

NORA'S TEST

BY MARY CECIL HAY

From
Darkness
To Light

CHAPTER II—Continued

"Micky is very good," she said, thoughtfully, "and he is getting well. How I wish he could get well—that would be very kind on the work. When you think of Micky and Larry always making those 'wep' fairies."

"He seemed to think he had found a fairy to-day," observed Nora. And when he pointed out a spot upon the wall, and asked her whether he was to take home through that broken gate among the trees."

"That's—Mr. Traverser's. As Nora spoke, her face grew dimly. "That's Traverser, isn't it? I won't let you go further. Grandpa may be asleep."

"But with our sister's advice it may be possible to awaken him," pronounced Mark, coolly. "I am expecting him to see me to-day with you."

For several minutes Nora pondered his speech, and then, though she could not explain why, she had turned into the short, neglected avenue which bordered on one side by potato ground, and on the other by a field of flax—led up to an old square house, from which the colored plaster was half peeling away, and the brickwork crumbling below it.

"Mr. Poyntz," she said, and no wonder he laughed at her quaint solemnity—"that's Traverser. Do you wonder that travelers don't come to see the ruins?"

"That," repeated Nora, making a deliberate pause, as he looked in only at the dilapidated house, "is Traverser, is it? Your home where you spent the summer days and long winter nights—Child, how do you do it?"

"I am used to it," she answered, very softly. "And I have a grandpa, and old Kitty, and the dogs, and Snow—that's our cow; she is the best cow a great deal—and Bork, and there are some old books that were grandpa's, and I've a few Will left me, and one Colla gave me once on a birthday. Now," she went on, with just a little unsteadiness in her low, clear tones, "will you come, or will you change your mind?"

They walked on then, among water-lily beds and poultry, to the front door, which, wide open as it was, swayed to and fro upon one hinge.

"I don't think," remarked Nora, as they entered a bare, unfurnished hall, "that there is a single door at Traverser which will quite close. Some have both hinges but no lock or handle; some have an upper hinge only, some a lower one. They vary a good deal. This way, please."

As she spoke, she with some little difficulty pushed open a creaking door in one corner of the hall, and Mr. Poyntz followed her into the most curious room he had ever entered. In one corner a pile of bogwood reached from floor to ceiling, and had a ladder propped against it. In another, a stack of turf stood half-dismembered, its thick brown dust trodden well into the threadbare carpet. Upon the hearth lay at least a dozen dogs and cats; and behind them a small, wizened man sat straightening the beam of a wretched looking lat.

"Look here, child," he said, hearing Nora's step, but without troubling himself to look up. "I've got a bargain up at East. I found this on a screeper in Elliot's wheat, and so I changed. The bird was nearly off mine, and I can soon mend this. Ha?" he chuckled. "This is the first bargain I've met with this year."

"Grandpa," said Nora, the bright pink spreading painfully from chin to brow as she gazed beside him, "here is a gentleman."

"A what?" he asked, screwing his eyes fast, and then opening them as wide as he could. Presently he slowly rose, and looked beyond her to his visitor, raising his hand once to rub his eyes, as if his sight were dim.

"Who?" he asked, still looking at the tall, strong figure opposite, while Mark in his turn, looked keenly down upon his shrunken form, buttoned in a shabby coat, wearing no collar, and a patched black cap over his bald head.

"Mr. Poyntz," whispered Nora, the blush deepening strangely, and her breath coming hurriedly, in her new position, as she looked into her grandfather's face.

"From England?"

"Yes, from England," Mark answered, his long gray eyes fixed upon the old man.

"From Surry?"

"Yes, from Surry."

"It's chilly, and getting late, child; you can go and prop that window from outside—it flies open. Go quickly, and you needn't come back. Now, here, sir," he cried, querulously, as Mr. Poyntz seemed to be going himself to obey this command. "Don't think the child—never by any other term did old Col. St. George designate his granddaughter—hustle some enough to manage such a trifle as this."

For two or three minutes after Nora had left the room, Mr. Poyntz stood waiting; but when her face—still with the cheeks flushed, and the eyes brilliant and restless—had appeared outside the broken window, and was gone again, he turned coolly to the table and took a seat opposite Col. St. George.

"May I smoke?"

"Certainly—certainly," acquiesced the old man, again speaking with querulous rapidity. "Is that the only question you have to ask me?"

