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HIS COURTSHIP

By HELEN R. MARTIN, Author of 'Tillie: A Mennonite Maid.'

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CHAPTER IX.

It was Sunday evening, "bean night" in the social circle of the Morningstars, and Ollie, dressed in her best furbeles, was seated in the front room, which was never opened except on the Sabbath.

Eunice was seated near her at one of the windows, an open Bible on her lap. She was not like Ollie, dressed in her Sunday clothes. The truth was Eunice did not have any Sunday clothes.

A few feet away, in the open doorway leading out to the porch, Dr. Kinross sat smoking a pipe and reading a Sunday paper.

His reading of his newspaper was varied with speculations as to why Eunice so industriously read the Bible. Was she devout? He had always believed that he had a constitutional dislike of devout people—unless they were Roman Catholics, in which case they were rather picturesque.

Ollie Morningstar was regarding with pride the furnishings of the best front room. Her parlor boasted of some elegancies that no other parlor in the township possessed, for besides the inevitable plaster of paris cut and crazy jug (the latter consisting of a large sized bottle covered with putty and stuccoed with various objects such as buttons, beans, pieces of glass, and so forth, and the whole gilded over to produce a wonderful effect) there was the large, elegant colored picture—Swift & Co.'s advertisement of lard—portraying two great, fat, oval hogs leaning drowsily against a fence, with a lurid sunset in the background.

Presently her complacent expectation and the reading of Kinross and Eunice were interrupted by Georgiana and Daisy, who strolled into the parlor and seated themselves, Daisy on the front doorstep near Peter and Georgiana on the window sill beside Eunice.

"I may serve to develop the girl's latent aesthetic sense to give her some pretty clothes," Georgiana had suggested. "Tasteful clothing is often really educative."

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to throw herself away—as nice looking as she is—on a fellow as tight across the chest as he is—as any one can see he is! Ugh!" Daisy shook her shoulders with a shudder.

"You entirely miss my point, Daisy, dear," Georgiana had returned gravely. "My object in offering Eunice a pretty gown is to try to awaken in her a sense of the beautiful on a much higher plane than that you talk about."

Seated on the window sill beside the object of her benevolent intentions, Georgiana led up tactfully to the matter of her gift.

"Eunice," she began earnestly, her eyes on the distant horizon which was just beginning to deepen its evening hues, "do you ever feel, in your nearness to nature here, how really we ourselves are a part of all this wonderful beauty? It seems to me that this environment," she added, without waiting for Eunice to reply, "ought to make us sensitive to beauty in every detail of life."

Kinross grinned behind his newspaper and settled himself to enjoy the conversation. He was finding Georgiana very diverting.

"Sensitive to beauty even to the point of feeling out of harmony with our environment if we are not tastefully dressed," Georgiana went on. "And so," she ended gracefully, laying the gown she held across Eunice's lap, "I want to give you this pretty white gown."

"Because I feel," Georgiana smiled encouragingly, "that even so trifling a thing as our clothes can help us to get into right relations with life."

The girl's puzzled gaze seemed trying to make it out. But before she could reply Ollie leaned forward and, eagerly examining the embroidery and ruffles on the pretty dress lying across Eunice's lap, asked with undisguised covetousness, "Did you wear it fur nice or just fur so?"

"Oh, I wore it for 'nice,'" Georgiana smiled. "Eunice she never did think at the clothes much like what I do," Ollie added insinuatingly.

"That is perhaps commendable to a certain point," said Georgiana gently. "But one should give just enough attention to outward adornment to let it express something of the inner life. The refinement of our thoughts and feelings or the lack of it is often symbolized by our dress. We should cultivate our natural inclinations for external harmonies—it is not right to be indifferent to them—they are a legitimate part of life."

"I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul." "And the great English poet Robert Browning," she continued instructively, "called environment 'machinery,' just meant to give you life its bent." Emerson's whole gospel is man's spiritual mastery of circumstance. I am aware that most of us are slaves to it. But we can rise to a plane where instead of letting it control us we control it. Otherwise we go through life missing the true beauty, the perfect harmony of the universe. I feel sure that you can find that harmony if you will keep your mind open to it. For instance," she said, with a perfunctory playfulness, "begin by putting on this white gown—in which I feel you will give those about you a genuine aesthetic pleasure—and even help to educate them to a fine taste in the small things of life."

she spoke and laid it on Georgiana's lap. Kinross saw that Georgiana in her chagrin at the girl's failure to appreciate her generous patronage almost lost sight of the astonishing language she had used.

"If that is the way you feel," she answered, "very well. I beg your pardon if I have offended. I did not mean to. The fact is I have misunderstood. I did not know that"—She broke off incoherently, unable to express herself in her new and confused impression of the farm girl.

"Stung again!" exclaimed Daisy. "Please, Daisy!" protested Georgiana.

"But, indeed, Georgie," pleaded Daisy. "I can't blame Eunice for thinking it isn't worth while to wear glad rags out here when no one would see her anyway."

"That isn't the point at all," returned Georgiana, looking distressed. "Are you givin' it back?" Ollie here demanded of Eunice incredulously. "Och, what makes you act so dumb? Mebbe," she said, turning to Georgiana, "it would fit me—if you don't want it."

