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Old Hagar's Secret

BY MRS. M. J. HOLMES

Author of "For a Woman's Sake," "Love's Triumph," "Purified by Suffering," "A Grass Widow," "Woman Against Woman," Etc.

"Just the old witch one would expect to find in this out of the way place," thought Mr. Douglas, while at the same time he asked "if this were Madam Conway's residence, and if a young man by the name of Warner were staying here?"

"Another city beau!" muttered Hagar, as she answered in the affirmative, and ushered him into the parlor. "Another city beau; there'll be high carryings on now, if he's anything like the other one, who's come mighty high turning the house upside down."

"What did you say?" asked George Douglas, catching the sound of her muttering, and thinking she was addressing himself.

"I wasn't speaking to you. I was talking to a likelier person," retorted old Hagar, in an undertone, as she shuffled away in quest of Henry Warner, who by this time was able to walk with the help of a cane.

The meeting between the young men was a joyful one, for, though George Douglas was a little out of the subject of Rose, he would not suffer a matter like that to come between him and Henry Warner, whom he had known and liked from boyhood. Henry's first inquiries were naturally of a business character, and then George Douglas spoke of the young ladies, saying he was only anxious to see Mag, for he knew, of course, he should dislike the other.

Such, however, is wayward human nature, that the fair, pale face and quiet, dignified manner of Theo Miller had greater attractions for a person of George Douglas' peculiar temperament than had the dashing, brilliant Mag. There was a resemblance, he imagined, between Theo and Rose, and this of itself was sufficient to attract him toward her. Theo, too, was equally pleased, and when, the evening, Madam Jeffrey faintly interposed her fast departing authority, telling her quondam pupils it was time they were asleep, Theo did not, as usual, heed the warning, but sat very still beneath the vine-wreathed portico, listening while George Douglas told her of the world which she had never seen. She was not proud toward him, for he possessed the charm of money, and as he looked down upon her, conversing with him so familiarly, he wondered how Henry could have called her cold and haughty—she was merely dignified, high-bred, he thought, and George Douglas liked anything which savored of aristocracy.

Meanwhile, Henry and Mag had wandered to a little summer-house, where, with the bright moonlight falling upon them, they sat together, but not exactly as of old, for Mag did not now look up into his face as she was wont to do, and if she thought his eye was resting upon her, she moved uneasily, while the rich blood deepened on her cheek. A change has come over Maggie Miller: it is the old story, too—old to hundreds of thousands, but new to her, the blushing maiden. To call her nervous—Mrs. Jeffrey calls her sick—the servants call her mighty queer—while old Hagar, hovering ever near, and watching her with a jealous eye, knows she is in love. Faithfully and well had Hagar studied Henry Warner to see if there were aught in him of evil, and though he was not what she would have chosen for the queenly Mag, she was satisfied if Margaret loved him and he loved Margaret. "But did he? He had never told her so," and in Hagar Warren's wild dark

eyes there was a savage gleam as she thought: "He'll rue the day that he dares trifle with Maggie Miller." But Henry Warner was not trifling with her. He was only waiting a favorable opportunity for telling her the story of his love, and now, as they sat together in the moonlight, with the musical flow of the mill-stream falling on his ear, he essays to speak—to tell how she has grown into his heart; to ask her to go with him where he goes; to make his home, her home, and so be with him always; but ere the first word was uttered Maggie asked if Mr. Douglas had brought the picture of his sister.

"Why, yes," he answered. "I had forgotten it entirely. Here it is," and taking it from his pocket he passed it to her.

It was a face of almost ethereal loveliness which through the moonlight looked up to Maggie Miller, and again she experienced the same indefinable emotion, a mysterious, invisible something, drawing her toward the original of the beautiful likeness.

"It is strange how thoughts of Rose always affect me," she said, gazing earnestly upon the large eyes of blue, shadowed forth upon the picture. "It seems as though she must be nearer to me than an unknown friend."

"Seems she like a sister?" asked Henry Warner, coming so near that Maggie felt his warm breath upon her cheek.

"Yes, yes—that's it," she answered, with something of her olden frankness. "And had I somewhere in the world an unknown sister, I should say it was Rose Warner!"

"There were a few low, whispered words, and when the full moon, which for a time had hidden itself behind the clouds, again shone forth in all its glory, Henry had asked Maggie Miller to be the sister of Rose Warner, and Maggie had answered "Yes!"