Leaning forward on his unsteady chair, Mark struck a fusee. Not until his cigar was alight did he raise his eyes to an answer, calmly:

"No, there are one or two more questions, which I shall be glad if you will answer me—as frankly."

CHAPTER III

Nora's bedroom was a long, low room, unadorned, like most of the rooms in the house; its scant items of furniture were as old and as badly in need of repair as were all the other articles in the house, yet her girlish taste and neatness had devised little methods of making the whole attractive. In a quaint, whimsical, ingenious way. But what a grace of picturesque neatness could she supply from her scant little wardrobe!

A faded muslin frock was brought out and shaken and then deposed in perfect

and unperceived content. After that, a young girl of the name which might originally have been a girl's name, on, was led to the end of her long plastic and, when she had brought the table cool around to the side of the effort, she could do her best, thinking how pay she was, and wondering whether Colla would consider she was properly dressed.

"An' ye've putted yer half apron, I do declare," exclaimed Kitty, half closing her eyes, as she examined Nora's dress. "I don't think it's the best you've got. Why, I'd think that inside enough white a day. I'm glad ye're rightly, though. The best thing's found in the yard."

"He heard," cried Nora, her tone more disapproving than surprised. "And on'y six eggs, Kitty?"

"Yes, an' a watter that he more'n one apron. I've bin in an' sit the cloth, Miss Nora, ye've grandpa on the bed in a watter far apart—stage I think the girl's ma's father apart this yer grandpa."

"And what do you think of the gentleman?" questioned the girl, for she had no one else to question.

"Just naught," replied Kitty, provokingly devoted to her soapstone. "I just couldn't look at him for watter. Fing' she couldn't wash in his color and his watter—so white—such a watter a soap. Ye needn't be lookin' so hard at those eggs, Miss Nora; the naught's stare in yer eyes won't make 'em right."

"I shall not go in to dinner," the girl said, with a sigh. "I will have some bread and cheese here. There will be only two eggs each even them. Oh, Kitty, if we had but a little money now and then!"

"What holla I to say about ye?" asked Kitty, passing with the dish in her hand. "Headache is the best complaint fur ye. 'Perhaps they watter ass,' said Nora, dimly, as she cut her bread and cheese. "If they do, I'd better have a headache; but if they seem sorry, say I shall be better in an hour, and will go in."

"Did they ass?" she questioned eagerly, when the old servant returned.

"Yes, my dear—one of 'em. Oh, don't be queshtionin' me. I furgit which it watter. I've put every thin on the table now. Yer grandpa says he watter not me again."

Nora, forgetting her bread and cheese before she was half-way through it, rose and passing through the cullin' nath, went into a favorite room of hers, where she and tried to make the shabby old room into friends as well as furniture, and had her pet lounging place in a little window seat in one corner. Here she had sat for only a few minutes, when she fancied that the door behind her had been pushed ajar. But, when she had looked round and found that there was no one in the room with her, she fancied one of the dogs had nosed in, as he went about in his next search for food.

So she sat on in the fading light, wrapped in a deep, wide, wonderful thought, which she fancied was only the continuation of an old day-dream, until suddenly she started up and, in a moment, her eyes were fixed and radiant. But the step which crossed the hall, and came straight up to her without pause, was a familiar one, and she leaned back again in her old position, and turned her eyes once more to the pale, pink light above the doorway.

"Nora," said Dr. Armstrong, speaking coolly, as he took up her left hand, which lay nearest him, and pressed his fingers on her pulse, "what has given you a headache today?"

"Eggs," said Nora, laughing; but Noel Armstrong looked how swiftly she tried to draw away her hand, and how readily her eyes, so large and beautiful in the pale light, went back from his face to the distant sunset.

He stood a moment in angry hesitation, and then he sat down beside her, still holding the hand, while west in his strong, supple fingers. He was a man of more than forty; yet there had traveled so smoothly with him that his face was unlined, and the glossy surface of his light brown hair was undisturbed by any silver thread. If any one had told Nora just then that Dr. Armstrong was two years older than the gentleman who had driven her home that day, she would have laughed at the truth as a jest.

"My dear little Nora," Noel Armstrong said, presently, in a soft, plausible voice, "how can I believe you are really suffering when you look so fresh and so lovely? Yet I feel sure you would not tell me a falsehood."

