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THE ADOPTED DAUGHTER.

IT was a golden day in October, and earth, having decked herself in her many-hued robes, and gathered upon her bosom her wealth of autumn fruits, was royal in her beauty. Her charms were lost however, upon the weary man who plodded along the dusty road that led to his farmhouse, for he scarcely raised his eyes, and seemed filled with sad thoughts. They were sad, and no wonder, for the little farm upon which he had toiled so many years, and where he had hoped to spend the remnant of his days, seemed likely to pass out of his hands.

The old trees in the orchard were heavy with their rich fruit, a bountiful supply of corn was waiting to be garnered, and a goodly array of pumpkins and squashes lay ripening in the sunshine; but all this had no charm now for John Humphrey, for probably they would never be his. Twenty years before he had purchased the farm, paying a trifle down, and had set himself diligently to work to reclaim its wasted acres, and make for his loved ones a home of plenty.

But somehow he never seemed to prosper like other men, never had "any luck," as he expressed it. His hay was always sure to get wet, his sheep and cattle died, and scarcely a year passed that some untoward event did not happen to discourage him.

It was slow work paying up for the farm but it was accomplished at last, and the joyful event was celebrated by taking his wife and children to visit a sister in a neighboring town. But, alas! they paid heavily in sorrow for their day of pleasure, for the whole family caught a malignant fever that was prevalent at the time. John and his wife were delicious during their sickness, and when reason returned and they were able to bear the news, it was told them that their three little ones were laid side by side in the old churchyard on the hill.

This affliction had an opposite effect upon the parents; while Ruth Humphrey bowed submissively beneath the rod that smote her, and took home the sweet truth to her heart, that whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, her husband was filled with hard and bitter feelings. The cheery smile with which he met his other misfortunes was now seldom seen upon his face, and ever after he walked under a heavy cloud of sorrow. No other children came to cheer the old homestead, and so the lonely years passed on.

One cold chilly day in autumn, a little bare-footed girl, in tattered garments, peered with hungry eyes into the kitchen door, which chanced to be open, and asked in a feeble voice for something to eat. Mrs. Humphrey was at once struck with the beauty of the little pinched face and her forlorn appearance.

"Come in, dear," said Mrs. Humphrey, and I will give you something to eat."

"O my!" said the child; "that's what she called her."

"What do you mean by she?"

"The beautiful lady that came to the big house once, leading a little girl just as big as I. She called her dear, ever so many times, and it sounded so nice. I wished somebody would call me so, but no one ever did but you, and please, ma'am, I love you?"

"Poor child!" said Mrs. Humphrey, wiping away the tears that filled her eyes; "where do you live?"

"I don't live anywhere now, since I ran away from the big house. They didn't give me enough to eat, and they whipped me for everything—see there!" And the child pointed to the blue marks on her slender arms.

"You poor little dear, how can people be so cruel! Can you tell me your name?"

"I'm Madeline, that's all. Everybody called me Mad in the great house, and O how I hated them for it!"

Mrs. Humphrey placed a bountiful supply of food on the table, and the eagerness with which the almost starved child devoured it brought the tears again to her eyes.

When the little one had finished eating,

Mrs. Humphrey drew her to her side, and gently smoothing her hair, asked her how she would like to live with her.

"O, may I?" And the hazel eyes grew large and lustrous with sudden hope.

"Yes, if you wish. I had a little girl once, but God took her home to live with him. Perhaps he has sent you to take her place."

Madeline answered by nestling close to that mother heart, and murmuring again and again, "O, I love you so much!"

Mrs. Humphrey went to the drawer that held the garments her little one had worn, and consecrating them to their new use with a baptism of tears, she arrayed Madeline in them, and taking her by the hand, went out to meet her husband, who was approaching the house. His eyes looked his astonishment, and Mrs. Humphrey told him briefly all she knew about the child.

"I may keep her, may I not?" she asked. "It will be such a comfort to hear a child's voice in the house once more."

"Yes, do as you like, Ruth; perhaps, as you say, she will brighten up the old house."

And thus it came to pass, that the little waif that floated to the farmhouse on that autumn day became known as sweet Madeline Humphrey, the fairest maid in all the country round.

Mrs. Humphrey, on the afternoon in which our story opens, caught sight of her husband as he slowly walked up the lane leading to the house, and met him on the threshold with an inquiring look.

