

Select Story.

[For the Colonial Farmer.]

MILLIE.

BY HERBERT TOWNLEY.

CHAPTER I.

SHE had just returned from a walk, and stood leaning on the garden gate, her hat in one hand, while the other rested on the gate, and her gold-brown hair was waving in the breeze. She made a pretty picture standing there. She was a pretty country girl, and had a bright and attractive face. Two little rosy cheeks, pretty blue eyes and rosy lips, gave an additional beauty to her otherwise sweet face. Her figure was graceful and well-formed. The little hand on the gate was white and soft, the fingers long and slender. She wore a ring of exquisite beauty, which contained a stone of the purest water.

The young girl's name was Millie Selwood, the daughter of a wealthy country gentleman, and was his only child. Millie's mother died when she was quite young, so that the youthful training of the young girl devolved upon her father. She was eighteen, and almost spoiled; merry, laughing, mischievous Millie. Everyone loved 'pretty Millie,' as she was called.

She was standing as we found her merrily humming a few snatches from a song, when the sound of horses' hoofs reached her ear.

Soon she beheld a buggy, with a pair of beautiful bays attached, and containing two gentlemen, coming down the road. As they passed her a light wind caught the hat of one of the gentlemen, and carried it across the road, where it fell at her feet.

She smiled as she saw the hat coming toward her. Suddenly the horses were stopped, and a bare head thrust out of the buggy, and looking Millie, its owner called out, 'Hullo, sis; will you bring me my hat?'

It is evident that the gentleman did not notice her particularly, or he would have seen that she was not a child, and gone after the hat himself.

However, nothing daunted by the sarcastic remark, Millie, smiling, picked up the hat, saying to herself, 'We will see if he gets the hat from me, the imprudent!'

She approached the carriage, and standing so as not to be seen, reached her arm around, until she brought the hat in front of the owner; and just as she stretched out his hand to take it, she drew it suddenly back, and sent it spinning over the horses' heads into the road.

The hat dropping so suddenly before them, the horses started forward, until it lay irretrievably crushed beneath their feet.

Millie stood looking on, feeling sorry that she had been so rude, when one of the gentlemen—not the one she had teased—sprang from the buggy, and picked the hat up from under the horses' feet. And looking up, he caught the mischievous eyes of Millie looking steadily at him. With some confusion, he removed his own hat, and apologized for his friends' rudeness. The other occupant of the carriage looked out at her, and then suddenly withdrew his head.

Millie slightly bowed, when the gentleman made his apology, and walked slowly towards the gate again, followed by two pairs of handsome eyes.

'Here's your hat, Steinfeld,' said the gentleman, as he regained his seat.

'All there is of it, any way. It's a nice trick. The wizard! A pretty way to treat a stranger.'

'Hold on, boy. You forget you spoke first.'

'I didn't think she would.' Of course not. You thought she was a little country lass, ready to jump at your command; returned his companion. 'Did you see what a pretty hand she held out to you, Fred?'

'Of course—I did. I wonder who she is?'

'I'm sure I don't know. But I admire her.'

'There you go again, Merton. You fall in love with every pretty girl you meet.'

'So you appear to think. How is Helen?'

'There, that's enough. We will say no more about it.'

'Very well. It isn't worth talking about,' replied Merton, and they continued to drive on in silence for some time.

At length Merton turned to his companion, and said, 'Fred, I'm going to find out who that little beauty is.'

'Humph!' replied Fred, without taking any further notice. He felt a little provoked at the loss of his hat, but was obliged to own that he had been justly served for his imprudence.

Millie having reached the gate again, entered it, and walked up the gravelled path to the house. She found her way to her room, and went in. She sat down before an open window, murmuring to herself, 'I wonder who they are? They must think I am very rude. I suppose I ought to be very sorry for what I did. But what right had he to speak to me that way?'

Millie laughed merrily when she thought about it.

'I wonder if papa expects his friends to-day? I wonder if they are handsome?'

'Silly Millie!'

'Ho, ho!' the thought again, 'perhaps they are the men. I'll bet anything they are. Yet, perhaps, they are only strangers taking a drive into the country, or else they would have stopped here. Still, it may be just as I think, and that they have mistaken the house. Wouldn't it be odd if it were them. Well, I needn't be alarmed for myself.'

She laughed again, as she thought of the possibility of those two gentlemen being the ones whom her father was expecting from the city, to spend a few weeks with him on a shooting excursion.

Millie began to dress for supper, as it was nearing that hour. She had scarcely commenced, when she heard the door bell ring, and a servant answer the summons. Her heart leaped at the sound, for she half expected that her thoughts were about to be realized.

