

The Disappointment Of Lady Woodruff.

"Her ladyship and Miss Woodruff are out, sir. They drove to Elston house after luncheon."

Moncrief's face fell. Earlier in the day he had made the discovery that his departure from town could be put off until a late hour; and though he had bidden his sweetheart "good-by" the night before, he could not resist the opportunity of another glance at Betty's bewildering blue eyes. He had thrown himself into a harness with hope high in his breast, to be met with the intelligence that his Betty was off merry-making, when he had imagined her overcome with grief.

The old butler stole a commiserating look at the downcast face. Moncrief's love affair was a favorite tonic in the kitchen.

"Oh, well, Saunders, it can't be helped," he said, at length. "I'll just see the little girls before I go. Are they in?"

"Yes, sir. The little ladies are just at tea in the schoolroom. I'll tell them you are here, sir."

"Never mind. I'll go to them myself. I think I know my way to the schoolroom Saunders!"

"Yes, sir."

When Moncrief opened the schoolroom door there was a delighted shriek from the two little fair-haired occupants. They darted up from the table and flung themselves upon him, almost frantic with joy.

"Oh, Terry, darling, aren't you going away after all?"

"I am, my pets, worse luck; but I found I had an extra hour or two, and I came off to see Betty; but she's out, and I couldn't go away without a peep at my little girls again."

"No, of course not, Terry. It was lovely of you to come, and you'll have tea with us, won't you? But we've got nothing very nice," and Molly surveyed the table with great disfavor.

"But we will ring for anything you'd like, Terry," put in Sue, promptly.

But Terry assured them that toast and cake was the fare he most desired. And Sue seated herself with great dignity behind the tea tray, and Molly got out another cup and saucer.

"And where is Miss Mathews that she is not here to chaperon us, Sue?"

"Oh, she's gone to her sister's wedding. Isn't it jolly? Molly and I wanted to be bridesmaids, but Gran flew out at us and asked us if we wanted to disgrace her."

"But we are glad now, for if we had been bridesmaids, we would have missed you," and Molly smiled lovingly up at him.

"So you would, old woman; her ladyship did us a good turn that time. But cheer up, Betty will be requiring your professional services before very long, I hope."

The little girls bent forward deeply interested faces.

"And you, too, Terry?"

"Of course, Molly."

"Oh, that will be splendid! But will it be soon, Terry?"

"Well, I must get back from Jamaica first," said the young man, laughing. Then he looked down at his plate with a sigh.

It seemed very far off, his marriage with Betty—further off than he dared to let himself think sometimes. Lady Woodruff was the obstacle. From the very first she had set her stiff old face against it. She had more ambitious views for beautiful Betty. She could not prevent them loving each other, but she had refused to permit a formal engagement.

"Why are you going to Jamaica at all, Terry?" asked Sue, anxiously. "I think you ought to stay at home and look after Betty. Gran puts such things into her head. Sometimes she does not seem to be our Betty at all. She's either dressing or dancing or going somewhere."

"I wish I could, Sue, dear, but my affairs in Jamaica are all jumbled up, and it is necessary for me to go and see after them. There is a chance that I have been cheated, and I may be a richer man than I thought."

"Oh, Terry, I hope so! It would please Gran if you were richer, wouldn't it? And it takes an awful lot of money to buy Betty's frocks now."

"But it wouldn't matter if you came home as poor as a sweep," said Molly, tenderly. "We'd love you just the same."

"Well, I should think so," said Sue, loftily. "You needn't tell Terry what he knows."

"I'm afraid if that were the case your grandmother would show me the door in earnest," said Terry, grimly.

"Tell me, what made Betty go to Elston house to-day?"

"She didn't want to go one bit," said Sue, "but you know Gran's way; when she puts her foot down we all crawl. And Betty was a fright, for her nose and her eyes were as red as anything with crying all night about you going away, you know."

"My poor little love," said Moncrief, tenderly.

"And Gran was as cross as two sticks," Molly said, mournfully.

"I'll tell you what I think," said Sue, leaning her chin on her palm and looking across the table solemnly. "Gran's setting

her cap at old Lord Elston. Oh, you needn't laugh, Terry," she went on, with a shake of her wise young head. "I'm sure she wants to marry him."

Terry stopped laughing and looked suddenly grave. Could it be that Lady Woodruff was thinking of Lord Elston as a possible husband for Betty? That old man! His heart grew cold at the very thought. He did not doubt his Betty's fidelity. But he knew only too well the ambitious views and the indomitable will of the perverse old woman in whose hands he left his treasure. But there was no time to brood over this now; he looked at his watch and started up in a hurry, and said he must be off.

Molly burst into stormy tears, and Sue's face got so white that Terry felt he had been selfish to come near them again. They clung to him and followed him down to the hall for a last kiss, a last embrace. When he had broken from their clinging arms he looked back at Sue's strong young face.

"Sue," he said, pleadingly, "take care of Betty."

"Yes, Terry."

"Give her my love—"

Sue nodded.

"And don't let her forget me, Sue!"

"I won't, Terry—Terry darling."