"You are too stout and too short for it," Georgiana answered a little distantly. "It isn't that I want to get rid of the gown. I thought merely to encourage Eunice."

"Encourage me?" repeated Eunice, again puzzled.

"But I see that I was mistaken," she said hastily. Her half turned her back with a movement that closed the conversation. Eunice's eyes fell to her book again, and for a time no one spoke, though Ollie's look of disgust at the loss of the proffered gown was louder than words.

Kinross replaced his pipe in his mouth and drew on it vigorously. This girl, Eunice—the sort of language she used, the ideas she expressed—talking about the want of harmony with her environment being "fundamental" for an unschooled Pennsylvania Dutch girl of the backwoods—but his reflection was checked by a whispered remark from Daisy at his side.

"Imagine that yard of pump water, Ollie, in one of Georgiana's gowns! She looks as though she weighed 250 'fahrenheit!'"

"Do you mean avoirdupois?" "Now, Pete, you needn't be so smart!" she retorted resentfully. "What if I do mean avoirdupois? Oh, dear," she sighed, "I never seem to be cognate of a fact. I almost wish I were clever instead of pretty."

"Now, if you was Georgie," he remarked, "you'd be both; ain't it?" "Peter," Daisy gently reproved him, "I wouldn't be shocked if you called me Daisy. (Sweet name, isn't it?) But to permit yourself the liberty of calling Miss Eilery 'Georgie'—that's the limit! So you think," she added, "that she's both clever and beautiful? And she thinks you, Peter," she confided to him, "have a latent fineness concealed somewhere about you?"

"A whatever?" Daisy's answer was arrested by Georgiana's rising from the window sill and sitting down beside her on the front door step. Georgiana had evidently quite recovered her not easily disturbed equanimity.

"What are you reading?" she inquired of Daisy in the tone of gentle patronage she always used to her cousin and for which Daisy appeared humbly grateful. "Or, I should say, what is that book you are not reading? One of those that father made you pack?"

"Yes," sighed Daisy, "this one is to equip me for our European tour next summer. I'm on Switzerland now. It's perfectly dear," she said, with perfunctory enthusiasm. "The author has so many pretty thoughts about the scenery."

Georgiana smiled indulgently. "Do you know, Daisy, what book you and I



Imagine that yard of pump water in one of Georgiana's gowns!

ought to have brought with us to read in this setting—with this background" she asked, waving her hand abroad to indicate the farm at large. "Which?" inquired Daisy respectfully. "Please to break it to me gently, Georgiana." "Izaak Walton's 'Compleat Angler.' It is remarkable that such an unpretentious work as 'The Compleat Angler' should have lived since the seventeenth century and be so very much alive still."

thoughtfully. "Because it is so vividly exhaled on every page—the strong message. Why, if anything could make me want to go on fishing, it is Walton's picture of first-class trout tempt me. And the famous passage about the worm—in which the worm is meant to be a metaphor for the temptations of the world."

"The worm?" It was a name so soft voice that spoke impulsively. "It was not to the worm, but to the angler, Izaak Walton recommended anglers to be merciful, wasn't it? He said as though you loved him, that he was as little as you may possibly be that he may live the longest," she quoted.

Kinross leaned forward in his chair, his elbow on his knee, and listened to her hand. The two young girls stared at the girl as though unable to credit the evidence of their ears.

"You have read 'The Compleat Angler'?" Georgiana's astonished tones inquired.

"Many times," she replied, "then suddenly colored and blushed, a little. 'I have seen it eyes.' 'You have seen it to some purpose since you are able to quote it so accurately.'"

Eunice looked down at the Bible on her knee and did not answer.

"But, Eunice, where did you get that book?" asked Georgiana.

"I—came by it—once." "And you read it many times?" she persisted.

Eunice glanced up with a faint smile. "Not so much for the didactic instructions about fishing, but for the anecdotes scattered throughout, the quotations and songs and poems."

"You have the book in the house?" asked Georgiana.

The girl looked unconcerned. "I have not read it for more than a year," she said with evident evasion.

"If you are fond of reading, and of such reading, we shall be glad to let you have some of our books," said Georgiana in a tone of encouragement to struggling rural ambition.

"Offer her 'Some Faintly Reminiscent of the Great Back Boned Fatally,'" advised Daisy earnestly. "It's so clearly and interesting that I'm sure it must be very instructive and useful!"

"Thank you," Eunice replied. "But," she added, with an uneasy smile, "I have never had time to read except on Sunday, and Mr. Morningstar would not allow me to read anything but the Bible then."

"But I am so glad to hear that," said Georgiana graciously, "that if you do have an opportunity to read good literature you take advantage of it, and that you read so appreciatively!"

"I am glad to be a source of such happiness to you," said Eunice, smiling with a faint unconscious touch of irony that suddenly brought the color to Georgiana's cheeks. Eunice's hands looked as though she scarcely understood the vague discontent which possessed her under the almost unobtrusive patronage of Miss Eilery.

The sound of a step on the porch which evidently announced the expected arrival of Ollie's "regular company"—led Eunice to a quick review of her Bible and rise to go away.

But she was stopped by the entrance of Ollie.

To be continued.

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