

Beautiful Cynthia;

Victory After Many Defeats.

CHAPTER I.
THE BOY HERO.

"It's rather a long story, Cynthia," said Drayle, carefully folding a slice of bread and butter and regarding it thoughtfully before taking a bite. "And, like most long things, should be avoided. But perhaps I can condense it into tabloid form. I will not begin with 'Once upon a time,' or 'In the year so and so,' but I will state shortly that Sir Anson wants something that I've got, that I'm not prepared to part with. Permit me to remark in parentheses, Cynthia, that to want something, and to keep on wanting it, when you know you can't get it, is childish and futile."

"What is it that Sir Anson wants?" asked Cynthia, deeply interested.

"My land," replied Drayle, succinctly. "He has what is called the earth-hunger. Of all hungers it is the most insatiable. It grows on what it feeds upon. The more you have, the more you want. Sir Anson has several thousand acres of land—so many that it would tire and bore him to death to circumambulate it."

"Daddy, what a terrifically long word!"

"I crave pardon, Cynthia. We will say, walk round it. Now, really all the earth Sir Anson wants, or will want in a few short years, will be about six feet by four, just enough to lie down in comfortably. But all the same, he wants to buy my moorland. His father had this same earth-hunger, and did succeed in buying from my father the greater portion of it scientifically, with the usual result—and yielded so far as to sell a greater portion of the land, he clung on to the moor which I now possess. See, Cynthia?"

Cynthia nodded. "Of course I do, father. But why should Sir Anson dislike you and be angry with you because you won't sell him the land that is left you?"

"Because Sir Anson thinks it is like my impudence to refuse him," said Drayle. "He is a baronet, the great man of the place, the squire, while I

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am just Bradley Drayle—a yeoman. I think I ought to call myself, though I always picture a yeoman as a kind of giant with a red face and a cord riding suit. Naturally enough, Sir Anson cannot understand why I refuse a good offer. For he has made me a very good one. And he thinks me an obstinate, pig-headed fellow, which, quite between ourselves, I really believe I am."

He paused and held out his cup for some more tea. Cynthia did not speak for she knew by her father's manner and expression that he had not finished the explanation.

"Then, again," said Drayle, looking hard at his tea-cup, "there was another thing. Your mother," his voice dropped, there was a slight twitch of his thin, intellectual lips, "your mother—she was a very beautiful girl, Cynthia. I am somewhat puzzled to account for your plainness, my child."

"Perhaps I take after you, daddy," said Cynthia, meekly and innocently.

"Probably," assented Drayle gravely, enjoying her unconsciousness of her budding beauty. "Your mother was extremely pretty. And she was a lady, above me in station. She was a Leicester. Ah, yes; you don't know what that means. No matter Sir Anson had met her, and—I have never heard any one impugn Sir Anson's good taste."

"You mean that he fell in love with mother?" said Cynthia, almost in a whisper.

"He did," replied Drayle. "But she married me."

"I'm very, very glad she did, daddy," exclaimed Cynthia, with a long breath of satisfaction.

"Thank you, my dear," said her father. "That is one of the nicest compliments that I ever had paid me; but I must admit that I have not received many. I take it that you wish me to infer that if you had been given the choice of a father—which, when you come to think of it, every person ought to have—you would have selected the humble individual who now addresses you?"

"Yes. I should certainly have chosen you, daddy," said Cynthia emphatically. "But, of course, Sir Anson must have been dreadfully disappointed, though he ought to have forgiven you by this time."

"I agree with you, Cynthia, but I am afraid he hasn't. Here ends the explanation of the fact that Sir Anson only touches his hat and always looks away when I greet him courteously."

Cynthia looked before her thoughtfully for a minute or two, then she said:

"I suppose you don't want me to have anything to do with young Darrel Frayne, father?"

"Why not?" he replied. "That would be perpetuating, or, rather, imitating, Sir Anson's folly. There is no reason why you should not be friends. No, there is a reason, and Sir Anson will doubtless provide it. You will find that when you next meet young Frayne he will look away and pretend he doesn't see you. Being a gentleman, he will also blush and appear extremely uncomfortable. But all the same, he will remember his father's commands and will cut you."

Cynthia laughed, but her color rose slightly, and her eyes were downcast.

"Who cares?" she said.

"You do, my dear Cynthia," retorted Drayle. "And I should be sorry if you didn't, because it would argue that you were capable of ingratitude toward your heroic rescuer. But all the same, you will return the cut by looking straight before you and pretending that you do not see him."

