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# The DAUGHTER OF DAVID KERR

by Harry King Tootle

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"You know it's the truth, Gloria. Let us go together."  
"Don't make it so hard for me, Joe dear," she begged. "When you kissed me I thought I knew my heart, but now nothing in the whole world will ever be the same again. You mustn't blame me; I still like you, more than ever, but in a different way. Can't you understand? You have told me I'm more than a shallow, frivolous girl. I honor you for the offer, Joe, but I wouldn't be true to that better self you talk about if I accepted."  
"I make no offer, Gloria," he pleaded. "I'm begging you to love me, to become my wife."

She trembled visibly at his words. Yet her resolution was such that she was not shaken from her purpose. She did not dare look at him, however, as she answered:

"I'm afraid the love one must beg for wouldn't be worth having, Joe. You wouldn't be happy with me. No matter where we went you couldn't forget what happened here. Then consider me—if you'd ever be absent-minded for a minute, gazing into



"No, Joe, I Couldn't."

space, I'd know you were thinking of Belmont and the opportunities you'd thrown away because of me. I couldn't stand it. I'd always feel that you were recalling the past and regretting the present. It would kill me. No, Joe, I couldn't."

Wright's proposal had been totally unexpected by Gloria. Up to the time he had begun to plead with her to go away with him, she had maintained fair control of herself. His generous offer, as she termed it, had pierced her armor of reserve and laid bare her warm, quivering heart.

"Pride, Gloria, pride," the man whispered. "It's pride that's keeping you from being true to yourself and true to me."

"Don't speak to me, Joe," she sobbed. "I can't stand it."

In his heart he yearned with all the ardor of youth and love to gather her in his arms and comfort her. Yet he knew her well enough to know that it could not be. Her humiliation had rendered impregnable the barrier she had erected between them. There was naught he could do but suffer in silence while she wept.

### CHAPTER XXIII

Gloria hated herself for the paroxysm of emotion to which she had given way in the presence of the man whose love she had rejected. There was no interpretation to be put upon it save that her nerves were overwrought, yet she did not know how he would construe her tears. She did not wish him to think her weak. Suddenly the girl remembered that tears were a woman's weapon. The thought so enraged her that in her anger at being so much a mere woman she forgot to weep. She had in her the spirit of her father. Drying her eyes hastily, she turned to say good-by.

Wright saw her turn and hold out her hand. Could she have changed her mind? His heart prompted this thought, but one glance at her face told him she was still determined to go her own way alone.

"Good-by," she said.

"Is it to be good-by, Gloria?"

"That, and nothing more."

The man looked at her in a dazed manner. Now that the time of parting had come she had far more self-possession than he. He groped about in his mind for something to say, but words were inadequate. There is no telling how his feelings might have betrayed him had there not come a knock at the door to interrupt their parting.

At the sound Gloria exclaimed with a start, "Who's that?"  
Wright walked to the door, saw who asked for entrance, and opened it wide for Patty to enter.

"Mr. Joey, there's a man says he must see you at once."

"Did you tell him I was busy, and to wait?"

"Oh, yes, just like you told me, but he said to tell you he was David Kerr!"

"My father!" Gloria took a step forward. Her exclamation told what a surprise this news was to her.

"What does this mean?" he asked.  
"You know as much as I. I've told you I've not seen my father since that day in Judge Gilbert's office. He's been busy with politics, but, more than that, I've—well, I've preferred staying with Mrs. Hayes."

Patty, tired of listening to a conversation she could not understand, and remembering the visitor, asked: "What shall I tell him?"

"Wait a minute, Patty," Wright motioned the child to the door. Then

he turned to Gloria. "You can leave by this side entrance. No one will be the wiser for your visit. The minute the door closes behind you, Patty—and I—will have forgotten that you called. But I will not have forgotten your kindness and consideration. Before you leave I want you to know that I can't value too highly the motive that prompted your call. To the end I'll treasure it as a memory hallowed by the parting from the only woman I—Good-by."

He felt he could not complete what he wished to say without a show of emotion to which it would not do to give way. The only thing he could do was to hold out his hand and say, "Good-by."

Gloria put both her hands behind her back, and shook her head.

"No, I refuse to go."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean just what I say. I intend to stay here and meet my father and hear what he has to say to you."

Wright gazed at her intently, but she did not quiver under his scrutiny.

"It shall be as you say," he assented. "Go, Patty, tell him to come in."

After Patty closed the door there was an awkward silence which he broke by saying, "I must say that this meeting is ill-advised."

She sighed and shook her head.

"Oh, ill-advised or not, my mind is made up. Things cannot go on as they are. If henceforth I am to direct my own affairs, why shouldn't I begin now?"

"But how explain your being here?"

"If he can't believe what I have to say he isn't worth the slight esteem with which I still regard him."

"Here he comes."

"Let him see you first." She retreated to a corner of the room where her father's first glance as he entered would not discover her. Patty opened the door and David Kerr walked into the room.

The two men looked at each other without any attempt at a feigned cordiality.

"Mr. Wright," began the boss, and at mention of his name the newspaper man bowed slightly in recognition of the greeting. "I met Dr. Hayes this afternoon. He spoke of you, and what he told me has led me to break a custom of years; I've come to see you. In this town it's always been the other way." He spoke with all his accustomed force, and seemed even more confident than usual as he added, "The old way will continue, sir; but owing to what you might call the relationship that once—"

"Sir!" thundered Wright in astonishment. Covertly he looked at Gloria, to find his own amazement mirrored on her face.