"It was of no use," he said, sinking into a chair. "Travers has already lent all the money he has to spare, and there is no one else to whom I can apply."

"Is there no hope, then?" said Mrs. Humphrey, with pale lips.

"None that I know of now. The old house must go, I suppose, for next week the mortgage runs out."

Just then Madeline came in from the orchard with a basket of rosy apples.

"O father!" she exclaimed, "I have been taking a survey of the orchard, and I never knew the trees hang so heavy with fruit as they do this year. The old cellar will hardly hold it all."

"It will never hold any more fruit for us my child."

"Then you were not successful in raising the money, father?"

"No, Madeline, what we have all dreaded is likely to come upon us. It was always my luck."

"Don't, John, don't call everything that happens to us luck."

"What else can I call it, Ruth? I have tried as hard as any one to get along, but you know how everything has worked against me."

"But we had the farm paid for once, John. You were successful at last, although it took a great many years. If you had never signed your name to that note, this present trouble would not have come upon us."

"Yes, yes, I know it. But who would have believed that my best friend would have run away and left me to pay the note? He wouldn't have served any one else so. I tell you it's my luck, and it's of no use to fight against it. I might as well have sold the farm then to pay the money, as to have raised it by placing a mortgage upon it. I might have known I never could pay it. I depended upon the sale of the hay last summer to pay a certain amount, but you know there was hardly a ton that went into the barn in good condition."

"Well, John, God's ways are not our ways, and though it has sometimes looked dark enough, and does now, in fact, yet I never saw the time I couldn't trust him."

There was such a serene look of peace and calm trust in the face of his wife as she said this, that John Humphrey marvelled greatly.

"How you can take everything, good or bad, that comes to us in the way you do, is past my finding out," he said, as he took the weekly paper that had come in his absence and tried to become interested in its contents.

Madeline seated herself by the window, and gazed sadly out upon the familiar scenes which she feared they must leave for a strange home. The silence of the old kitchen was at length broken by a knock upon the outer door. It was opened by Mrs. Humphrey, who ushered in a young man named Ernest Seaton. An angry flush overspread the face of Madeline, but she managed to greet the visitor with a show of cordiality.

"I have heard," said he, addressing Mr. Humphrey, "that you wished to borrow a certain sum of Mr. Travers to-day."

"I did, sir, but he was unable to accommodate me."

"I have called to say I have about that amount by me, which I wish to invest, and will loan it to you for one year."

"You are very kind, sir," said Mr. Humphrey, the light of a great joy kindling in his eyes. "On what terms do you propose to make me this loan?"

"Simply this: that with the money I shall furnish you shall cancel the present mortgage upon your place, and give me a new mortgage for one year from date."

"I will accept your kind offer, Mr. Seaton, and although it looks so dark now, something to my advantage may happen before the time expires, and the old place be free again."

"Very well, I am glad I could accommodate you, and if you please, I will meet you at Squire Preble's this evening and have the papers made out."

"Won't you stop to tea?" urged Mrs. Humphrey. "I will have it ready in a very few moments."

"No, I thank you, I am in something of a hurry. Isn't there a nearer path to town through your woods than by the road?"

"Yes sir, and Madeline will show you the way, for it is somewhat difficult to find."

Madeline took her hat from its accustomed nail, and with ill-concealed reluctance prepared to obey her father's wish. Ever since the Seaton's, a proud English family, had moved into town, Ernest had been persistent in forcing his attentions upon Madeline. She thoroughly disliked him for his snobbish ways and the meanness of his general character. She would rather have had her father indebted to any one else than to him for pecuniary aid. They walked on in silence a few steps, but as they entered the wood Seaton strove to draw Madeline into conversation.

"This is the way," she said, pointing to a well-defined bridge-path that opened to the left; "you have only to go straight forward through the woods, and you will find the distance much shorter to the town."

"Thank you, Madeline; and now let us sit on this mossy seat and rest a few moments."

"I am not fatigued, and I thought you were in a hurry, Mr. Seaton."

"I am never in too much of a hurry to talk to you, Madeline, when I can get an opportunity. I am going to Europe in a few weeks, to be absent some months, and before I go I must hear my fate from your lips. You have evaded the question and fought shy of me long enough. Madeline, you know how madly I love you, and I must know whether you accept that love or not."