Sue's mouth quivered, and for the first time the tears sprang into her brilliant eyes, and Terry bolted down the steps without another word, for Sue's tear-drowned eyes bore too strong a resemblance to Betty's to be contemplated calmly at such a moment.

When that suspicion flashed into Terry's mind that it would not be at all improbable if Lady Woodruff with her worldly views had some idea of securing the rich old nobleman as a husband for Betty, he had been nearer the truth than he thought. This scheme had been maturing in her ladyship's mind for some time, and no sooner was poor Terry out of the way than she set about driving him out of Betty's head.

She went to work with some diplomacy. For a few days she left Betty to herself, and Betty grieved very honestly after her absent lover, and liked nothing better than to get Miss Mathews out of the way and the two little girls to herself that she might talk of Terry to such sympathetic listeners.

But after that Lady Woodruff filled up Betty's days from morning until night with such brilliant gaieties that the girl had no time to fret; and Betty was young and this was her first season, and her uncommon style of beauty brought her adulation that might have turned the head of a wiser and older woman.

And wherever Betty went she met Lord Elston. He undoubtedly admired the pretty, fresh-matured girl, and Lady Woodruff fostered his admiration and encouraged him with diplomatic skillfulness. Betty treated the old man with a merry deference she might have accorded to a father or uncle.

And when he at last made her a stately proposal of marriage the girl was dismayed, and at first proudly repulsed him. But at this period Lady Woodruff interposed, and speedily brought poor Betty to a state of subjection. The haughty old woman scolded, entreated, commanded. And finally, for very sickness of heart, Betty gave way.

When the engagement was announced the little girls were thunder-struck. They utterly refused to believe it. They put forward Terry's claim, they argued and expostulated—Molly tearfully, Sue with blazing eyes. And when at last they insisted that it must be Gran whom Lord Elston wanted to marry, Lady Woodruff flew into a furious passion and ordered them back to the schoolroom.

But when Betty was dressing for a dinner party that evening Sue burst into the room with a determined face. Betty was sitting before the glass, listlessly buttoning her glove. The bright color that was one of her charms had faded from her cheeks. The satin of her gown was not whiter or softer than her skin. And clasping that snowy throat and descending to her waist were pearls that a queen might have coveted—the betrothal gift of Lord Elston.

Sue pointed to the pearls with a contemptuous finger.

"Betty, is that why you are going to marry that old man?"

"Sue!" Betty started, and the blood rushed hotly into her face. She frowned at Sue over the bent head of her maid, who was kneeling on the floor arranging her skirt. She shut her mouth with a snap, and waited until the woman had left the room; then she said, impetuously—

"Is it because Terry can't give you those things that you have broken your word to him?"

"Sue, darling, you don't know what you are saying."

"I do," flashed out Sue, wrathfully. "You are behaving horribly. You are going to marry that dressed-up old Lord Elston because he's richer than Terry."

"Oh, Sue! No! No! Don't say that."

"But I will, and I must speak, Betty. It doesn't matter if Gran is angry. You can't love him—he's as old as Gran. It is because he is rich. Oh, Betty, what shall we say to Terry when he comes back!"

"Sue, hush!" Betty bent forward and covered her face with her hands. "Don't add to my—misery."

Sue's stern young face softened.

"Betty, you couldn't be cruel to poor Terry, who loves you so? Send Lord Elston away, Betty. Tell him you can't be untrue to Terry."

"Sue, I can't. It's too late."

"Then you don't love Terry. You told him lies."

"Sue!" said Betty, haughtily, her eyes for an instant flashing with their old spirit, "does Miss Mathews permit you to use such expressions?"

"It doesn't matter two pins what Miss Mathews permits or doesn't permit. I'll say it again, Betty. You told Terry lies."

"Sue, you forget yourself."

"Do you love Terry?"

"You shall not take me to task in this way. Go back to the schoolroom."

"I'm going. But I'm ashamed of you and I'm ashamed of Gran. You aren't my Betty a bit, and the best thing that Terry can do is to stop loving you as fast as he can."

Sue took her departure with an angry bang of the door, but almost instantly she was back again and flung her arms around Betty's neck.

"Oh, Betty, I'm horrid to you," she said, remorsefully. "But everything's horrid. Betty darling, you do love Terry don't you? It is Gran who is making you marry that man."

But just then Lady Woodruff's voice was heard calling, "Betty!" and Betty started and lifted her head from Sue's friendly shoulder.

"Go away, my darling," said Betty, hoarsely. "Don't make it harder for me, dear Sue."

And Sue with a down-cast face went obediently out of the room.

The two little girls discussed the subject when they were supposed to be preparing their lessons. But it was hard to give their attention to German grammar when their minds were distracted with thoughts of poor Betty and poor Terry.

"She does love him, you know," observed Sue, gloomily. "This is all Gran's doing."

"If Gran likes Lord Elston so much, why doesn't she marry him herself?" asked Molly, distractedly.

Sue shrugged her shoulders.

"I'm sure I wish she would. There is one thing," she added, darkly, "I'm not going to have anything to do with him."

"Neither am I," said Molly, positively.