"I did," acknowledged Nora, with a nod. "At least, I let Kitty do it for me, which was worse. I'm coming in presently, though, to grandpa and Mr. Poyntz."

"He—you've seen him, then?" Dr. Armstrong had changed his speech too swiftly for Nora to notice it.

"Yes; he came home with me to-day. He is a friend of Will's."

"I think," observed Dr. Armstrong, his voice low and harsh, "that, after a three years' absence, it would be mildly for you to say Mr. Foster."

"I suppose so," she assented, simply.

"Colla did. Noel, I wish I was married."

"And what the happier would you be?" inquired Noel Armstrong. "With a little while and you shall be married with a care and watchfulness which few girls know. Every step of your education shall be an hour of bliss, my darling; and every lesson you are taught shall be on a theme that women love."

"I saw Miss Foster at the vicarage to-day," Nora said, without staying to consider what Noel meant. "She came with Mr. Poyntz to Ireland. She looked so elegant, and she is so educated, Noel!"

"She came with Mr. Poyntz, did she?" he queried, looking into the girl's face with a smile which she did not understand. "Then we may naturally conclude that they two are about to become husband and wife."

"Are they, d'you think?" she questioned, bringing her eyes back to his face for a moment, for she had for years been to do what a very clever man Dr. Armstrong was. "How strange that I never thought of that!"

In her fresh, untroubled voice, though he smiled was a little dreamy—"to be in love."

"Likel!" repeated Noel Armstrong, rising and standing over the girl's shining figure, as he answered in a rapid, unsteady whisper. "It's like an other sensation on earth—no other! It makes one long strain after a something that is misery as well as happiness. It makes one hopeless to rule one's own destiny—for good or ill. It makes a man stand in his narrow spot, holding all his world in his arms, while his heart burns and his brain aches. It makes the world so small to him that all its beauty is in one face, all its music in one voice, and all its rapture in one kiss."

She had risen then, and was looking at him in silence, pained surprise. He was so moved—so quiet, clever man to whom she had been a secret to look up with admiration—so moved.

"I don't like to hear this," she said, frankly, though very gently. "I don't want to think of it. I should like to think that love makes us happy and better; but instead of making the world so small to us, it makes it larger and more beautiful to us, and makes us help to make it larger and more beautiful, for others. That is my fancy, Noel, and I like the fancy. Besides, I dare say, if I were to ask some one else—"

His face darkened at her simple words, as if they had a covert meaning.

"Don't say an' one else," he said, in his harsh, authoritative tones; "it is not right for a girl to do."

"Noel," cried Nora, with burning cheeks, stepping farther from him, "you say strange things to me sometimes, if you are much older and very clever, and I am so—so ignorant of everything, and so undecide."

She broke down there, and stopped, for fear of being betrayed into tears before him, but she started forward and caught her hand hurriedly.

"Educated!" he cried, with a hard, quick laugh. "You will be educated soon enough, heaven knows! Have patience, Nora; it is not time yet."

"Take your hand away, please," she said, looking gravely up into his face, utterly unconscious that he could read some new courage there beyond the old fearless, child-like spirit; "I am going to grandpa."

Rather slowly and almost timidly she pushed open the door of their general sitting room; but in the first moment of her entrance she saw that, except for her grandfather's spare little figure in his cushionless armchair, the long room was empty.

"Oh, you're up again, are you?" he said, scrutinizing her. "Armstrong went an hour ago to fetch you to say good-by to the Englishman, but he found you were gone to bed."

CHAPTER IV

While Nora had sat dreaming at that favorite window of hers on the west side of the house, Mark Poyntz, smiling a little over her sudden illness, walked down the old avenue—so silent and shadowy in the April twilight—and out into the road which skirted the bog. Perhaps he was thinking of the drive and counting Board's pace, for though he walked without pause or losing back, his step was slow and leisurely. And there was another similarity, too, for when he reached the cottage on the roadside at which Bork had stopped, he stopped, too. A woman stood in the open doorway, and he began to talk to her in the coolest and easiest and most natural way possible; and when, two or three minutes afterward, he was sitting on her hearth, with her and her invalid son, it all seemed the most ordinary thing in the world. He sat just opposite a little sketch of an English house; and what more natural to him for him to speak of it and to admire its pretty frame of log oak? And then, what more natural than for the English woman—who through all her early womanhood had lived among the English gentry, and recognized one of them by instinct—to tell the story of that house so far as she knew it? And Mr. Poyntz sat and listened, looking now into the low turf fire, and now up at the pretty little sketch, but without a sense of weariness, and never without a pleasant look of interest on his face.

