

MATT.

A TALE OF A CARAVAN.

Monk, of Monkshurst, was not brought to trial for his iniquities, but he was sorely enough punished by the loss of his ill-gotten estates. Before the claim of the foundling was fully proved he left England never to return. Whether he is alive or dead I cannot tell.

William Jones, too, escaped legal punishment. A severer retribution came upon him in the seizure and dispersal of the hoards in the great cave. So sorely did he take his loss to heart that he crept to his bed and had an attack of brain fever. When he reappeared on the scene of his old plunderings his intellect was weakened, and he showed curious evidences of imbecility. But the ruling passion remained strong within him. I saw him only last summer, rambling on the seashore, talking incoherently to himself and watching the sea in search of wreckage as of old.

And Matt?

Well, her title to Monkshurst and the property was fully proved. For a long time she did not realize her good fortune, but gradually the pleasant truth dawned upon her in a sunrise of nice dresses, jewelry and plenty of money. Chancery stepped in like a severe foster-parent and sent her to school. There she remained for several years; but Charles Brinkley, who had first taken in hand the vindication of her claims, and who never ceased to be interested in her, saw her from time to time and took particular note of her improvement in her grammar and in the gentle art of speech.

"Matt," he said, when they met last Christmas in London, and when he saw before him, instead of a towsey girl, as bright and buxom a young lady as ever wore purple raiment and fine linen, "Matt, you are 'grewed-up' at last."

Matt blushed and hung her head, with a touch of the old manner.

"Yes, I am grown, as you say, I wonder what William Jones would think if he saw me now."

"And if he noticed these pretty boots Matt, and heard you play the piano and prattle a little in French. Upon my word it's a transformation! You always were a nice girl though."

"Do you really think so?" asked Matt, shyly. "Did you always think so?"

"Certainly."

"Even when I told you I liked you so much, and you told me 'it wouldn't do'?"

It was Brinkley's turn to blush now. It was clear that Matt, despite other changes, still retained her indomitable frankness.

"Even then," he replied laughing. "But I say you were a precocious youngster. You proposed to me, you know!"

"I know I did," said Matt, "and it wasn't leap year then."

She added still more shyly:

"But it's leap year now!"

Their eyes met. Both blushed more and more.

"Matt, don't! It won't do, you know! Yes, I say so still. You're a rich woman and I'm only a poor devil of a painter. You must marry some great swell."

But Matt replied:

"I shall never marry any one but you!"

"You won't? Do you mean it?"

"Of course I do."

He caught her in his arms.

"My darling Matt—yes, I shall call you by that dear name to the end of the chapter. You love me, then? I can't believe it!"

"I have loved you," she answered, laughing, "ever since I first came 'to be took'!"

And she rested her head on his shoulder just as she had done in the old days when she was an unsophisticated child of Nature.

"So there's to be a wedding after all," he said, kissing her. "Matt, I've an idea!"

"Yes!"

"When we marry suppose we arrange to spend the honeymoon in—a caravan!"

THE END.

LIFE'S CHANGES.

BY SARAH ROCKE.

CHAPTER I.

"Hi, dar! What esly bizness ye got helpin' yo'self to Miss Mabel's apples? Just you go right along," and Aunt Chloe drew her portly figure up, as she tried to look fierce at the forlorn-looking figure, travel worn and dusty, who had climbed on the topmost rail of the fence enclosing the old apple orchard, and was helping himself eagerly to the red-checked apples hanging so temptingly near.

He looked up with a startled air, and Aunt Chloe saw a young, sad-looking face, with a tired, hungry expression that touched her motherly heart, and she called out:

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"Don't be skeered, honey; ef yo' is starved, come in and I'll give you sumpin' nuff site bettah for yo' hongry insides dan dem nasty green apples, what aint mor'n half ripe, no way," and the boy climbed down and came slowly toward the house.

She gave him a seat on the porch, shaded by trailing sprays of fragrant jasmine, which had climbed to its low roof, and went into the spotless kitchen on her charitable errand.

He gave a little sigh of relief as he rested his head against the railing, for he was very weary. Many long miles he had trudged since morning, and many more were to be passed over before he reached his contemplated home. He was alone in the world, with no loving mother-hand to minister to his needs, no tender mother-heart to feel for his disappointments or to cheer him in his efforts to make his way through the world.

