

November, 1905

ness which Kate did not notice.

"Why Mummy dear, he's off to a ranch in Canada, surely you don't want to send your little girl out there too! Why, the last you might hear of me might be that my scalp was decorating a red Indian's belt!"

"My dear, Sir Nicholas says that Canada is not such a wild place after all, but of course darling I don't want to lose you." Mrs. Manners' weak face beamed with motherly love upon her child.

"Ring for tea Kate, I am tired and have something to say to you."

Kate did as requested wondering much what her mother had to say and somewhat hurt at her apparent willingness to see her leave home and country for George Rayson and the western ranch.

Tea was brought in by James; the little boy in buttons who had begged to stay on with Miss Kate when Dr. Manners died, and who still absolutely refused to leave the service of the family he loved.

Mrs. Manners fidgeted with the cups and saucers, dropped her spoon and finally poured tea into the sugar basin in mistake for Kate's cup.

"Why Mother," said Kate with a merry laugh,—"what are you about? Let me pour out the tea and do tell me what is the matter."

"Sir Nicholas Bull was here this afternoon" began Mrs. Manners.

"He comes too often, mother, its no use and I wish you would not entertain a man of his character; its no compliment to us to be known as his acquaintances"

"You misjudge him, Kate; he is a very pleasant man and I hope you will grow to like him as I do."

"You seem very anxious to get rid of me mother," said Kate, with rising color; "first you want me to marry George, now I suppose it is Sir Nicholas over again. I told you mother and I mean it, I will never marry him, nor any man with such a character."

"My dear, Sir George has accepted your refusal as final; he will not renew his offer to you."

"Then what is this all about, mother dear; surely he has not had the audacity to propose to you?"

"I don't call it audacity," said Mrs. Manners feebly.

Kate put down her cup and looked at her mother, then she rose and came and knelt down and put her head in her lap.

"Mummy dear, tell me it isn't true and that you are joking; you could never put any one in Daddy's place. Oh mother don't!" as Mrs. Manners took refuge in her lace pocket handkerchief.

"He's very nice, Kate, and I shall be so lonely when you marry."

"But mother dear I may never marry and anyway that need not separate us. Oh mother don't; it seems horrible and I will promise you never to marry at all if you will give up this man."

"I can't dear; its all settled; he persuaded me and really he has a beautiful place and will make us both happy if you will only not be so—so strongminded. Dear Kate, why fret so. Oh dear, what shall I do with her!"

"If you prefer this man to me and Daddy, mother, you can have him, but I will never, never live in the same house."

Kate was sobbing passionately; all her pure young soul revolted against this odious marriage. How could her

mother contemplate such a thing. She was very young, only nineteen, and though possessing twice the strength of character of her mother she still had that feeling of dependence which is bred in those who have been surrounded with parental care and protection from their earliest years. It was not grief only but a sense of shock and outrage which made her cling sobbing to her helpless mother.

"My dear, Sir Nicholas will be here to dinner, won't you go to your room and compose yourself."

Kate rose, "Mother, this will separate us for ever; don't you care for me one bit?"

"Of course I care for you Kate; said Mrs. Manners peevishly, "but you are so unreasonable child; it will not separate us at all if you will only be sensible."

Kate went to her room and sat down by the window. She felt years older since lunch when she had been chatting brightly to George Rayson, unsuspecting of the chasm yawning at her feet. That her mother could care to take anyone in the place of her dear father was bad enough, but that she should have first been willing to give her daughter and then herself to a man who had nothing to recommend him but a large fortune and a knighthood bestowed for municipal service on the occasion of a royal visit to the borough was a frightful shock to the girls moral nature. Her mother's affection for her must be as weak as her character and that, Kate had gradually learnt was almost phenomenal. Mrs. Manners had repeatedly shown that she could be ruled by anyone who flattered her vanity and absolved her from all responsibility. True she had not much of the latter.

Mr. Box their lawyer administered her estate with prudence and success. Kate was amenable to reason and affection and gave no trouble; the servants were faithful and devoted. Something must be done was Kate's desperate thought, but what? Then her eye caught the picture of her father which stood framed in silver on her table, and her grief broke out afresh; but something like an inspiration came with it. Mrs. Manners had a step-mother, a dear old lady whom Kate had been brought up to call "Granny" and who had been greatly respected and loved by Kate's father. She would write and tell Granny who lived in a pretty London suburb and had always treated Kate as if she were indeed her own flesh and blood.

Kate wrote a long and somewhat impulsive letter begging the old lady to use her influence to prevent the marriage and appealing to her for advice. Then she rang the bell and gave it to the maid telling her to send James with it at once to the post office.

Finally she bathed her face, dressed for dinner, and when the bell rang both Mrs. Manners and Sir Nicholas were surprised to see a very dignified well dressed young lady, who showed no traces of tears and treated Sir Nicholas with a calm, well bred hauteur which was highly embarrassing to both.

"Your dear mother has told you" began Sir Nicholas after dinner, and then paused as Kate lifted her eyebrows and regarded him with disconcerting calmness.

"Kate will soon get accustomed to you,—I mean the new arrangement" stammered Mrs. Manners.

"I shall be delighted to have so charming a young lady as my daughter" said Sir Nicholas with an inward curse at the girls uncompromising manner.

"I should like you to understand Sir Nicholas," said Kate, with rising color and voice which vibrated with indignation, "that I shall never regard you as a relation of mine, nor will I ever live in your house. My mother is always my dear mother to me, but no one, least of all you Sir Nicholas, shall stand to me in the place of my noble father," and with this parting shot Kate left the room.

"You must not mind her Nicholas" sobbed Mrs. Manners.