"Beautiful! You may well say so, sir. It was the most beautiful home I ever saw, and Miss Kate painted it just like. Notice that two towers, with windows between the young master's room. The window opens like two doors, on those wide steps, and then 'hair pipe' leads straight to the table, and the party slip a gown to it all round. Notice that, please, before I go on with my story. The young master—the master he was by all rights, though a good deal of his life in this room, for he'd always something in hand, an invention, or an improvement, or a discovery; and instead of riding after the hounds, and shooting and farming, like other gentlemen, he would start him if up there; and sometimes there'd be a smell of chemist's nooses, and sometimes there'd be the steam of engines, and sometimes there'd be great litters, Miss Kate went into his room but rarely, for she was always with the old lady—by the old lady, sir, I mean Mr. Arthur's great aunt, who owned the money that was to free all the land, which for years had been getting smaller and smaller, until poor Mr. Arthur owned little beyond the park. The very house, they used to say, was pawned like over his head. But old Mrs. Say had more money than would buy back all the big estate that went with the title coming to Mr. Arthur; and old Mrs. Say was dying slowly now, in this very house. What sort of old lady, sir? Why, about the very worst sort of old lady anybody could possibly know! From morning to night, and from night to morning, she woke only to eat and scold, and make Miss Kate's life a long, miserable slavery. Why she came to stay with Mr. Arthur through that whole year of fault-finding we never could make out—we always thought it dangerous—but that she should have brought poor Miss Kate, to show how she could nurse a patient, pretty young girl, we thought more dangerous still. Miss Kate was some sort of a relation of the rich old lady's. So time went on, and the only wonder to us was that their patience held out so long, especially Mr. Arthur's; for I don't think he ever came near her bed—she lay in bed that whole year—without having spiteful words said to him about his want of money, and the misery of that great house with so few servants in it."

"I needn't make the tale very long. One night the doctor having to go out

himself, sent his young assistant up to the Hall with a little vial, and he was himself to explain the contents to Miss Kate. She was to pour just six drops into water, and give it to the sick daily if she could not rest or sleep more on any account. Mr. Arthur was present and listened as well as Miss Kate. I so well remember my last visit into the sick room that night. The old lady fretting and complaining, even in her sleep; Miss Kate sat by the bed, close to the little table which held the medicine, and great weariness in her attitude. Mr. Arthur sat before the fire, looking thoroughly worn and discontented. In the outer room the nurse sat sleeping in an easy chair. I had begged Miss Kate to let me sit on this one night, but she wouldn't hear of it.

(To be continued.)

Spider and Caterpillar.

An exciting battle between a spider and a caterpillar, which lasted nearly an hour, was witnessed by a crowd of men and boys in West Main street yesterday. The spider won the contest after losing two legs.

The fight occurred on a tall fence on William Shindler's farm. Two boys were attracted by the combat, and gradually the audience grew until there were about fifty spectators. Many wagers were made on the result, the spider being the favorite. It is believed that the fight was caused by the caterpillar getting caught in the spider's web.

Being wedged in the meshes of its antagonist's parlor, the caterpillar was at great disadvantage, and could only fight from the one spot, while the spider could slide up and down and attack the caterpillar from all sides. The caterpillar fought with its head and tail. The spider punished with its deadly stings.

As a last resort the caterpillar attempted to encircle its opponent. The spider dodged right and left. Then both closed in. When they separated two of the spider's legs were missing. Then they clinched again, and by a quick move the spider got at the rear of the caterpillar and rolled it up like a piece of carpet.

Then the spider carried its opponent in triumph to a secluded hole in the fence. Later a feast was served in the spider's den.—Philadelphia North American.

Strenuous Hintsman.

A story of the life of Henry Mangers for the last five weeks would read like a dime novel, and Henry would really make a good subject for a story of some kind. Five weeks ago on Sunday he went sailing on the river, and the wind overturned the boat when in the deepest part of the river. He narrowly escaped drowning, but by good hard swimming he caught the boat.