He had watched with bitter tears while kindly hands had made her a last resting place under the willows in the quiet church-yard near their old home, and when all was over, had gone forth to seek a distant relative, whom he hoped would be willing to aid him in his efforts to complete his education, in return for the help he could render.

As all their little means had been exhausted in ministering to the needs of that loved mother in her long illness, nothing was left after their indebtedness had been paid. So Ray Ventnor was fain to go out into the world with empty pockets and nothing but the small bundle containing his few carefully-kept articles of clothing. Nothing had passed his lips since morning, and the rosy apples looked so tempting hanging low by the fence he could not resist helping himself to one, till startled by Aunt Chloe's warning call.

Soon she emerged from the kitchen, a huge sandwich of ham and biscuit in one hand and a bowl of milk in the other, and placed them on a bench by his side.

"There, he'p yo'self, honey. Reckon yo' needs it bad nuff," which he did, gladly, as he thanked her for the generous gift.

Seating herself on the broad steps, she managed to make herself pretty well acquainted with the most of his short history.

"Jist you wait till Miss Mabel dun come home. Reckon she wants a boy 'bout yo' size to he'p de ole man tend de gardin' an' tings. He's gittin' mighty ole and stiff and can't git around spry like he ust to, no more 'tall. She's jist gone to de village ov an arrant, and'll be comin' back 'fore long, now. Why, dar she is, shua nuff," and as the gate clicked a girlish figure came slowly up the walk.

Fair and cool she looked in the white muslin dress, a wide-brimmed hat shading the fair, oval face, whose rounded cheeks had stolen the tints of the wild rose, and whose sunny hair clung in dark, tendril-like curls around the white brow. She raised her eyes with a look of inquiry as she came up to the porch, and Aunt Chloe said, as she rose to go in:

"He's jist stoppin' fur to rest awhile, and I tole 'im to wait till you cumed, and mebbe you'd find sumpin' for him to do. He might help yer Uncle Jim a right smart bit, and he's gittin' so ole and stiff, 'pears like he aint good for nuffin, no mo' no way," and Aunt Chloe disappeared in the pursuit of some neglected duty, having had her say, which she considered as her due privilege, being she had been Miss Mabel's mainstay and adviser so long.

Ever since the delicate mother, who could not bear the rude transplanting of herself and household idols from the sunny southern home which had been hers to this bleak northern country, had faded silently away, leaving her little Mabel to the protecting care of Aunt Chloe and Uncle Jim, tried and true had been these faithful friends. As slaves they had served her mother's family, and when Missa Avis married, were her portion, and when the proclamation went forth giving them their freedom, they refused to leave her, and in her changed fortunes, shattered by war's desolating power, came with her to the North, and with what was left, succeeded in making a comfortable home for her and the little Mabel. Uncle Jim was sole manager of the small farm which was all that remained of their once ample fortune, and he managed to make a comfortable living with the help of Aunt Chloe, but he was getting old and lame, and felt the need of younger help.

Mabel seated herself in the hammock strung across the farther end of the veranda, and taking off her hat, fanned herself with its broad brim, as she drew from Ray his story, and tears of pity filled her eyes at its sad tenor. As she talked to him she was pleased to see his face brighten into new beauty, and noted the refined, intelligent expression which shone forth in his dark eyes.

"How old are you, Ray?" she asked.

"I am past eighteen, Miss Mabel."

"Indeed! I did not think you could be so old. Well, I'll tell you: If you think you could be content to stay with us for a while, I think, perhaps, we could manage it. Of course, Aunt Chloe pretends to defer to me, but I am sure she has set led in her own mind that you will stay and give Uncle Jim a little assistance, which she insists he must have, and I suppose he is getting too old to have all the steps to take, even though our domain is not very widespread. You were intending to go to school, you said, I think, but perhaps you can get some time to study, odd hours and evenings through the summer and fall, and when the term of school opens at the village we might arrange it so you could attend. I think, perhaps, I can find time to help you in your studies, if you need help. As I profess to be a schoolmarm, perhaps, I will be competent to do so. How does the plan suit you?"

"I shall be very glad to stay, Miss Mabel, if you think I can manage to do enough to pay you for the trouble," he said. "I dread so to go to

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