But they had something to do with him in a few days, as it turned out. For after two or three attempts to propitiate the two cold but polite young ladies who called his fiancée sister, old Lord Elston invited them both to luncheon.

Lady Woodruff frowned down the obstinate refusal that was framing itself on Sue's lips and the rebellious look on Molly's face, and accepted the invitation for them.

"They will be delighted to go. Miss Mathews will go with them, dear Lord Elston. How very good of you to trouble yourself with the children!"

"No, no. Ye won't have that Mathews woman," said the old lord, testily. "We'll manage without the governess, eh, Sue?"

Sue permitted a stiff smile to flit over her face. She hated to be called "Sue." Molly looked perfectly impassive. Lady Woodruff felt she could have shaken them both for the wooden way they received his lordship's pleasantries. But she said nothing—for the remembrance of their outspokenness on more than one occasion when publicly censured made her shudder.

The little girls' expostulations were of no avail. Lady Woodruff's will was law, and they drove off to Elston house the following day with obstinate little faces that did not augur well for the success of the visit.

After luncheon Lord Elston led them into his library, and, going to a cabinet, he brought out two little morocco cases.

"I wished," he said, "to give you both some small memento to my engagement to your sister. I consulted her as to your tastes, but she would not assist me; however, I trust these will please you."

He opened the cases, and disclosed in each a small but exquisite gold watch. On the back of one was "Molly" in rubies; the other bore the word "Sue" in sapphires.

"Oh!" said Molly, round-eyed and staring. Then she grew scarlet, and put her hands behind her back and averted her eyes, and gently pushed her watch towards her.

"No, thank you," she said, politely.

He raised his eyebrows in cynical surprise.

"You don't care for such things?"

"Oh, yes—very much; but—but we can't take them, thank you."

"Come; there is a reason for this refusal, I see. Do you think your grandmother would object? I can assure you," with extreme hauteur, "she will not object to any gift of mine."

"It's not Gran," said Sue, stoutly, "it's ourselves. If we took them we wouldn't be true to Terry."

"I don't understand. Pray who is Terry?"

"Mr. Moncrief."

"Oh!" Lord Elston put in his eyeglass, to better examine the two earnest faces before him. "Young Moncrief—he has gone to Jamaica, hasn't he? I don't quite see what Moncrief has to do with my gifts to you. Come," he said, turning to

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Molly, "take your watch, child."

But Molly shook her head, and her eyes filled with tears of vexation. It was a struggle to refuse that beautiful watch but loyalty to Terry was the uppermost feeling.

Lord Elston looked puzzled.

"Upon my word, you are a very extraordinary pair of young ladies! Will you be good enough to explain, Susan?"

"We don't mean to be rude," said Sue, desperately, "and we'd love to have the watches if you weren't going to marry Betty—we wouldn't mind if you were going to marry Gran."

"Indeed!" said his lordship, with a satirical curl of his lips. He was really excessively amused. He leaned back in his chair, and pulled the waxed end of his grey moustache with his delicate old fingers, and peered at the children with supercilious eyes.

"You see," said Sue, bravely, "we have known Terry all our lives, and he has always loved Betty, and they were engaged—though Gran—"

"Wait!" said the old lord, imperatively. There was an aroused, suspicious gleam in his eyes. "I don't quite comprehend. Your sister was never engaged to young Moncrief."

"It was the same as an engagement persisted Sue. "Betty promised to marry him, but Gran wouldn't hear of it in Betty's first season. But Terry loves Betty, and Betty loves Terry."

"She cried for days when Terry went away," put in Molly, conclusively.

"I see," said Lord Elston, idly, then he continued, with an ironical smile, "And because, with—er—better judgment, your sister prefers another, you two children agree to oppose the newcomer."

"But she doesn't prefer you," said Sue, impetuously, quite unconscious of the bluntness of her speech in her eagerness. "If she loved you best, that would be different. She loves Terry best. Gran made her give up Terry and promise to marry you."

"That will do," said Lord Elston, uncomfortably. "Your friend Moncrief is fortunate in his champions, but your sister will not thank us for discussing her affairs so freely."

He sat quiet for a few minutes playing with an ivory paper-cutter, and watching the children with a queer light in his half-shut eyes. He admired the flower-like loveliness of Betty Woodruff, but he was not blind to the disadvantages of marrying a girl whose heart was in the keeping of a young lover. Lady Woodruff had deceived him. She had angled for him and flattered him, and thought he had seen through the angling and the flattery, he had believed her when she stated that Betty's heart was free.

He had liked the idea of a gay young girl in the house. It would have added to his glory to have given to his old ancestral home a lovelier mistress than they had ever known before. But was he to be saddled at this late day with a young wife who would grow to hate him and find her bondage irksome? Were his ease and peace of mind to be tampered with? He closed his eyes in horror at the thought. If what these children said was true, and somehow he did not doubt it, he ought to be vastly obliged for the way in which his eyes had been opened. He would find out for himself and would be quits with that manoeuvring old woman. He smiled maliciously at the thought of her dismay.

Sue's voice broke in anxiously upon his musings.

Continued on page 5.

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