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The DAUGHTER OF DAVID KERR

by Harry King Tootle

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"And the men down here," Little Ella cried, the memory of the good, wholesome men whom she had known in her earlier life coming back to smite her. "poor ignorant excuses for men, most of 'em—all they're good for is to steal an' lie an' live off us women, an' vote the way the boss tells 'em on election day. An' who's responsible for that? Say?" Gloria could make no reply, and Ella, whose pause had been rhetorical, uncouth as she was, made answer herself. "I know. The fine gentlemen what buys the votes. An' when they needs more money fer more votes they send the p'lice 'round, an' us poor girls has to pay, always pay."

"I never dreamed of such a thing." "I tol' you you didn't know. Why, onct I was good like you, too. An' now," she began to sob—"now—I'm down—an' I can't git up. I can't git up. It's too late."

Suddenly Gloria remembered the power to which she would appeal. Where a minute before had been darkness and uncertainty was now the clearness of a summer day.

"It's never too late," she insisted. "Remember, I'm not alone. My father will help me. He's brave and good and strong, with a heart of gold. I can't change the world's ways, maybe, but I can do something to make Belmont better with my father's help—and yours."

Gloria was a doughty Crusader, and was eager to plunge at once into the work of reform. She was going to permit her father to be a ways and means committee, but she intended to have a thorough grasp of the whole situation herself.

"Why do you pay this—this blackmail?" Gloria demanded.

"I've got to live. What else can I do—now? I'm down, an' in debt."

"But they can't keep you from living."

"They can send me to the work-



"I Don't Understand."

house." And at the thought Little Ella shuddered.

"Whom does this money go to? I want to get that part of it absolutely straight so I can tell father."

"It goes to the boss, of course."

Little Ella made this statement in a matter-of-fact manner. The methods of the "system" were so notorious that she did not have to think a moment before giving her answer.

The boss. Here was a factor in the game of which Gloria as yet had had no inkling. The boss. What does he do? Now she desired to know about this boss.

"The boss?" Both the tone of her question and the look on her face denoted her interrogation.

"Yes, the boss gets the money." Little Ella saw that it would be necessary for her to explain. "I thought everybody in Belmont knew that. I gives it to Noonan mostly, but sometimes the round-shoulder collects, an' sometimes they both do."

This double collection wasn't on the square, but what was she to do? If she complained, she knew 'oo well what would happen to her.

"Who's Noonan?"

"Mike Noonan? He runs the saloon downstairs, an' rents me this room. He gits a rake-off from 'most everybody down here."

"He must be a rich man."

"Oh, some—but he's got to 'ars a lot of it on."

"And you say the police know about this?"

Little Ella looked at her in amazement. To Gloria a policeman was a stalwart individual with white gloves who halted traffic while she crossed the avenue. To the other a policeman was an enemy, a grafter who never overlooked an opportunity to feather his own nest or line his own pocket-book. The best that she ever could say for any one of them was that he was an autocratic rowdy. Gloria's simplicity in asking if the police knew of this tribute caused her to reply:

"They ought to—they gits some of it. Then the man higher up gits his."

"I can't believe it. When you get well I want you to come and tell my father all this. He is—he's an influential man. I'm sure he'll help you."

He shall help you," she added decisively. "and every poor, unhappy person down here, because I shall tell him to."

Little Ella looked at her, all admiration for such power.

"Gee! I wish I had a pa like yours," was all that she could say.

"I can't know that such things are ha'nd—here—every day in Belmont."

"If he did, I'm sure he wouldn't tell you." Little Ella was more conversant with the ways of the world.

"And what did you say finally becomes of this money you have to pay?"

"The boss gits it."

"Oh, yes. This boss—who is he? What does he do to earn his money?"

"That's what he gits fer perfectin' us. He keeps the bulls from juggin' us."

"And if you don't pay?"

"He gives 'em the tip an' we're hauled in, and sent up for thirty days."

This didn't accord with Gloria's idea of law and justice. Here was a man who, without authority and as his whim dictated, arrested people because they would not do something unlawful. And the police, instead of being instruments of the law, were under the direction of this boss.

"Can't the law touch him?" she asked.

"No! He's the law in this town."

"Do you mean to tell me there is a man so boss," demanded the daughter of David Kerr indignantly, "this boss, that spends his time collecting this money?"

Little Ella had come to realize soon after they had met that she was dealing with a fledgling. Hence she bore with her and answered her question patiently.

"Gosh! Little time he spends collecting money down here." Her tone indicated clearly that he spent no time at all. "What's the cops fer? What's Mike Noonan fer? He's got other things to do himself. I onct knowed a young lawyer, an' he tol' me the boss got his from the big gamblin' houses, an' the street car comp'ny, an' the electric light comp'ny, an' big things like that."

"Then you're just a drop in the bucket." The magnitude of the "system" was just beginning to dawn on Gloria. She now saw that its ramifications were many, that there must be much that even this woman, for all her knowledge, could know little of. While she could not learn all from Little Ella, she could learn enough to make her father investigate.

"There's enough of us drops in Belmont to fill a pretty big bucket," the girl admitted. "Gimme a drink o' water, will you? I never was so dry at a Dutch picnic."

Gloria poured a glass of water for her. Then, feeling that she had not been considerate in asking the girl to tax her little strength by the recital of a story that sadly wasted her vital energy, she begged her to rest.

