

THE DOUGLAS HEIR.

CHAPTER VIII.

It soon became noised abroad that Miss Meta Douglas, the heiress, was no more than any other common mortal, since her wealth had taken to its wings and flown away.

She had been obliged to descend from the golden pedestal on which she had been elevated for so long, and was, therefore, treated accordingly. But with the "spirit of heroes" strong within her, she took no notice of it, other than to curl her pretty lips with scorn, and then went on the even tenor of her way.

It seemed as if her heart must break when, as the last day before the sale came, she went from room to room to take a farewell view of everything, and gather up the few precious treasures which Mr. Conrad had told her she was at liberty to take.

Aspasia had proved herself a friend indeed during her friend's trial. She had insisted upon remaining with her until everything was over, and donating a simple calico dress, minus either ruffles or train, and her own fair hands the packing of valuable books, statuettes, bronzes and ornaments, which she knew were so dear to Brownie's tender heart.

And when at length, the last day arrived, early in the morning, before even the servants were astir, she had slipped down stairs, and no longer caring for the "sobs" which she knew Miss Meta had highly prized, from the fact of their having been brought over from the old country.

Her father had given her permission and carte blanche to perform this delicate service for her friend's trial. But it was all over at last. Everything was sold, and the house was left bare and desolate.

Aspasia had gone, and Brownie was alone. The debts were all paid, also the bequests to the servants, which Brownie had insisted upon, although they were urged to invest the money for herself.

"No," she said, decidedly; "auntie wished them to have it—they have been very faithful, and I desire her wishes to be strictly adhered to."

Accordingly, Mr. Conrad was obliged to do her bidding, and then, with a sigh of despair, placed the hundred girls to work, and remained of a fortune of a million, in her little hands.

about the business; I have come to learn, she answered, frankly and simply. The gentleman gave her a look of surprise, then a smile of amusement curled his lips.

"Miss Walton does not like the trouble of teaching any one," returned the other, coldly. "Now," she continued, "take the hat like this, between your finger and thumb, so; then with your finger try to steady the wire in its place. Ta, that is just right."

"But Miss Walton told me to be very particular, said Brownie, surprised at the fearfully long stitch which she was told to make."

"I know," she tells us all to be very particular, but when a few stitches will answer the purpose as well as a good many, we do not hesitate to avail ourselves of the fact."

"You are very kind to show me, and I think I shall do nicely now." Brownie worked so happily that she finished the refractory wire in its place, and knowing just how to hold the work the needle no longer depended on her fingers.

"I do not think you will have any more trouble, and every one you see will find the next one will come easier," her companion said, after watching her a few moments, and giving her a little more advice.

It was even so. She was very quick in her motions, and apt to learn, and after a while she found she could make a hat in ten minutes, when at first it had taken her more than double that time.

"But the confinement—the close, hot room, the noise of the machinery, and incessant chatter of the girls around her, began to wear upon her."

Her head throbed and ached, as did also her arms and back from their unaccustomed work, and she grew so tired and nervous that it seemed to her when night came as if her brain were turned.

Wearily returned Brownie, becoming somewhat uncomplaisant at being so closely questioned.

"Thank you, if you will, I shall be grateful, I watched Miss Walton carefully, but do not seem to get her way of holding it."

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"No, sir," replied the young girl, blushing, as she thus became aware that he had been listening to her. "I only read for my own profit and amusement."

"Your accent is remarkably pure," Pardoe said, and where were you instructed in the language?"

"In Philadelphia, sir, I had a teacher who was a native, and who never allowed his class, after they once understood the language, to utter a word in any other tongue during the hours of recitation."

An excellent plan, young lady. Now, if it would not tax your patience too far, will you kindly read to me two or three sentences in French from this book?"

The old gentleman took up the book she had but just laid aside, and held it out to her.

Brownie bowed gracefully, wondering what his object could be in thus testing her power, as she took the book and began reading aloud fluently.

"Thank you," he said, after a few minutes, during which time he had been intently reading the face of the beautiful girl.

She smiled brightly, and answered it on the instant.

He asked another, and soon they were in a lively conversation, which was like Choctaw to poor Mattie, who was anxious to get home.

"Do you speak any other language?" Can you speak Italian?"

Brownie's proud spirit boiled at these insulting words, but she did not deign to notice them further than by lifting her proud head a trifle more haughtily, as she swept up the stairs to her own room, followed by the more subdued and trembling Mattie.

(To be continued)

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