. She must not see any of her relatives or old friends. She will take my name and I want her to forget that she is a Cajan."

Ulysses passed his hand stupidly across his forehead. "I mu' think. She all got. Please, mo' time, lady. Tomorrow, I send the word."

The woman rose and Mrs. Whittington took his hand. "Good by, Mr. Moncoaux. I appreciate your feelings, but your good sense must tell you that my plan for the child is best."

Ulysses opened the gate for the visitor. "Adieu," he said as he closed it. He watched the silken garments disappear in the waiting car, and saw it spin smoothly around the bend in the road.

She will have those things, Elite, if she forget she Cajan. He walked back to the porch and crumpled himself in the chair. "I must think—"

It was dusk of the next day. Ulysses walked with lagging step across the bridge and up the walk, his chest shrunken further into his thin shoulders. He stepped to the water bucket and drained the dipper at one gulp, sat down in the accustomed chair and took out his pipe.

Odette came out on the porch, drying her hands on her apron. "What word you see?" she asked.

Ulysses stirred absent-mindedly, and tried to swallow the pain in his voice.

"I say Elite can stay. The lady say Elite want stay. The Father, he thinks best. I buy the lil' pink dress and the white shoes she like for Sunday. Put them away. Elite she have the fine things now—"

That evening after supper Ulysses sat on the porch smoking his pipe. The frogs in the bayou jarred the night air with their many-toned choruses. Ulysses raised his head sharply. Someone was tugging at the loop of rope over the gate.

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