"You're still a bit feverish. Lie down now and rest. Try to go to sleep, and I'll sit here and read."

Soon her patient seemed to sleep, and Gloria picked up a book and tried to read. The revelations to which she had listened made all possibility of concentration upon the printed page out of the question. Suddenly it occurred to her that she did not know the boss's name. Just as this came into her mind, the girl turned restlessly and opened her eyes. Finding that she was awake, Gloria asked:

"Tell me, what's the name of the boss?"

"Eh? What?" Little Ella was not thoroughly awake.

"What's the name of the boss? I want to tell father."

"His name? Oh, it's Kerr. He's o' Dave Kerr. Ever hear of him?"

Having roused herself sufficiently to answer the question, Little Ella sank again into a doze.

As for Gloria, it almost seemed that the words meant nothing to her at all. So slowly did her mind accept this intelligence that the fall of the book unnoticed to the floor did not seem related in point of time. Yet in fact it told that her mind was intent upon one question: Who was the boss of Belmont?

"Kerr! Kerr! Old Dave Kerr." still rang in her ears. "The boss? Dave Kerr? I wonder what relation—the very ignominy of the thought re-

strained her. "No, no, no. It's all a mistake. It can't be—I couldn't believe it. There can't be any relation of my father's—my fa— It's absurd. It would be maddening, the suspicion of such a thing. Why, my father's the soul of honor."

Without warning, Joe Wright came into her mind; Joe Wright, her evil genius.

"What did the paper say? 'The king of underhand manipulators, David Kerr!' The king!" she muttered aloud, and clapped her hand over her mouth at the word. The thought of such a thing widened her eyes with terror and set her heart to beating high with sudden fear. "But not this, O God! Not this."

She repeated the pathetic words of Little Ella.

"There's enough of us drops in Belmont to fill a pretty big bucket"—oh,

it can't be my father! It can't be my father!—He has a daughter—it's all a horrid mistake. There must be another David Kerr, I'm sure."

Gloria sprang from her chair and



The Picture Was That of Her Father.

seized the sleeping woman roughly by the arm.

"Listen to me. Tell me something more of David Kerr."

She shook Little Ella into a conscious state and repeated the question.

"Which David Kerr is it?"

"There's only one I know of," answered Ella. "He's got a real estate office on Fifth street."

"What!"

The net of circumstances was being drawn tighter and tighter about one man, and that man her father.

"Are you sure he's the man, girl?" Gloria asked the question in as subdued a manner as possible. Suddenly she had become afraid. She did not wish to arouse suspicion.

"Sure, he's the man." It tried one's patience to be roused from sleep, and then to meet with contradiction was enough to make one petulant. To settle the question so that she could go back to sleep, little Ella added:

"Look on my bureau and you'll see a program of the Dave Kerr Democratic club ball."

Gloria walked over to the bureau with its jumble of odds and ends, and began to turn over the things mechanically.

"No, not that. Look behind that photygraft. That's it. That's his picture on the front."

Gloria gave one look. The picture was that of her father.

For a time Little Ella chattered drowsily, but Gloria did not hear. She was prostrated by a grief that numbed her every faculty. The foundation of her faith had been swept away.

What she beheld seemed to burn itself into her brain. On the cover of the program were the words: "Annual Ball. David Kerr Democratic Club." and the picture of her father. It was the truth; her father was the boss of Belmont. So different was her position from that pinnacle on which she had thought herself to be that the whole world would have to go through a revolutionary orientation. There was nothing in her life which would not have to be adjusted anew because of this revelation.

As she turned the pages of the program, pages filled with liquor and saloon advertisements, her thoughts were all of herself. Resentment and anger there were, directed toward her father, but now in the first moments when she saw herself as Belmont saw her humiliation conquered all other emotions. Her first thought of Joe Wright was that he had kept the truth from her. She could not grow more sick at heart, comparatively feeling was out of the question because she was completely crushed, but she saw as in a book that had been written and laid away as finished, the sacrifice he had made for her, the supreme renunciation he had made because he would not denounce her father before her.

The thought of how different her home-coming had been from what she had planned made her laugh hysterically. Then when she recalled the few staunch friends she had made she clutched wildly at the hope that after all it was untrue.

"It's a lie, every word of it, a lie his enemies invent. What big man but has about him envious wasps that prick and sting? Judge Gilbert, Mr. Kendall, Doctor Hayes, they'll all say that he—Joe Wright! What of him? What will he say?"

She put this man that had loved her in one balance and the other men in the other. He outweighed them all, and the momentary hope was gone. She could see it all now. As the baffling attitude of Belmont revealed itself to her bit by bit she buried her face in her arms and sobbed.

"And I was so proud, oh, so proud!" moaned the daughter of David Kerr. "Joe! Joe! You did love me—I sent him away, and I never understood. Now I can see it all. The social slight—the cold disdain I could not understand—the whispers that died away before they reached my ears—all, all, all because I was David Kerr's daughter. David Kerr, the boss of Belmont."

Her father's name exercised a fascination over her. Again and again she repeated it, her lips curling with scorn.

"David Kerr, the boss of Belmont!" she cried with a contempt that wrung her heart. "David Kerr, the king of underhand manipulators! David Kerr, the man these wretched women look to for protection—and pay him for it!" This new thought was a poisoned

Continued on page 7.

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