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#### \*\*\*\*\*\* A GIRL OF THE PEOPLE

By Mrs. O. N. Williamson.

might have been-neither one nor the other," I answered, firmly, though my heart had begun to beat very fast. "Perhaps he was only-pos-

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

"You are a cynic, my child," Roger said, calmly, But his beautifully arched brows drew together in a frown.

"What has your story to do with me?" I acked

me?" I asked. "Everything, with both you and me."
I looked up quickly; our eyes met and dwelt. A slight shiver ran through my body. What was coming now? I felt as if I was standing on the edge of a precipice, knowing that Roger would push me over and I should not be able "You are serious?"

"Most serious. This is what was in my mind when I asked if Aunt Ermyn-trude had spoken at the last of the circumstances of your birth. This was in her mind, perhaps, when she told you it

would make her happy if you could learn to care for me."

"Please don't try to break it gently.
Roger," I said, my lips very dry. "Tell me everything you know-straight out."

"I will, if you can bear it. You have been brought up to believe that you were born abroad. That is not the "Oh, well, it is not important."

"My cousin, Sir Vincent Cope, was not your father." "What, was my mother twice married, then?"

"My Aunt Ermyntrude was not your I sprang up with a faint, choking cry "It is not true!" I panted. "It is true, and it can easily be proved. I am not the only one who

knows it. There are other witnesses in whose mouths the truth shall be established. There is not a drop of Cope blood in your veins, poor little desolate "Desolate, indeed!" I bitterly echoed

"If it be true—oh, I will grant it true, if you choose!—why was I never told before? Why was I left to hear it from "Why should I not be the one to tell you, as tenderly as such a hard thing

can be told? Had Aunt Ermyntrude lived you would have been kept in igporance at least until your marriage. Then it would have been as your hus-band thought best. Ah, Shella, how l would have protected and shielded you if you would have let me! Even yet t's not too late. Look at me; I'm holding out my arms to you. Don't go away into the world homeless, penniless. Stay in this shelter and you will not miss anything that was ever yours."
"Homeless — penniless!" I echoed,
dazedly. "I don't understand."

"If Aunt Ermyntrude had left a will, she would, doubtless, have provided for you as a daughter," Roger went on, slowly. "Had she done so I must have known it, for I was her lawyer, and managed all business matters for her, as you are probably aware. Once or twice, thinking of some such difficulty as this, I ventured advise her to make a will But she always evaded me and put it off. This place was her property. She was a rich woman, with an income of ten or twelve thousand pounds a year; and had you been her daughter by ties of blood as well as affection, everything must have gone to you in the absence of a will, as you would have been the natural heir. No one else could have claimed an acre or a penny. But as it is you are not a relation at all, and you will get nothing. Everything goes by law to the next-of-kin, Aunt Ermyn

"Yourself!" I exclaimed. "Exactly. Don't blame me, Shella. fid not make the law." "No, but-"."
"But what?"

"Nothing," I said, dully.

I had been on the point of crying out: "You might refuse to accept what the law gives." But I stopped just in time. I would have died sooner than ask or receive favors from Roger Cope. I never trusted or liked him. Now, al-most numbed as I was by the blow with which he had struck me. I saw him as he was—a hypocrite, a poseur vain, utterly selfish, utterly unscrupulous in gaining his own ends. I had lost everything; mother, home, and means of support, but I would have nothing from him. I could not yet fully realize what the revelation of this morning must mean for me. So far I only felt the pain of knowing that the beautiful woman I had worshipped and feared had never belonged to me at all. And in my misery, like some wretched little animal caught in a trap, my impulse was to bite the hand nearest. turned on Roger.

#### CHAPTER VII.

I Arrive at a Momentous Decision. "I can understand well enough," I exclaimed, bitterly, "why you should have wished to marry me if I had been the heiress that reople have thought

me. But why do you want me now?"

Roger waved his hand towards a great mirror that went from floor to ceiling, on the wall of the "Indian bou-"Look at yourself," he said. Mechanically, hardly knowing what I did, I looked. Never before had I been

did, I löoked. Never before had I been critical of myseif. But now I gazed searchingly at my own face—the one fortune that was left ma.

I was beautiful. Even I could see that. As I grew older, my hair might change its young gold for autumn brown; but it was yellow as ripe wheat now, brown only in the shadows, where the waves cuived inward. And

where the waves cuived inward. And my eyes were big, and dark, and soft. Suddenly, I felt very sorry for myself, because I was so pretty, and only eighteen; because I seemed to have left youth and happiness forever behind me, and there was no one whom I loved or had a claim upon to put kind arms round me, and let me cry my heart out on a sympathetic breast.

Tears sprang to my eyes, but I crushed them back. Roger Cope should not see me cry.

orushed them back. Roger Cope should not see me cry.

"I want you because you are the prettiest girl, and some day will be the most beautiful woman, on earth," cried Roser, speaking more warmly and im-

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speak. "I want you, too, because you are hard to win; and I have always liked overcoming difficulties. Sooner or later, I warn you, Sheila, I will overome this one, and you with it. I will! You might as well yield to the inevi-

Dodd's Kidney Pills are fifty cents a box at all druggists.