"Mr. Seaton, I had hoped to have been spared this avowal from you; my manner towards you must have betrayed the state of my feelings, and I cannot return the love you profess for me."

Seaton sprang to his feet, while his face became livid with rage.

"Madeline Humphrey," he hissed, "who are you, that you should spurn me in this manner? You, a foundling, and the inmate of a poorhouse in your childhood! The blood of one of the best families of England flows in my veins, and I know of a score of girls who would consider an alliance with me as the height of their ambition."

"Then I advise you to bestow your precious self upon some one of this score without any delay. I have never thought you really loved me, and now this taunt with regard to the circumstances of my early life confirms my belief beyond a doubt. This matter must be considered as settled between us forever."

"Not so fast, my lady. One year from to-day a mortgage which I shall hold upon your father's farm will expire. If you marry me, I shall never demand a cent; but if you do not, I shall demand of Mr. Humphrey the uttermost farthing. You know as well as I do what prospect there is of his paying it."

The baseness of Seaton's motive in aiding her father in his extremity flashed upon Madeline in an instant, and the indignant blood mounted to her face.

"I leave you," said Seaton, "and remember my conditions. They must be complied with or you take the consequences."

With a haughty stride Seaton disappeared down the bridge-path, and Madeline turned with a heavy heart towards the farmhouse.

Mr. Humphrey went to the village soon after tea, to keep his appointment with Seaton, and Mrs. Humphrey, who was fatigued with the cares of the day, retired soon after, so Madeline was left alone in the old kitchen. As the time sped on she glan-

ced at the tall clock in the corner, and thought to herself:

"That dreadful mortgage, I suppose, is made out by this time, and there is no help for it now. It only remains for me, single-handed and alone, to do what I can to thwart his villainy."

She took up the newspaper, and as she glanced over its columns, her eyes rested upon this item among the "Wants."

"WANTED.—An assistant teacher for the English branches in the Lakeside Seminary. Candidates will be examined at the Institution on the 20th inst."

"O," thought Madeline, "if I could only get that situation it would relieve us from all difficulty!"

The more she thought of it the more determined she was to try. She had always been the smartest scholar in the village school, and had taken the first rank during the half year she had been permitted to attend the academy. It was only the English branches she would be required to teach, and she felt competent to do that. Her mind was made up before she sought her pillow, and the divine wisdom asked to aid in the new course she had marked out.

Madeline spent all her spare time in study during the next week, and then sent for her friend Clara Lane to come and pass the night with her.

"Well, I declare," exclaimed Clara, as she entered Madeline's chamber, "what an array of school books you have upon your table! Do you intend to set up a private school here?"

"Not exactly, Clara, though I hope to have a school somewhere."

"What on earth do you mean, Madeline Humphrey? Every district in town is already supplied with a teacher for the winter term, so there is no chance for you here."

"There may be in another place, though, for you are aware that Irvington is only a very small corner of the world. In fact, I mean to apply for the situation offered in that advertisement," said Madeline, handing the paper to Clara. "and I want some of your help," she added.

"Dear me, Madeline! I don't see how I can help you, but if there is anything I can do, I am willing to try."

"Then, Clara, please show the sincerity of your offer by giving me a thorough examination in these branches. I want you to ask me the hardest questions you can find, and if I pass the ordeal with tolerable credit, I shall venture to become a candidate at Lakeside next week."

"I'll do the best I can, Madeline, so let us proceed to business. I'll warrant you'll get examined to your heart's content."

The girls sat up till the old clock in the kitchen struck eleven, and then Clara closed the book, exclaiming:

"There, I haven't the slightest doubt but what you will not only pass a triumphant examination, but annihilate every other candidate who presents herself! But what in the world has put this idea of teaching into your head just now?"

"O, several things. One is, I want to help father; you know he has rather a hard time to get along, and as he took me, a forlorn and friendless child, it is no more than right, now that I have grown up, that I should strive to make him some return. I haven't spoken of my plan yet, but I shall to-morrow; and I think they will approve of it, although I know they will be lonesome without me the coming winter."

Madeline waited the next day till the morning housework was done, and her father had come in to rest him after doing his chores at the barn, before she spoke of her project.

"Well, I never!" said Mrs. Humphrey, dropping her knitting work; "to think of you wanting to go away off to that out-of-the-way place to teach! Why, child, I don't hope you think we begrudge you a living here at home!"

