



Love in a Flour Mill,

OR,

The Romance of Two Loyal Hearts!

CHAPTER IX.

"I should think not," said Dexter Reece, devoutly hoping there was not, and that they would soon get away from it.

"We shall have a splendid view presently, Mr. Reece," she said. "You will see the river winding below and running out by the estuary to the sea; and the great woods on the other side. Why, what's this?" she asked, as she looked at a dark-mass which suddenly rose from the brow of the hill. "Oh, it's the old mill! I remember now. It's so long since I was on this part of the moor that I had quite forgotten it. Why, it's going!" she added, with surprise, as they drew near enough to see the great sails revolving against the cloudless sky.

"Ought it not to be going?" asked Dexter Reece.

"Well, it wasn't going when I was here last," she replied; "and I thought that it was not working—that it was unoccupied. Oh, I must go and see!"

"The horses—" muttered Reece; but she did not hear him, and put them to a quicker pace.

The carriage rolled joltingly over some broken ground, and presently they came almost abreast of the mill. The cobs had been staring at it apprehensively for some time; and now, as they approached the terrible thing, they threw up their heads, snorted, began to swerve away, and then stood stock still.

"Oh, go on, dears!" remonstrated Evelyn. "It's only a mill, and won't hurt you."

"Perhaps—or—we had better turn," suggested Dexter Reece, trying to speak carelessly.

"Oh, we mustn't do that," said Evelyn; "or they'd be troublesome whenever they came this way again. You foolish things, it's only a mill for grinding the corn you love so."

She drew the whips across their backs, but they did not respond; and she touched them more sharply, with a firm little "Go on, stupids!" They moved at last, and drew a little nearer; but they were really frightened

by the great revolving sails, which seemed to them limbs of some new and altogether horrible kind of animal; they shied violently, reared until they were almost on their haunches; then, receiving a sharp cut, came down on all fours, and, making a half-turn, tried to bolt.

Reece, white as a sheet, clung to the rail, but looked round as if he meditated leaping from the carriage. Evelyn's lips drew straight and her brows came down. She knew that if they did bolt she would not have the slightest chance of checking them down the hillside; and she remembered the wide ditch and high fence which divided the moor from the road. But her pluck did not desert her; she gripped the reins tightly, and, with stern but soothing voice, tried to reassure the scared animals.

But they were beyond soothing, and, with heads down, they strained at their bits. The carriage went over a large stone, and Reece was almost shot into the air, and he was throwing the rug from his knees, preparatory to jumping out, when a strange figure darted from the mill, sprang at the horses' heads, and checked them. A moment later the intervention would have been futile; but the horses were just in that mental state when a new and sudden terror brings about a collapse, and renders action impossible.

Somewhat to Evelyn's surprise, they pulled and strained back in confusion. With her eyes still fixed on them she got them in hand; then she looked with eager gratitude at the person who had so courageously saved them from what might have very easily been a fatal accident. She had to lean on one side, for the figure was half hidden by the horses' heads; and, to her amazement, she saw that the rescuer was a girl. She stared at a beautiful flour-flecked face, into a pair of wonderful grey eyes; she was too amazed to utter a word for a moment or two; and then, when she found her voice, she could only gasp, with mingled astonishment and admiration. "Oh!"

CHAPTER X.

Evelyn recovered from her astonishment in a moment or two.

"Will you go to their heads?" she said to Dexter Reece. "They will stand perfectly quiet now."

He obeyed, not too quickly, and stood gingerly holding the reins; and the girl who had checked the horses and the girl who had checked the mill; but Evelyn called after her eagerly.

"Oh, please don't go," she cried. "I want to thank you for coming to our help."

The girl paused irresolutely and stood, with something like a frown, regarding Evelyn, as if she were conscious of the striking contrast they presented. But there was no sullen envy in Cara's regard of Evelyn's delicate, refined beauty and her simple but costly attire; there was just the curiosity and interest which would have been evoked in Cara if she had come across some strange flower or insect of brilliant hues. She was as struck and impressed by Evelyn's appearance as she had been by that of Ronald Desborough on the preceding night; and even at the moment it seemed to her remarkable that these denizens of another and a higher world should, so to speak, have floated into her ken.

"It was awfully brave of you," said



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Evelyn gently but warmly. "You might have been knocked down, hurt, and I am very grateful to you."

Cara nodded a curt and cold acknowledgment, and was turning away; but Evelyn had had time to fully recognize the girl's beauty and grace; she was quite startled by it, and was loath to let her go without further talk.

"I did not know that the mill was working, that anybody lived in it," she said invitingly. She glanced up at the name-board over the door, and she was going to say, "You are the miller's daughter?" but something about the girl, a certain dignity of face and form, caused her to change the question to, "You are Miss Raven?"

Cara nodded again. "Yes; my father owns the mill," she said.

The deep contralto of her voice, its simple composure, affected Evelyn as its owner's face had done, and still further prepossessed her; and the girl's rough clothing, powdered with the flour which flecked the soft black hair, seemed to Evelyn almost cruelly discordant with her beauty and grace.

"Are you living alone with him here?" she asked, as she looked round and listened for signs of other human beings. "Your mother? Have you any brothers and sisters?"

"My mother is dead," replied Cara, as calmly as before. "I haven't any brothers and sisters; and I help father with the mill. I must go now, or the hoppers will be choked."

"Oh, but come out again, please!" pleaded Evelyn.

"Why?" asked Cara gravely. Evelyn was actually a little embarrassed by the steady regard of the beautiful eyes.

"Oh, I want to talk to you," she said. "My name is Desborough; I live in Thorden Hall; over there, you know"—she pointed with her whip. "I don't come up here very often—that is why I had not seen you; and I don't think we have met in the village, have we?"

Cara shook her head.

"I don't know; I don't remember,"

she said, but she knew that if she had seen Evelyn before this she would have remembered her.

"I am sure we have met; or I should not have forgotten you," said Evelyn. She looked at the moor, grand and impressive in its solitude, and then, with a sense of pity stirring within her, at the girl. "Do you not feel very lonely here sometimes?" she asked.

Cara considered for a moment, then shook her head.

"No," she replied. "Why should I? There is always the work."

"Yes; but you can't always be working," said Evelyn, with a smile; "the mill must stop sometimes, and then— But I suppose you go for a walk, or read, or do needlework?"

Cara appeared to ponder these suggestions before she answered.

"I walk about the moor sometimes; I don't read—I haven't any books; and there is no needlework to do.—I must go now. Good morning."

But she was stopped again; this time by Dexter Reece.

"One moment, please," he said, in quite a different tone to that which Evelyn had used—the tone of a fine gentleman addressing a person very much his inferior.

He was about to make the mistake which Ronald had made last night, and his hand went to his waistcoat-pocket in search of half a sovereign; but Evelyn saw the action, and, shaking her head earnestly, she murmured:

"Oh, no, no!"

He coloured, bit his lip, and shrugged his shoulders, and, raising his hat, said to Cara, in the same tone: "Let me add my thanks to Miss Desborough's. You have behaved very pluckily; and we both appreciate your assistance."

(To be Continued.)

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