"It isn't inevitable. And I won't yield," I stoutly maintained. "You haven't proved any of your statements "I will, soon enough; or, rather, I can. But if you will promise to marry

me, sweet, no one need ever know. You will marry as Miss. Shella Cope of Arrish Mell Court; and I will come here to live, as your husband-" "You will come here to live, it may be, but not as my husband," I cut him

short. "I shall have gone away before that." "Where would you go?" Roger asked,

where would you go?" Roger asked, curiously, almost incredulously.

"The world's a big place," I retorted, my voice quivering with the sobs that would not quite be kept back. One tore its way up from my heart; and, with two great tears running down my cheeks, I exclaimed: "Oh, if there were only somebody whom I belonged to!" Roger took a step forward, and put

and his blue eyes flashed their resent-ment. "I believe," he said, quietly, in the drawl which had so often stung me to impatience, "that there are several persons with whom you are entitled to claim kinship, if you choose." I dashed my tears away, and gazed at him eagerly. "Tell me—tell me!" I

"How was it that my moth-

out his hand, but I pushed it from me;

that Lady Cope took me as her own "She was very unhappy at the time Five years before she had lost her lit-tle son, whom she and her husband both adored. He died in most tragic both adored. He died in most tragic circumstances, which changed his mother's whole nature. Sir Vincent and Aunt Ermyntrude went abroad. There Sir Vincent died also, and poor Aunt Ermyntrude came back—not to her old home, but to London. She undertook various charitable works, and it was while she was giving up her life. t was while she was giving up her life

"My mother!" I echoed in a whisper.
For a moment I was powerless to ask more; but Roger went on, without waiting for my questions.

"Your mother was also a widow, and very poor. You were her only child, but she had been ill, among other misfortunes, and was hardly able to provide for you. Aunt Ermyntrude saw you—a pretty little thing a few months of age; and, taking a great fancy to you, in her loneliness, offered to adopt you as her own. Your mother finally consented, and as Aunt Ermyntrude had been living abroad for several years with her husband, and her presence in London had been known to

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prised when she came home at last with a baby not quite a year old.

"I knew the truth from the first, because I had visited Cousin Vincent and Aunt Ermyntrude abroad, and knew that they had no child, so I had to be told. And the vicar, old Mr. Westerley, was told also, but we were both asked to keep the secret, and we always have."

"You said that some of my people were still alive," I said, in a strained voice.

voice.

"Your mother is living," Roger quietly answered. "I have been at some pains to keep track of her—for Aunt Ermyntrude's sake, of course."

Somehow I did not believe that it had been for anyone's sake but his own, and for some purpose which I seemed to be on the point of discovering.

"I have your mother's present address, if you wish to write her, Shella," Roger said. "Shall I give it to you," "Yes," I said, "I want the address. But before writing, I should like to see Mr. Westerley. You told me that—he knew the secret also."

"He does," Roger answered, gravely.
"And you shall see him. I understand what is in your mind. You believe that I am deceiving you. Well, it is natur-I am deceiving you. Well, it is natural, perhaps—though it's hard to be misjudged by the woman one loves. In the rouths of two witnesses, it is said, a truth shall be established; and the sooner you heat what Mr. Westerley can add to my statement, the better I shall be pleased. Not—I wouldn't have you think that for a moment!—not that I'm not only too glad to have you stay here as long as you will, even if we here as long as you will, even if we are to be nothing to each other."

"I will send a carriage down to Lull, and ask Mr: Westerley to come out at once," I cried; then bit my lip. The carriages were Roger's. But I let it pass. Until I was sure I would grant myself some privileges, with the bene-

of the doubt. Roger rang the bell, and then came back to me. From his pocket he took a sealed envelope. "The address you wanted," he explained. "I will go and leave you alone now. I can see that you would prefer that. After Mr. Westerley has ben with you, and gone away again, you shall have a little time to think. Then I will come back, and you shall tell me what decision you have reached. It may be that you will look upon matters with a different eye. At all events, remember that while you have me you are not friendless."

He keld out his hand, and though felt the impulse to refuse it, I wou't not, lest he should think it was be cause I grudged him the things that

When the bell was answered a servant was intermed that the carriage I ordered might take Sir Roger Cope back to the inth hefore calling for Mr.

Westerley.

The vicar was a kind old man with a nervous manner, and the air of being slightly startled when anyone addressed him. His greatest pleasure was collecting butterfiles, a pastime which he infinitely preferred to the companionship of human beings. But, because he was good. I knew that he would come to me without delay, and I was not disap-

pointed I could hardly wait to answer his questions as to my health and spirits when he arrived, but burst at once into the subject weighing on my heart. "Mr. Westerley," I asked, abruptly, "is it true that—that Lady Cope adopted me when I was a baby-that I was not

The wrinkled old face, with its long. narrow oval, and its high forehead thatched with white hair, flushed deeply, and looked more startled than ever 'Who-who told you this?" the vicar questioned, with an exaggeration of his

usual slight stammer.

"Sir Roger Cope," I answered. "He said that you, 1500, knew the story—only you and he in the world now since my—since Lady Cope is dead. I wouldn't believe it until I had seen you. But now I know-just from your face, even

before you speak—that it's true."
"My poor child! It is indeed true.
But I had hoped—I knew that Lady
Cope had not wished you ever to be told that you were not her daughter by birth, as you were in heart."

We had both been standing up. In my impatience I had not given him the chance of sitting down; but now I sank upon a sofa and covered my face with my hands. The vicar sat beside To be Continued.

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