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## HIS COURTSHIP

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

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CHAPTER XXVI. FROM the seclusion Miss Wolcott to Dr. Peter Kinross: "Newport, Sept. — "She has been with me here at Newport for nearly three weeks, and this is my first opportunity, Peter, for writing to you. You must, of course, be curious to hear how things have gone with each of us since the girl came to me.

"Of course after your uncommittal account of her, I was prepared for the worst and had braced myself to meet the shock which my own niece's manners and appearance must give me. The bracing served me in good stead when she arrived, for the shock was even greater than I had counted on; though as it came from an unexpected direction, my being prepared to meet it did not count for so much as it would otherwise have done. Of course I knew Mrs. Kenyon would do all she could to soften the blow by fixing her up as to clothes. But from what you had told me of my niece's life, I could not reasonably have expected to see the graceful, exquisite looking girl who walked into my drawing room last Friday night. You know it is the expression of a face and not merely perfection of coloring and feature which saves it from being common.

"I thought she would look vacant and awkward or else vulgarly loud and self assertive. I was not prepared to see a face of extraordinary refinement and intelligence and to meet a manner of dignity and gentleness. You acknowledge now that blood will tell!

"At first I was inclined to be angry with you for not having spared me the suffering I endured in anticipating her coming. I thought you might have told me what she was like, how she had educated herself, and so forth. But on second thoughts I knew you had done wisely in leaving me to find it out for myself.

"The child is touchingly grateful to me for the motherly care—so new to her—which I confess I delight in lavishing upon her, and I need not tell you that two lonely, love hungry hearts have found comfort in this newly discovered tie of blood.

"When we came to talk of finances I was surprised at her quickness to understand business problems which were so entirely new to her. A trained intelligence, even when the training has been as one sided as hers has been, helps so much in every direction. Against my protest she has insisted upon an equal division between us of her father's wealth. I have absolutely refused to accept this until she has had at least one year's experience of life in the world, when she will understand something of the value of money.

"Even if I wished to I don't think I could ever make a worldling of her. Each day she is with me I am impressed afresh with the purity and simplicity of her mind.

"It is a keener pleasure than I watch known in many a long year to have her impressions of things as I take her about with me—she is so filled with wonder at everything. She is like a small boy at his first circus! Her comments are often so funny and yet so unexpectedly wise. It will be delightful to take her to Europe.

"It isn't always easy to understand her. At times she seems absent and dreamy in a way that is quite unaccountable to me. There is a melancholy about her which she seems unable to shake off and which puzzles and troubles me, for surely she has everything to be happy for. Is it perhaps, the somberness of her past still clinging to her? Or can it be possible that she is brooding over some country lover she left out there? If that were the case, you, Peter, having been by her all summer, would know. I wish you would tell me. Wouldn't it be tragic if that were the case?"

Miss Wolcott concluded with a warm expression of obligation to Dr. Kinross for his disinterested kindness. It was this letter which had brought

Dr. Kinross after a bitter struggle with himself to the place where it was on this afternoon late in the month of October—at Eunice's side, talking with her in Central park.

It was a bracing autumn day, the fresh air was not alone responsible for the brilliant color in Eunice's face and the light in her eyes. But the color and the light suggested excitement rather than joy. There was a shadow of melancholy back of them.

In Kinross' face, too, the signs of his battle with himself were deep marked. They walked slowly in a seclusion. The change he had felt in Eunice since from the hour of their meeting that morning had given him a sense of loss, as though the unsophisticated child who had trusted and liked him had slipped from him, for there was a dignity in her manner with him that almost made him think she had already grown conventional. And as for the deep feeling for him which in their last talk together at the farm she had so naively revealed—he shrugged his shoulders at the fickleness of the sex, for not a sign of it could be read in her new manner of reserve.

Now, however, that they were alone in the isolation of the great park he had a sense of being nearer to her. She was unbending to him and opening up as she had not done all day.

"I am waiting to hear some of your first impressions, Eunice, of life in the great world," he said as they strolled under the great trees which rustled in the autumn breeze.

"Perhaps," she answered, "when I am more adjusted to my new life and understand it better the world may look very much less mournful and lamentable to me than it looks now. Yet I am happy. Life is full of wonder and beauty and constant new delights. And, remember, I never before knew the meaning of the word happiness."

"Um—! You are happy?" he repeated. "I'm so glad to know it, Eunice."

"Of course one constantly sees things that sadden. No sooner am I deep in the enjoyment and interest of some pleasure than I am confronted with a sight of poverty that makes my own possessions seem wholly wrong. I didn't work for this money—why should I have it?"

"But your father worked for it," he said, knowing very well he was instilling false social economy.

"That doesn't make it right," she shook her head.

