

THE WINSTALLS

OF
NEW YORK

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A TALE OF LOVE AND MONEY

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CHAPTER XIV.

THE COLORED CHURCH ON DUKE STREET.

Miss Pearce's visit to her friends in New York was a very pleasant epoch in her life. She had never been so far from home before, and the newness of so many things American was to her a great exhilaration. It is easy to see that she had the gift of seeing the ridiculous side of things; and when there was no ridiculous side she generally managed to see the bright side instead. Besides, she had a very original and vivacious mind, so that without any constrained or self-conscious effort she was a source of constant entertainment. Her friends never had so good a time before. And they did their part well in making her stay a very bright chapter in her life. They drove with her over the city, and not only through the handsome residential portions, but through the lower districts as well, and places that might be denominated slums. Miss Pearce had a large fund of genuine sympathy, and she was interested in seeing how the poor lived. There was no ostentation or arrogance or offensive "slumming" in this, but a sincere fellow feeling with those less fortunate in the world than herself. To be sure, she could barely touch the fringe of the mass of human misery that swelters in poverty and crime in the great city; and she could not relieve it at all; still the mere sight of suffering she felt to be wholesome in helping her to realize the unhappy condition of others, and inspiring more fervent thankfulness for her own. Had she only had the means the world might have heard of her as a philanthropist. At any rate she was serious as well as gay.

Miss Pearce had not forgotten that projected trip on the street cars. She wanted to see how much of the city she could "do" on the cars for five cents, and she reminded Miss Winstall of the scheme. But that young lady had none of the rakish spirit in her whatever, and while she would be glad to oblige her friend, she thought she might now escape, since Grace was on hand, and much more in sympathy with such a frolic. So Miss Pearce attacked Grace, and soon brought her into the scheme.

Miss Winstall favored it so far as to keep it secret from papa. It was agreed they should start after lunch, calculating to be back in good time for dinner. But

"The best laid schemes of mice and men
Gang aft agley."

And this was not a well laid scheme. Except within quite narrow limits Grace knew no more of the city than did Miss Pearce. But they thought if they would take any north bound car they could not be far wrong. The car was bound to go somewhere, and it did not matter much where; they could stay with it, and come back with it if they wished, for it must surely come back. It was not a very clear-cut programme for seeing the city of New York. Still it would do, and might serve as well as a more exact one; and it might give more variety. And their programme did give variety—rather more than they expected. They took the first car going north. They had a very long, pleasant trip. The day was fine; the scenery was

constantly changing; they were in good spirits; they had an enjoyable time. When the car came to a point where it switched off to another track the conductor asked them where they wished to go, to which they replied that they wanted to go as far as they could get for five cents. He gave them transfers, and pointing to another car, told them to take that. Then they had another long trip, and after a while they found themselves at 176th street. If they had then been content to return the way they came it would have been well. But they wanted to see more of the city, so they took another car. It made one or two windings before it got fairly under way, and then they lost all sense of location. After a long time they began to think they were getting away too far. Consulting the conductor, he hailed another car and told them to take that. Then after a long run they took another. It was growing late. It was long past their dinner hour. What would papa say? How anxious they must be at home. The ladies grew almost desperate. They spoke to the conductor, but he gave them so many directions that they could not follow him. Finding he was going down town they stayed on the car till he turned off the main track. Then they got off. Going into a store they asked for direction. These were given so clearly that they could see what was to be done. They took another car, and in due time transferred to another which brought them within two blocks of their own door.

What a joyful thing it is to get home when one is weary and hungry. These young ladies realized something of that joy, but the joy was marred by the thought of the anxiety their absence must have caused. Mr. Winstall, however, was not a man of the bickering or lecturing kind; and he was so overjoyed to see them back that instead of giving any reproach he turned their adventure into a jest. Especially when he perceived the keenness of their appetites he felt recompensed for all his anxiety.

After this ill luck Miss Pearce felt that she must not be too quick in proposing any new adventure. But she had never given up the idea of hearing Methuselah at prayer meeting. And her time in New York was now drawing to a close. By next Wednesday evening she must have her plans laid to hear Methuselah. So she waited until Tuesday evening, and after dinner launched her scheme. She had concluded to take Mr. Winstall into her counsels this time.

"You know, Mr. Winstall," she said, "how very penitent I was about that trip on the cars. I have, therefore, been slow in proposing any new scheme. But I want to hear Methuselah at prayer meeting before I go away. And so does Grace. You will not try to prevent us, I am sure. But how to manage it—that is the point."

"Oh, I don't think it would be worth your while," said Mr. Winstall. "Methuselah is a ponderous big chunk of ebony—that is all. He does his duty well enough here. But I don't see how he could entertain you at a meeting. Methuselah has none of the risability and eloquence that some niggers have."

"Oh, I wouldn't be too sure about that,"

said Miss Pearce, "The most ponderous ones, they say, sometimes flare up the most. Of course Methuselah's eloquence, if he has any, is not needed here. Maybe he would be all the more fervent when he gets a chance at prayer meeting. The steam may be gathering in him all week, and he may need to open the valve now and then to keep him from bursting or busting. I suppose he would say"

They all laughed at this strange conceit; yet it might possibly be something more than a conceit. Mr. Winstall especially was amused by the idea of Methuselah's eloquence rising in him every day, like steam in a boiler, till he might become dangerous, and explode.

"Well," he said, "If Methuselah has any exploding to do I hope he won't do it here. I never realized the use of the prayer meeting before. I hope Methuselah will keep on, if that makes him any safer."

"Well," said Miss Pearce, "you agree that we go. And we shall take the cars. It is quite easy, and you need have no fear." She thought, but dare not say it, how much safer they would be than they were on that other occasion of the prayer meeting when they were under the guardianship of Jerry. Mr. Winstall gave his consent. There was one word in what Miss Pearce had said that made him ready to yield any reasonable point. She had said, "Before I go away." He felt there would be a blank in the house when she was gone. She had been here only three short weeks; but what sunshine she had brought with her, and what shadows she would leave behind. So he simply let her have her way. Miss Pearce had been careful not to mention that they meant to go to the meeting incognito. That was a thing which she felt Mr. Winstall might not approve. With herself it was one of the most attractive items in the programme. Lucinda had suggested in the first instance that it would be better not to be recognized. When she innocently made that suggestion, however, she had no idea of the very complete disguise which Miss Pearce might take it into her head to assume. But Grace had already been talked into the scheme; and indeed she did not need a great deal of persuasion, for she had very much of Miss Pearce's love of adventure. Their intention was to use as much burnt cork as would make them as black as Methuselah himself.

This orthodox color, along with some very old fashioned garments they might hunt up, they hoped might enable them to pass muster, even under Methuselah's nose.

Miss Winstall, when made aware of this invention, protested against it strongly. It will be seen that she was a little more conventional and self-conscious than they. So she did what she could do to induce them to forego, or at least to modify, such a wild proceeding. She would compromise on old fashioned, thick, black veils, which she said would suit the purpose. When she found her arguments on that point of no avail, she went a step farther, and suggested old fashioned black bonnets, and would have gone so far as red and yellow ribbons. But she could not move them from their purpose. They were two, and she was but one; so she was in a hopeless minority. But they counted on her all the same, not to divulge their little scheme. And to that she agreed. If she could not enjoy the fun herself she was too magnanimous to spoil theirs.

So the next afternoon there was a rare hunt through old wardrobes for the needed articles of attire. And to Miss Winstall's credit be it said that she took part in searching for and consulting about what was best