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CHAPTER XVI. BETH FINDS HER PICTURE.

"If he does, he takes a queer way of showing it—he is like an iceberg," retorted Beth bitterly.

"Yes? How can he help being an iceberg? He has been frozen stiff—excuse me again for the slang—by a really warm-hearted girl," said Miss Prue, with a mischievous light in her eyes. "Nevertheless, in spite of all your pride and obstinacy, I know that you love Philip Walton with your whole heart."

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confronted the speaker with blazing eyes. She was goaded to the last point of endurance at thus having her unhappy secret laid bare, dissected, and analyzed.

"Well, what if I do love Philip Walton?" she recklessly blazed forth. "As you say, you have read my heart, and you have not spared me in doing it. But do you imagine I will ever allow him to suspect that I love him?"

Something in Miss Prue's face made her pause suddenly just here.

"Beth, dear, excuse me, but I—I think I am wanted at the house," gasped Miss Russell, and, springing from her seat, she was gone almost before the startled girl realized her absence.

"Why—why!" she began in sudden dismay, thinking she had perhaps broken her dear one's heart by her passionate outbreak. A slight sound behind her caused her to glance over her shoulder, to find a glorified face smiling down upon her, and the next moment a strong pair of arms had drawn her close within their embrace.

"Philip!" cried Beth, in a frightened voice, but too weak from the shock of his sudden appearance to make the slightest resistance to his enfolding arms.

"My Lady Beth, now and for all time," he returned, his voice tremulous from mingled joy and triumph. "What good fairy sent me here just at the right moment to catch that blessed confession from your dear lips?"

CHAPTER XVIII. PHILIP WINS THE DAY.

We left Nathan seated on the great rock by the wayside trying to solve the perplexing riddle regarding the picture for which he had been so diligently looking ever since Philip's last visit to the farm.

Where could Lady Beth have found it? Why was she so unhappy when she looked at it, and how was he ever going to restore it to Mr. Walton? He couldn't ask her for it, because Philip had told him not to speak of his loss to any one; and his old trick of stealing was not to be thought of. He sat revolving these pros and cons for some time, when, all at once, the sound of wheels aroused him from his reverie. The next moment a carriage stopped be-

side him, and Philip himself sprang to the ground, paid the coachman, and dismissed him.

"Well, Nathan, you did not expect me to-day, did you?" Philip smilingly observed as he met the boy's astonished gaze.

Nathan shook his head, but his beaming face bespoke a gratifying welcome and unqualified delight in his presence.

"I didn't think I could come until just at the last minute, when I found I could get away. How is Zieba?"

"Zieba—she foine; und—in an eager tone—"I find 'im—"

"You have found what?" asked Philip, looking perplexed.

"Der picture."

"Oh, the photograph of the little girl? I'm very glad. Give it to me, please," the gentleman returned, looking both gratified and relieved.

Nathan, with a depressed air, shook his head.

"I no got 'im," he said.

"You have found the picture, yet you haven't got it! What do you mean?" Philip inquired.

"My Lady—she got 'im."

"Miss Russell?" Philip seemed incredulous.

Nathan nodded affirmation.

"How do you know she has it?" the gentleman demanded, somewhat impatiently.

The boy hung his head, intuitively conscious that he had played the part

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of a spy where he had no business to do so.

"My Lady—she in der summer-house mit herself; she look at picture und cry on it—look at it again und cry more," he explained.

"When was this?" Philip asked, with quickening pulses.

"Just now—little while—"

"All right. Good boy! Here!" Philip plunged into a pocket, drew forth a silver dollar, which he tossed to Nathan, and was gone; his swift steps winged by a new, sweet hope.

He reached the summer-house just in time to hear Miss Prue's declaration regarding the state of Beth's heart, and the girl's desperate and passionate confession of her love for him. The look of abject dismay on Miss Russell's face as his form darkened the doorway almost caused him to laugh aloud in his elation. He merely nodded a smiling greeting, however, and made a gesture for her to disappear; then, with a clear field before him, he quietly cornered his prey as related.

Beth knew that her days of pretense were over, that she was at his mercy, for she had committed herself beyond recall; but after a moment she made an effort to release herself.

"No, my darling, you have rashly given yourself away, and now you must ratify what I have overheard," he said in a masterful tone, but with a world of tenderness in his eyes as he met her troubled look.