"Ah, Madeline knows better than that," said Mr. Humphrey. "While we have a roof over our heads or a crust of bread left she shall share it with us. She has heard us say that a great many times."

"I know it, father," replied Madeline. "I am aware I hold a daughter's place in both of your hearts, and that is why I want to act a daughter's part, and by doing something for myself, now that I am able, help you along a little. Lakeside is only fifty miles from here, and as there is a stage ride of only six miles at the end of this route, I can visit home whenever there is a vacation. I don't know as I can obtain the situation, but if I can, are you willing I should take it for a year, at least?"

"If you have set your heart so much upon it, child, I don't know as I have any objection; what do you say, mother?" said Mr. Humphrey addressing his wife.

"Well she might as well go, perhaps. It will be a change of scene, if nothing more; and I don't know as we ought to keep her shut up in the old farmhouse all her life, even if we could."

So it was settled that Madeline was to go the next week to Lakeside. She had no money to spend in unnecessary travel, and everything was prepared so that in case she was successful in obtaining the situation, her trunk could be sent on to her.

Clara Lane was the only one of the villagers entrusted with the secret of her going, and so when the old yellow stagecoach drove up to John Humphrey's door one morning, and Madeline was seen to enter it, there was a great speculation as to where she could be going, and what her business in that unknown region could possibly be.

When Madeline had fairly lost sight of the last familiar house, she began to realize what a venturesome thing she had undertaken. No doubt there would be a score of experienced teachers for her to compete with, while she had only taught one term in a district school.

There had been no rain for some time, and the roads were very dusty, so she was glad to tie on the thick brown veil she had brought for that purpose. It was well she did, for at the first place at which the stage stopped, who should get into it but Ernest Seaton? He was bound to the next railroad station, from which he was to take the cars en route for New York, and there embark on the steamer for England. A friend was with him, and the two, who had taken something to solace themselves at the last tavern, grew very talkative.

"How long do you intend to remain abroad, Seaton?" asked Frank Graves.

"O, five or six months, perhaps. Our old family estate needs to be looked after, you know, for I don't mean to settle in this miserable republican country. We only came over here on account of father's health, and he has received no benefit from the change, for the doctor says he has an incurable disease that may carry him off at any time. It is quite certain he can never return to England again, and in the event of his death, as the eldest son, I shall inherit Seaton Hall."

"I suppose you have some fair lady over the water, who is destined to reign mistress of the lordly mansion?"

"There are plenty who would be glad to secure that position, but, as it happens the lady whom I have selected is on this side of the water. America has some institutions which I like, and among them are the pretty girls. The one I have reference to is a perfect Hebe."

"How long since your engagement to this peerless beauty transpired?"

"O, there isn't a real engagement; indeed she fights shy and will have none of me at present, but I have laid a very clever trap to catch the beauty, and I haven't the slightest doubt about the result."

Madeline's cheek glowed with indignation, and she bit her lips till they nearly bled. The sublime impudence of the English snob was something wonderful, and she was more determined than ever to defeat his plans. The money should be ready for him on the day that mortgage expired if it were within the bounds of possibility. She was glad when the two friends were set down at their destined station, and she had the opportunity of removing her veil and breathing a little fresh air again.

A half hour's ride brought her to the railroad station, and she was soon speeding on as fast as steam could carry her to Lakeside. The cars were very full, and she had some difficulty in finding a seat. She had never traveled enough in her life to become hardened to the discomfort of others, and so when at the next station a fat old lady, with a carpet-bag, two bandboxes and an umbrella, wandered up and down the car looking in vain for a seat, she rose immediately and offered hers. A gentleman, who had previously done the same thing for a crippled fellow-passenger, gave Madeline a nod of sympathy as they each strove to balance themselves on the arm of a car seat.

"There is to be a convention, or something of the sort, I hear, at a station about five miles further on, and I presume so many will leave the cars at that place we shall then be able to find a seat," remarked the gentleman.

"O dear," spoke up the old lady, "I hope, if so many folks get off before we get to Lakeside, there won't be any of 'em take my things by mistake. My best bonnet is in that big bandbox, and my caps, collars and such things are in the t'other, and I wouldn't lose 'em for nothin'! I told my darter Sarah Maria that I didn't suppose I should have more'n half of my budgets when I got home. Are any of you folks going clear to Lakeside?"

CONTINUED ON SECOND PAGE.