And so it proved.

She heard her father greeting the strangers, calling one Fred and the other Allan. And then came the explanation that tingled her ears, as she heard it. 'Why, Fred, what is the matter with your hat?'

'Oh!' returned Fred, 'the horses tampered with that, that's all.'

'That's not all, though Millie, as she cut the last finishing touches to her toilet, and prepared to go down stairs. A moment later she heard her father call to her.

'Yes, papa,' she replied, 'and ran down stairs to meet him.'

Her father led her into the parlour, where she found the two very persons she expected to see.

If Millie looked pretty as she stood at the gate, she looked doubly so now. She was dressed in a manner that rendered her very attractive, and as she bowed to the gentlemen, when her father introduced them, there was something in her manner and appearance—a charm in figure and face—that could win the hearts of the most irresistible woman later.

After supper, while Steinfeld and Merton were sitting together in the piazza smoking, Merton said, 'Well, Fred, what do you think of your wizard now? Pretty, ain't she?'

'Of course,' laughed Fred.

'Don't you really think she is a beauty?'

'O, bother! You're captivated now.'

'Well, say—'

'Shut up, Allan. Don't be a fool. I am going to apologize to her this evening.'

'It's time you did.'

Here Mr. Selwood joined them, and further conversation on the subject ceased.

CHAPTER II.

One evening, a week or two later, as the young men were sitting together on the piazza, Steinfeld surprised Merton, by saying:

'Allan, I'm in love.'

'Are you, indeed?'

'Yes, I am; and what is more, I am in love with Miss Selwood.'

'When?' exclaimed Merton. 'And what will Helen say?'

'Helen! The duce!'

'Pretty Helen! Why, Fred, I'm ashamed of you. Do you not remember what you told me about her—how you swore that you would love only her? You know as well as I do, that she loves you, and her gentle heart beats with response to yours. Be careful, that you do not wound the heart of one who loves you more than life. It will serve you right, if Miss Selwood should treat you as she did when you first met her.'

'I say, Merton, why do you turn against me in that manner? I thought you were my friend.'

'And so I am, Fred. But I think it unworthy of you thus to forget Helen Layle, a woman whom any man would be proud to call his wife.'

'Confound it, Allan. I am not certain that I do love her.'

'How do you know but that you do not love Miss Selwood?'

'How do I know? I am certain I do; and I want you to help me.'

'What do you intend to do?'

'Oh, please—I will—I will—propose to her, of course. Millie has captivated my heart; and besides, she's the girl to play with—the beats me in everything—chess, croquet, and all that sort of thing.'

'And how do you know but what she will beat you in this game?'

'I will play close. I love this country life.'

'You may regret this.'

'Why should I? Will you help me, Allan?'

'How can I?'

'I don't know. What will I do?'

'Propose to Helen Layle, instead of to Miss Selwood.'

'I can't do it; so there. I have set my heart on Miss Selwood, and to her only will I propose. See if I don't.'

'Well, go ahead with your proposal. Only I think you may be sorry for it. What if she should reject you?'

'Don't talk to me about that; I can't hear it. I will propose.'

'Very well,' replied Merton, 'I'll bet you what you like, you will marry Helen.'

'Bah! Mary Helen!'

Merton looked at Steinfeld, when he said that, and saw that he looked flushed, as though he was ashamed of his words.

The two men withdrew to the parlour, where they found Millie, looking, if possible, sweeter than ever, sitting at the piano.

Millie proposed that they should sing, to which they consented. She rose from the stool, and asked Steinfeld to sit down to play. He, however, begged her to be seated again, and having selected a song, sang it. His voice was a rich tenor, and as he sang, Millie could not help admiring his rich tones.

Then it came Merton's turn, he approached the piano, and turning the leaves of the music book, chose for his piece, 'My love, my own.' As he turned over the leaf, his eyes met Millie's, and a slight color tinged her cheeks. Merton's voice was a deep bass; and as he sang, he seemed to throw his whole soul into the piece. Millie was delighted, and requested him to sing again. But he thought of Steinfeld, and begged to be excused.

Mr. Selwood now requested Millie to sing; and she selected a piece she knew to be her father's favorite. Her voice was sweet, and the young men were delighted by the spirited manner in which she sang. Merton, who stood at her side, turning over the music for her, gazed into her deep eyes, and seemed to read her very soul; and as she sang the last verse, he turned his eyes towards Steinfeld, with a look as much as to say, 'Steinfeld, she shall never marry you.'

(To be continued.)

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