"I think," she went on, "that people would interest me more than anything else in the world if only they were real, were themselves; but I have yet to meet a man or woman of the world who seems to me genuine—except you and my aunt. And Aunt Eunice seems to be herself only when we are alone.

"Perhaps," she suddenly looked up at him, "if I saw you with other people and to be acting a part."

"There's no telling, Eunice, what your unclouded eyes would see!"

"Some things seem so strange," she went on; "Aunt Eunice and all the people who make up what she calls her set" (meaning a sort of clan) are so hemmed in by social laws, so hampered on all sides by perfectly meaningless rules and customs, so taken up with details which are trivial and unessential—and very tiresome to themselves, but which they nevertheless take heed to—for what reason it is hard to make out—that at times they all seem like puppets moving at the pull of a string—with no freedom of motion at all and no spontaneity. It stiles me!"

"Go on," he urged when she paused, her fresh impressions interesting him.

"I ask myself sometimes, is all life a slavery, only in different forms? Every one seems to be in bondage of some sort. The men of Aunt Eunice's clan are slaves to the women; a man allows himself to become a mere money making machine for no other apparent reason than to keep his wife and daughters in idleness or to give them opportunity to cultivate themselves. It seems that the man doesn't need time for culture. It's no objection to him if he does have some culture, but it must not interfere with his money making. But the women must have leisure for the study of art, for society and other feminine occupations. Aunt Eunice says that if a man is a gentleman he will work night and day to give his wife or daughter absolute leisure to do as she pleases. I don't see the sanity of it or the justice. If a woman does not rear a family and make a home or else work at some vocation, if she is simply the daughter of a household, spending her time cultivating herself in music and literature and graceful social affairs, of what significance is her existence in the economy of the universe? What point has her life?"

She turned to him with her old wistful appeal. These commonplace problems, so new to her, were evidently vexing her sorely.

"Is it perhaps enough just to be," he suggested, "if only one be lovely and good and a delight to others?"

to be anything worth while—anything strong and worthy—without work, effort, responsibility? I am looking on at life not to judge and criticize, but only to learn, but sometimes judgment is forced upon me by what I see."

"And perhaps you, with your unsophisticated eyes, may be able to see deeper truth than is vouchsafed to old duffers like us—your aunt and me, I mean."

"But," she answered impetuously, "whatever impresses me I try to see through your eyes as well as my own, wondering what you would think about this or that which bewilders or puzzles me. In everything that I do or see your presence seems to be with me constantly. I have longed so unspeakably to have all these experiences with you actually and not just in fancy."

Kinross felt the blood surge to his very forehead. He answered her with an abrupt question.

"Why did you leave my letter unanswered, Eunice?"

Her eyes fell. She did not reply at once.

"I couldn't write to you."

"And why?"

"Aunt Eunice kept urging me to write. She said I must express my gratitude to you for all you had done for me, but my feeling for you is so far above gratitude—it is a feeling so much larger and greater than that. Yet," she added, her head drooping, "I could not write to you, and so I could not write at all, for there is to me a sacredness in my feeling for you which would seem belittled and even desecrated by my not being true to it. I could write to you out of the fullness of my heart or be silent."

He suddenly caught her hand, hanging at her side, and clasped it in a grip that hurt her. "If you had written to me out of the fullness of your heart, oh, you incomparable!" he checked himself and dropped her fingers with an abruptness that made her feel as though he had flung them off.

"Life is such a farce, Eunice," he answered coldly, "that, generally speaking, it is wiser to do as you did—to refrain from speaking out of the fullness of the heart. But what, may I ask, restrained you?"

She looked pained and hurt, both at his tone and his words.

"I feared," she answered, with a gentle sadness, "that I might weary you, Dr. Kinross."

His laugh sounded to her sardonic.

"Weary me? Let me tell you something. The night I saw you off on your train for New York there was a sudden drop in my spiritual thermometer that left me torpid, bored, sick to death of the not-worth-whileness of things. After a few days I wrote to you, and the expectation of hearing from you revived me somewhat. But the expectation prolonged itself to a point where it ceased to be interesting and became tormenting. 'Why doesn't Eunice answer my letter?' was the only thought my brain contained day and night."

"But now that you know why you say that you commend my 'wisdom' in keeping silent?"

"Ah, but what good did it serve? For you see here I am at your side—in spite of your wisdom. In spite of my own—for I, too, Eunice, have been acting wisely since we parted, else a whole month would not have passed without our looking again into each other's eyes!"

There was a passion in his voice that caught her breath.

"You have been repressing your feelings in staying away—your feelings for me?" she asked breathlessly. "Did you want to see me?" came her wistful question.

"Did I? Here I am!" was his answer.

"But," her eagerness suddenly dropped, and she spoke mournfully, "it can't last, you know."

"No. Your aunt is going to take you to Europe!"

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