"But—but—" she panted as she tried to hide her blushing face from him.

He voluntarily released her at once.

"Surely you are not going to retract what has made my heart so glad," he said gravely, as he stood with folded arms before her. "I know that it was practically forced from you, and I heard it by accident, even though it may look as if I had stolen a march on you. Beth, you know I love you with all my heart, so do not allow your pride to spoil our lives. Forgive me for that one offense of the past, inexcusable though it was. Let us settle it now once for all, and make the most of our future. Will you, my Lady Beth?"

Something in his tone as he thus spoke her name swept the last resentful thought from Beth's heart. She lifted a quick, shy look to him, then slipped a confiding hand into one of his.

"Philip, I'm afraid there is a great deal of the old wifely Beth still left," she faltered meekly.

He caught her to him again with a glad laugh.

"She wouldn't be My Lady if there was not," he said. "And now—I've got to have it straight—do you really and truly love me with all your heart as Aunt Prue said?"

"I always have, every moment of my life," she shyly admitted, adding with a mischievous smile: "At least ever since the day you told me, 'my will was law.'"

Again his laugh rang out joyously.

"Really, this situation is becoming exceedingly interesting," he observed, with an appreciative sigh, "and I am beginning to find some compensation for the protracted chill I've had ever since my return to my native land. Now, dear, let us sit down and continue this thawing-out process, and then you'll have to defend yourself on another charge."

With his strong right arm around her, he led her to a seat, and sat down beside her. Both faces were radiant now, and they gave themselves up to the happiness of the hour. Later, during a pause, Philip remarked:

"By the way, Miss Slyboots, I want my picture back."

"What picture?" Beth demurely inquired.

"You need not try to play innocence. I know you have it," he asserted. "This is the other charge you have to defend."

"How do you know? And that reminds me to ask how you happened to appear upon the scene so unexpectedly, and just at the right moment to—dissolve my heroics into a mere farce?" demanded Beth, assuming a mock air of injury.

"Well, I found it would be possible to leave Boston by straining a point, which I did, and was just in season to catch my train. On my arrival I



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came upon Nathan seated in troubled meditation on the big rock, and he told me you had my picture—"

"Nathan told you—"

"Yes, I lost it that evening the wind made such havoc with my papers on the piazza, and, failing to find it myself, I promised Nathan a dollar if he would hunt for it on the quiet," Philip explained. "When I met him just now he told me he had 'found 'im,' but he hadn't got 'im'; the lady had 'im in the summer-house and was 'crying on 'im—she look at 'im und cry—den she look at 'im agen und cry more.' I began to see daylight in more ways than one, and made a beeline for this henceforth historic spot. That is how I happened to be here. Now the picture, if you please, My Lady."

Beth laughingly, yet reluctantly, drew it from her bag, but still held it away from him, as she pleaded.

"Philip, please let me destroy it."

"Not on your life," he returned, as he promptly captured it, and put it carefully away. "It is all I have to remind me of the Beth of old times—except, perhaps, a flash of temper now and then," he interposed wickedly; "and I am going to keep it as long as I live," and Beth, secretly pleased in view of his loyalty, in spite of her detestation of the photograph, said no more.

"Now, your ladyship," Philip presently resumed, "when are you going to marry me?"

Beth looked surprised.

"Why—she began flushing brightly—"I hadn't thought about that—yet!"

"Well, there is only a month left before the limitation of that will expires."

Beth turned suddenly cold.

"So you are thinking about that money, are you?" she said, in a constrained tone.

"I don't want it scattered by the 'our winds of heaven; do you?' he questioned in a practical tone.

"Philip, and Beth faced him with earnest eyes, 'do you want or need this money, or any part of it?'"

"Not a penny of it," he unhesitatingly affirmed; "but I want it to go where it rightly belongs. Your Aunt Lizzy had no special interest in the beaheen—that condition is only a threat. It simply means if you won't do as I want you to, you can't have my money."

Beth sat silent for several moments. At last she said very gravely and deliberately:

"Philip, I do not want it, either, and—I am not going to marry you to get that money."

Philip experienced an inward shock. Here was another reminder of that old-time Beth, for he realized that she was in dead earnest.

(To be Continued.)

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