"I can do that, father, very well," said Cynthia.

"I never doubted it," said Drayle, emphatically. "The committee will now adjourn. A portion of it will return to the arduous task of encouraging the growth of parasites by the sweat of his brow, and will expect

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his toll with a fragrant pipe. I think I left it in the sitting room. No, don't trouble, I will get it."

He went into the next room, which unlike the ordinary sitting room of the farmer class, was homely and comfortable, because Drayle and Cynthia sat in it in the evenings and did not keep it for show, and got his pipe. But as he was about to light it, he paused, laid it down, and, going to an old-fashioned safe built into the wall unlocked it and took out a paper. He tucked this for some time, his lips pursed up, his finger rubbing his eye now, then he muttered:

"Is it worth while, I wonder? No, it isn't."

With a shrug of the shoulders and a sigh as if the decision had brought him relief, he tossed the paper back into the safe, with the air of a man hawking something off his mind.

It was a pity, because if, instead of hawking the paper into the safe and off his mind, he had taken it to the lawyer at Dursley, Cynthia's future would have been made much easier, and would not have been tangled up by Fate, who, in playing with the skein of our lives, is sometimes like a playful kitten, but more often like a spiteful cat.

CHAPTER III. A BOY'S PRIDE.

Having waited until Cynthia had reached the point of safety, Darrel made for home.

He rode into the stable yard as quietly as possible, for when you have a black eye and a cut and swollen lip you do not court observation.

Fortunately, the menservants were at tea. Darrel stabled his pony, and

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I will gladly answer her letter and tell her what Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound has done for me."

meeting no one, went through the back hall and was stealing up the stairs to his own room, when his father came out of his den, as he called the room where he kept his guns, fishing rods, and other implements of the chase, and caught sight of the back of his son and heir.

The Fraynes had always been almost kings in Summerleigh and the district. Their word had been law for centuries. There was no one to say them nay. To this social despot, good-natured and genial as he was, the fact that Bradley Drayle, a mere nobody compared with the owner of the Court, should set his will against the present representatives of that ancient race.

It seemed absurd to Sir Anson that a man living in a "tumble-down old cottage" should refuse to sell his land, and, so to speak, defy the owner of Summerleigh Court. And, no doubt, it seemed absurd to Drayle that the owner of a magnificent country mansion and thousands of acres of land should be nasty because he could not buy a bit of moorland. The great difference between the two men's view of the case lay in the fact that while Drayle could see the humor of the affair, Sir Anson's sense of the comic had for once deserted him.

"Hello, Darrel!" he said, cheerily. "Where have you been?"

"Been for a ride, sir," said Darrel, still mounting the broad stairs and still keeping his back to view.

"Come and have some tea. I'll tell them to put it in the den," said Sir Anson.

"Down directly, father," responded Darrel. As he spoke he turned a corner of the staircase, forgetting that he damaged side of his face was now presented to view.

"Hello!" exclaimed Sir Anson. "Hi! What's the matter? Here, come down!"

Darrel, with a shrug of the shoulders and a grin of resignation, turned and descended slowly and followed his father into the den.

"Where did you get that face?" demanded Sir Anson, by no means angrily, but with pardonable curiosity.

"In a fight, sir," replied Darrel, in a matter-of-fact tone, as if fighting, with its facial results, were an everyday affair with him. "I'll go and have a wash and come down presently."

"Hold on a minute," said Sir Anson, seating himself on the edge of the writing-table and swinging his leg. "What was it about? Whom did you fight? Let's have the whole thing, Darrel. My word, but you've got an eye!"

"I know, sir," said Darrel, cheerfully. "But there is nothing else the matter. I saw a chap worrying a girl coming home from school, and I had 't out with him."

"Of course," said Sir Anson, with prompt approval. "Was he a big chap, bigger than you?"

"Yes, a bit heavier," said Darrel, unconsciously drawing himself up.

"Did you beat him?" inquired his father, with a touch of anxiety.

Darrel nodded somewhat reluctantly, for, according to his code, it was caddish to brag about a victory.

"That's all right," said Sir Anson, with a smile.

"Oh, he showed fight, all right enough," observed Darrel, with a desire to do justice to his late opponent. "But he couldn't box for niss, and so I had the pull of him."

"He seems to have got in one or two, notwithstanding," said Sir Anson, viewing the injured countenance (ponapuuoo eq oL).

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