READY-MONEY MORTIBOY

A MATTER-OF-FACT STORY.

CHAPTER XV.

To London! Cry of the young and ambitious. Let those who will sit at home grub for money piece by piece, but not be Bagnetten. To London!—battle-field where glory is to be won, gold digging rather than any in California, diamond fields more fertile than any in Natal!—the place to make fortunes, to repair ruin, to hide disgrace, to revalidate dreams, to bury shame. No fable is it, invented for the delusion of youth, that of the rich man who came to London with a single sixpence in his pocket. It is a reality which happens every day. Nor does it matter whether the beginning be made with a sixpence or a hundred pounds, for the end is certain to him who has brains, and pluck, and patience.

The widow, with her two children, and with small capitals as realized from the general wreck, came to London. They had their modest one hundred pounds in paper—Mrs. Mellishy's dowry at her marriage; they had besides, two hundred pounds in cash. A small stock to start with; but Frank and Kate had youth and hope.

"We will paint pictures, Kate," said Frank, "and sell them. I would give the world to be a great painter. We will get lessons in the Royal Academy, and all the world will run to buy."

Kate smiled.

"Find me subjects, Frank, and find me strength and skill."

"You all least have the genius," said her brother.

It was true. Kate Mellishy had been taught as carefully as Market-Rasing professors could teach—though it had not been possible, in a suburban city, to give the lessons in painting which are essential to making a finished artist. And she had genius, which her brother had not. While Frank's drawings were sometimes stiff and always weak, hers were vigorous and free. If her conceptions were generally too difficult for her powers of execution, they were always artistic and genuine. Art was her passion. To be an artist for bread would bring no shame of shame with it, but rather of pride, as it ought. The only thing was to find out how to make such a living.

They took lodgings in South Kensington, near the Museum, and there, for a while, Mrs. Mellishy, with the view of being contributing to help the family, wrote secretly to a certain firm concerning the publication of a first counts sent her a temporary note; thought the money to be lent to her was for a dog! Kate made her mother promise to write no more begging letters, and said nothing to Frank about it.

This was the critical period in Kate Mellishy's life. Her mother's health began to fail, and, fearing a comparing mind, present with things of old, Frank alternately in enthusiastic praise of her mother's beauty and her own work going on all too slowly for impatient Frank. They grew cross, too, and poor Kate settled into acquiescence with their lot.

"Now dolce Rhapsodyers.

they might have ended had any one of the three known so much Latin, or found any consolation in applying it. Kate was not the first thing goes wrong, finds a lert in the Bible which the Bible does not, or, at the immediate confusion and confusion. It does not always them with any advice, it does not show them that they are punished for their sins, it does it does not promise anything for the future—but then it is a text, and the immediate heart, after recovering from the confusion and wounded, like a cold case with a glass of brandy and water. Kate was not the first these women. She had the bravery to look things in the face. Her mother was not one of these women, who, when they have looked anything in the face.

"Frank, too, is proud of his enthusiasm. In moments when his courage failed. At night, Kate would hear him walking to and fro in the room, and would know that he was haunted with the thoughts of failure, knowing that or success. He would be in the dark—battling with the temptation to ask of silent Heaven, why that only which every innocent thing, and Kate fully is tempted to ask, so that the Giver of all good it perpetually assailed with the reproach that He has given all.

"Is it not hard, Kate?"—he would not sometimes, when his mood was gone by—"Is it not hard?"—selfish in his sorrow.

"All was in my grasp. Grace loved me; we were rich; we—"

"Don't look back, Frank dear. Look forward. She loves you still. If she is worth having, she will wait."

"Wait! Look here, Kate—he tore the cover from a pistol—I had just finished. "This is the kit I'd dash which is to make us famous, is it?"

"Indeed, Frank, it is not bad. Your colouring is always rather cold." She bent over it, trying to find some good in it, but there were none. "At any rate you can copy."

"And earn about fifty pounds a year."

He was not always in this hopeless mood. Sometimes he was merry enough over little privations which had become necessary in their diminished means. It was in the time of that celebrated letter of Jerry in the *Daily Telegraph* which showed how a man can marry, bring up five children in luxury, be the proud proprietor of a *gew*, and save expense per annum to meet contingencies, all on eighty pounds a year. Frank would read out the details, applying them to their own case, till Kate would be almost tempted to laughing their old hatter almost to lead and bright as before. At twenty-four one can't be always cry, even though things do look hopelessly bad.

"I can't do anything with it, Kate, good Frank, sadly—"I can't do anything with it, good classical picture, "The Death of Antigone," which he had begun with confidence hope and pride. "I shall never be a painter. What shall I try next? The more I look at that stiff-necked Antigone I hate her the better. Shall I advertise for a post as light porter? Look at my arms—the muscles are strong. Shall I become a photographer's test? Ah! no, my wise sister, with counsel."

But Kate had none to give.

As the story, only to depict Mr. Mrs. Mellishy's health began to decline. More trouble for poor Kate. She did not believe Frank that the London confinement was pilling upon their mother. So she waited, hoping and fearing, and working quietly while the weeks crept by. Grace and Lucy Heathcote wrote to her.

Lucy's letters were all about Grace. Grace was becoming more womanly; she thought she was paler than she used to be; she was more thoughtful; she seemed more religious.

Grace wrote about things in general. She did not disguise from Kate the hard battle she always had with her mother. The girls, indeed, had never been greatly influenced by Mrs. Heathcote—inferior as she was to her daughters in point of both education and feeling.

"Tell Frank," she wrote, "that I have promised papa not to write to him. I told papa, too, that I was going to send him messages. Tell him, dear Kate, that he is to go on loving me if he can, for I shall always love him. He is not to be worried if he does not succeed at first, because I am sure, and he is not to be impatient.

"My mother and I had a scene yesterday. Poor Lucy only cried. It was about Cousin Dick. You know poor mamma's *bizzie* idea that Dick wants to marry me.

"Pray, how long are you going to encourage Dick's attentions?" she asked.

"I think I did not he is paying my attentions," I replied.

"Then she said things that made me go out of the room, and I refused to go back until papa came home. Dick, indeed!

"Dick is a real good fellow, though, and I like him extremely. He is so good-natured as a big man always is, and never is the way like little men. Poor, Kate, this is it that little men take up so much more room than big men! He says wonderful things, too; and invents stories, if you ask him for an anecdote, as if he was a Trollope. I hold up my finger, and say to Dick a little, can story. And he begins as once quite gravely, 'When I was in Texas,' and then always something new. He informed me on the other day that he invents. Mamma says that he is *trying* marriage, and that he is on principle. He can, my dear, be a bachelor, keep his light hidden, for he never goes to church, wastes one day in every week, and daily smokes figars all day if he like, and once heard him swear at Billy Billy till the poor man turned white. Dick I like Dick. Here he comes, and I am going to be shown the lame trick—yes! I'm coming.

"Oh, Kate, my dear, Cousin Dick is an Admirable Crichton. He has been trying the lame trick—yes! I'm coming. Bellows! Lucy and I looking on. The miserable spinnin was a cold; its leg is hurt. Cobs in the country don't understand the lame, and I told Dick. He swore in Spanish. It sounded very dear and pretty, but it was a bad word, a rude word, and I told him so. Dick looked which issue from the mouth of the rural Bobo. Kate, my dear, I'm very proud of my engagement. Of course, that makes no difference. Poor old Uncle Mortiboy looks greatly changed in the last few weeks. He said Aladdin, the other day, that he looked as all over. Lucy goes to see him oftener than I, because she is a better girl than you, wicked *Grace*—Lucy and I. Poor Lucy!