That night, in Maggie's dreams, there was a strange commingling of thought—thought of Henry Warner, as he told her of his love—thoughts of the gentle girl whose eyes of blue had looked so lovingly upon her, as if between them there was indeed a common bond of sympathy—and stranger far than all, thoughts of the little grave beneath the pine, where slept the so-called child of Hester Hamilton—the child defrauded of its birthright, and who, in the misty ravines of dreamland, seemed to stand between her and the beautiful Rose Warner!

CHAPTER VIII.

On the rude bench by her cabin door sat Hagar Warren, her black eyes peering out into the woods, and a quick ear turned to catch the first sound of bounding footsteps, which came at last, and Maggie Miller was sitting by her side.

"What is it, darling?" Hagar asked, and her shriveled hand smoothed caressingly the silken hair, as she looked into the glowing face of the young girl, and half guessed what was written there.

To Theo, Mag had whispered the words, "I am engaged," and Theo had coldly answered, "Pshaw! Grandma will quickly break that up. Why, Henry Warner is comparatively poor. Mr. Douglas told me so, rather I quizzed him until I found it out. He says, though, that Henry has rare business talents, and he could not do without him."

To the latter part of Theo's remark Maggie paid little heed, but the mention of her grandmother

troubled her. She would oppose it, Mag was sure of that, and it was to talk on this very subject she had come to Hagar's cottage. "Just the way I sposed it would end," said Hagar, when Mag, with blushing, half-averted face, told the story of her engagement. "Just the way I sposed it would end, but I didn't think 't would be so quick."

"Two months and a half is a great while, and then, we have been together so much," replied Maggie, at the same time asking if Hagar did not approve of her choice.

"Henry Warner's well enough," answered Hagar, "I've watched him close, and see no evil in him, but he isn't the one for you, nor are you the one for him. You are both too wild, too full of fun, and if yoked together will go to destruction. I know. You need somebody to hold you back, and so does he."

"Tire of him, Hagar? Tire of Henry Warner?" cried Mag, a little indignantly. "You do not know me if you think I'll ever tire of him; and then, too, did I tell you grandma keeps writing to me about a Mr. Carrolton, who she says is wealthy, fine-looking, highly educated, and very aristocratic, and that last makes me hate him! I've heard so much about aristocracy that I'm sick of it, and just for that reason I would not have this Mr. Carrolton if I knew he'd make me Queen of England. But grandma's how she set upon it, I know, and she thinks, of course, he would marry me—says he is deluged with my eager re-

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Costume, Style 375—A very handsome, fancy walking suit, coat is made with new cape and blouse-front effect, trimmed with taffeta and fancy silk braid, silk lined, thin pleated all around giving a very graceful flare, trimmed with taffeta to match coat. Made in any cloth desired.

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type—that awful one, too, with the staring eyes. In grandma's last letter he sent me a note. "Twas beautifully written, and I dare say he is a fine young man, at least he talks common sense, but I shan't answer it—and, if you'll believe me, I used part of it in lighting Henry's cigar, and with the rest I shall light fire-crackers on the Fourth of July. Henry has bought a lot of them, and we're going to have fun. How grandma would scold. But I shall marry Henry Warner, anyway. Do you think she will oppose me when she sees how determined I am?"

"Of course she will," answered Hagar. "I know these Carroltons. They are a haughty race, and if your grandmother has one of them in view she'll turn you from her door sooner than see you married to another, and an American, too."

There was a moment's silence, and then, with an unnatural gleam in her eye, old Hagar turned toward Mag, and grasping her shoulder, said: "If she does this thing, Maggie Miller, if she casts you off, will you take me for your grandmother? Will you let me live with you? I'll be your drudge, your slave. Say, Maggie, may I go with you? Will you call me grandmother? I'd willingly die if only once I could hear you speak to me thus, and know it was in love."

For a moment Mag looked at her in astonishment; then, thinking to herself, "She surely is half-crazed," she answered, laughingly: "Yes, Hagar, if grandma casts me off, you may go with me. I shall need your care, but I can't promise to call you grandma, because you know you are not."

The corners of Hagar's mouth worked nervously, but her teeth shut firmly over the thin, white lip, forcing back the wild words trembling there, and the secret was not told.

(To Be Continued.)

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