"Bound us, I thought I'd come to see you," the boss continued, not heeding Wright's exclamation.

"One minute, sir," Wright was not willing for him to proceed without his knowing that his daughter was in the room with them. "Before you speak further you must know that we're not alone in this room."

"We're not?" He looked about him, and at the sound of a familiar voice turned sharply to confront his daughter.

"No, father; I'm here." She advanced coolly to the center of the room, and waited for him to speak.

"Gloria! My daughter here!" He managed to gasp. Wright, determined not to have his hand forced, waited to see what card the daughter would play.

"Wait a minute, please," she remarked quietly, the most self-possessed of the three. "Are you so blind you can't see you find me here because I wish it so? My visit to Mr. Wright surprised him just as much as did yours. When you were announced, I told him I would stay."

"So that's it, is it?" her father raged. "Have you turned against me, too? Why didn't I raise you like you ought to 'a' been!" It was with an evident effort that he was restraining himself even as much as he was.

"Would to heaven you had!" Gloria exclaimed in a low tone. "You gave me only the roses of life, and now the thorns—all that life offers me—seem sharper than I can bear."

Wright had thought his heart had been so wrong that nothing could hurt him worse, but this confession of unhappiness to her father made his own unhappiness greater than he had believed it could be.

"Gloria, this is distressingly painful. Please don't," he begged. Then he turned to her father. "Why have you come here?"

"Why is she here?"

"Father," now she spoke timidly. a



"You Kin Come Over to My Way of Thinkin'."

maiden telling of a dear, dead love, "for a little while Mr. Wright and I—were engaged—to be married. I don't think you know what that means to a girl, what it meant to me. But you do know how it ended. Yet we're still such good friends that I felt I could come this afternoon to—"

As she spoke, a great light began to dawn upon her father. At the words "good friends" he saw his whole plan successful, although worked out along lines a trifle different than what had been in his mind when he had determined to call upon the editor. Your successful general is a great opportunist, and David Kerr was quick to seize this opportunity.

"Good friends!" he echoed, interrupting her. "Then I'm glad I found you here. Just listen to me a minute. I ain't got much to say, Mr. Wright, but we understand each other pretty well. Now then—you gave us a pretty hard bump, an' I admire you fer it. Of course, you're new to Belmont an' it looks all right from yer pint o' view." His tone was now suave and conciliatory. "But you're too good a man to be blockin' the wheels o' progress in this town."

"Things were running pretty smooth when I came here, weren't they?"

Wright was willing to admit that much.

"Exactly, exactly," Kerr took a step forward and glanced at Gloria before he went on. "Now then, what do you say to this? You switch over an' join me. If it's too strong fer you to go, I'll cut out that Maple avenue railway line, an' we'll go at it some other way."

Gloria looked at her father in astonishment. Wright did not interrupt him, wishing to hear all that he had to say. "This campaign's taught me I'm growin' old. Some day somebody's got to take my place. There ain't a man in the party with your sense. I need you, an'—what's more—you'll profit by bein' with me."

"Mr. Kerr, it won't take me many words to give you your answer."

Reading disapproval in the remark, David Kerr craftily replied with his kindest manner, "Take yer time, take yer time. The more you think it over, the more you'll like it. Besides, I'm thinkin' of Gloria. You two talk it over. She's—"

"Father!" The girl was perfectly horrified and her sense of the fitness of things outraged by having her name dragged into the discussion. "Would you dare connect my name with such an affair!"

To the coarse nature all things are coarse, and her father seemed surprised that she should resent the manner in which he had connected her with the offer. "An' why not?" he asked. "I've been thinkin' the matter over, an' you an' him would make a pretty good team."

"Oh!" Gloria's disgust was unspeakable. Mere rage was useless to express her feelings. She gave her father one withering look and turned away, walking up and down the room like a caged animal.

Kerr turned to Wright, since Gloria appeared to have no inclination to listen. "So I argues, why not fix it up between us." Then he spoke to his daughter in explanation, "Not knowin' you'd be here. But it's just as well. Now, Mr. Wright, what I say is this: This town wants somebody to run it. Belmont can't git along without somebody to keep the wheels greased. I'll put the paper on its feet fer you, an' gradually—as gradually as you like—you kin come over to my way of thinkin'. Then what'd be more natural than fer you to take over the runnin' o' things—especially as you'd be my son-in-law?"

Wright was about to make reply, but Gloria was too quick for him. Stamping her foot with rage, she paused before her father defiantly.

"Oh, this is more than I can bear! Am I a dog, a horse, a pig, that I can be traded in a dirty deal with not so much as 'by your leave'? I'll not stand it for another instant. One humiliation after another has been my lot, but this is the last. I'm through with you. What has passed has taught you nothing; you're the bargaining, trading, scheming politician still, so low that you'd make your own daughter, your own flesh and blood, the bait to lure a good man from his purpose. But you can't do it," she cried, a note of triumph creeping into her denunciation; "he's not your kind. And do you believe that I'd submit to such a thing? What can you think of me? You put me on a plane with those vile creatures who pay you for protection."

"Gloria, please stop!" Wright pleaded. Her father could only look at her in wonder as she poured out the

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