"She is a very—ahem—difficult young lady," said Sir Nicholas. "Why did she not accept that young Rayson?"

"She did not want to leave me and indeed I should have been sorry if she had done so," said Mrs. Manners.

"The girl may be damned for aught I care" said Sir Nicholas to himself with a mental resolve to make things so unpleasant for Kate that she would carry out her noble resolve to live elsewhere.

"My dear Ophelia," he said "you may trust me, for your dear sake, to bear with your daughter's, ahem, manners, until she finds out that I wish to be her friend as well as her step-father!"

"I told her" said Mrs. Manners "that she would learn to love you as—as—I do, but she is so young, you must forgive her, Nicholas."

Two days after this Mrs. Manners

and Kate each received a letter with Ealing postmark. The contents of Mrs. Manners' epistle appeared to be very upsetting and that good lady once more had recourse to her pocket handkerchief. Kate's letter was as follows:—

"My dear Child,

I have asked your Mother to spare you to spend a few weeks, or months if you will, with me. Come as soon as you can, and let me know the train so that I can send Jane to meet you.

Keep a brave heart and be your father's true daughter.

Your loving Granny,

Margaret Ellswood.

"I don't know what I should have done without you Granny!" said Kate as she sat on the grass at the dear old lady's feet the evening of her arrival at the Priory.

"If I remember right, your father's will left your mother and Mr. Box your sole guardians, and there was no provision for such a contingency as this," said Mrs. Ellswood.

"Yes," said Kate "and at 21 I am to have £100 a year of my own."

"Well" continued Mrs. Ellswood "I don't think it will be very difficult to persuade your mother, Mr. Box and Sir Nicholas to let you come and live with me for the present."

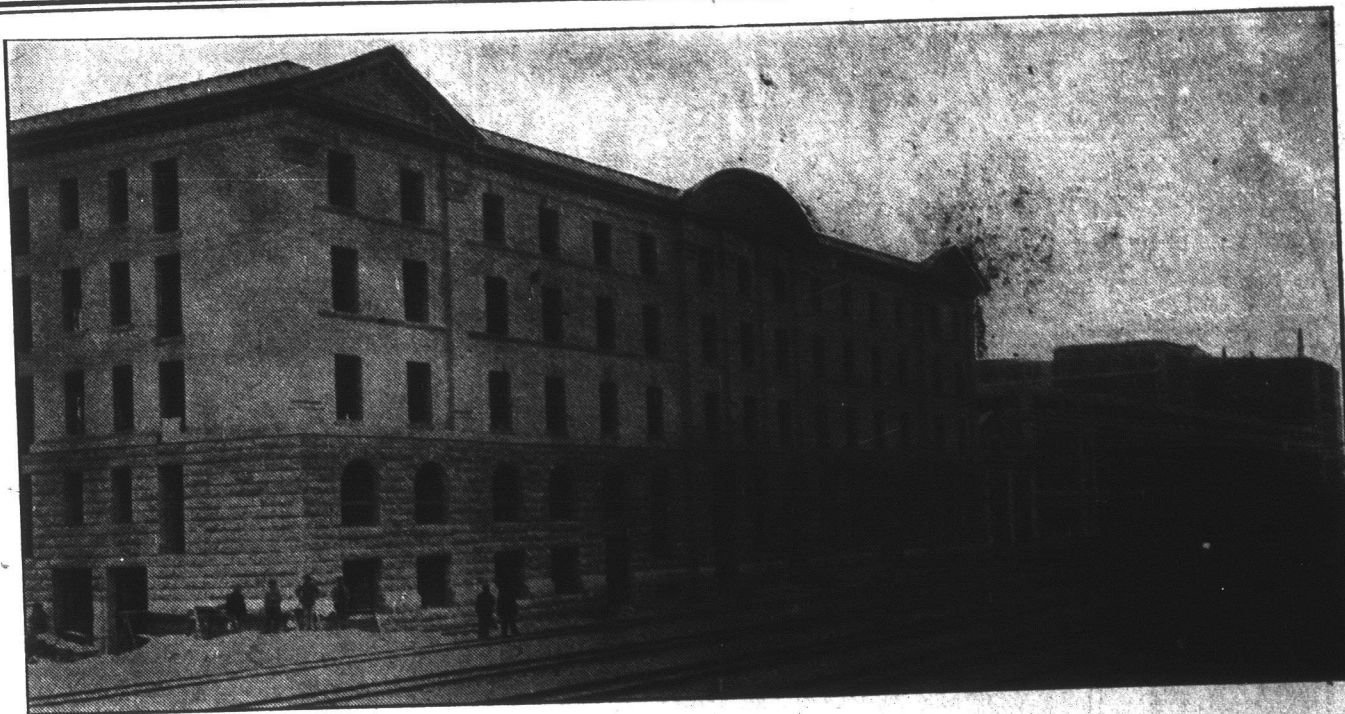
"Granny," said Kate impulsively, "I shall love to be near you, but the last few days, and sometimes before, I have thought how nice it would be to learn to do something for myself; £100 a year is not a great deal, and now I can never call mother's home my own, and money sometimes gets lost!"

"And what would you like to do, dearie?" said Granny with a smile.

"I would like to be a nurse, Grannie; Florence Nightingale was always my ideal only lately with parties and things I got careless and gay; somehow I feel so different now."

"Well darling, it's the profession of all other's that your father's daughter should take up, and though you are rather young yet I believe I can manage it. But now run up to bed; I hope Jane has made your room comfortable, and if we get you into a London hospital you will always have a home to come to in spare hours. Good night and God bless you, my dear!"

A few days later Kate received letters from her mother and Mr. Box consenting to the proposed arrangement. Mrs. Manners was "sorry, hurt



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