The following Sunday he was chased about a field by a bull in Weaver's bottom. The fence was near and Henry was a good runner, so his life was again saved.

He fought copperhead snakes the next Sunday. One of the snakes wrapped itself about his legs, and he beat it off with a club. He caught the other snake by the tail and beat the life out of it on a barb-wire fence.

The Sunday following that he was in the millrace at the time the young man from De Kalb was drowned. He dived for the body many times without success. The next day his neck was badly swollen from diving so often.

Last Sunday he was in company with a party on the island, when all were knocked down twice by lightning, which struck a tree thirty feet away.

He says that he is going to Sunday school next Sunday, but in the afternoon he will go to the river again.—Steering Standard.

Railroad Through a Block of Houses.

The new electric railroad in Berlin will run through a block of houses, being enabled to do so by the removal of the lower portion of one of them. This block is opposite the Lutheran Church, near the corner of Dennewitz and Bulow streets. When the surveyors announced that the line would have to pass through this house, the railroad company purchased it and ordered that a requisite opening be made by taking away the first and second stories. The upper portion of the building they decided to preserve, as the rooms in it could be easily transformed into satisfactory offices for their clerks and some of the other railroad officials.

Smallest Railway in the World.

A narrow gauge railway is in operation at Dunfieldham, England, with a locomotive so small that it would be almost a plaything in the hands of the average boy. The engine weighs only a trifle over three and a half tons. It is the smallest locomotive in the world used for business purposes. A man of ordinary height is considerably taller than the engine, including its smoke-stack, while the width of the machine in its widest part is only about seventeen inches. The rails over which it hauls miniature cars are fifteen inches apart.

Newspapers in Iowa.

There are more newspapers published in Iowa, in proportion to the population, than in any other State of the Union. Massachusetts, so long at the head of the list, will have to give the first place to the Hawkeye State, for in proportion to its population, Iowa has more than twice as many newspapers as Massachusetts, and many more than a large number of other States.

American Pottery Workers.

There are 170,000 pottery workers in the United States.

A proud and haughty woman handles a lot of no-account kin by picking a lady-like quarrel with them, and then never speaking to them after it.

The social need of the hour is chaperons for chaperons.

STYLES FOR SPRING.

MODISH EVENING GOWNS ARE DESCRIBED THIS TIME.

There is a Wide Variety of Materials to Choose From and Great Latitude is Allowed in Making Up the Same—Notes on Gotham Fashions.

New York correspondence:



white silk embroidery, or they have the effect of embroidery. Again they are patterned with varied sizes of polka dots, some as large as a ten-cent piece and giving a most striking effect. Broche tulle is also used for evening wear, es-

pecially the light designs and grounds. These silks show waved designs in irregular shapes all in one color with the plain part, and over this the pattern is thrown. The result is a more appearance at first glance and is very charming. Moire and Louisine silks in all the delicate tints are used for evening, and are made up plainly or elaborately as one chooses. White and corn colored moire silks are much liked. A new sheer silk is crepe bouillie, which has a crepe look and silk finish. It comes in all the delicate tints and will be much used for evening. A model gown of it in white appears beside today's initial. White lace insertion, sole blue chiffon and black velvet trimmings. Silk and wool sublime is another new-



PRINCESS EVENING STYLES.

avoidable black velvet ribbon still in force. Thin colored satin ribbon in baby widths is to be used extensively. Many of the bodices are of white, others figured, polka dotted, striped or checked. New silk and cotton grenadines come in handsome colors, in stripes and checks, and make up handsomely in bodices when trimmed with lace. Yokes and berthas of lace are to be worn on such waists. Tucking, shirring and smocking will be a common resort, too. Applications and inset pieces of lace will also be used. Sleeves are elbow length, bishop, shirt waist style or plain dress, with a deep point over the hand. While a number of bodices fasten in back, still those buttoning down the front or at the side will be more liked. Collars are higher than



ELABORATE RIVALS OF SHIRT WAISTS.

over, some coming away up under the hair at the back. The upper left-hand waist of those shown here was embroidered linen batiste and cream Irish crocheted, with belt of black velvet. Below this is a green and white striped silk and cotton grenadine, with white lace, black satin ribbon and silver buckles for trimmings. The central model was white gauze over pale blue silk, and covered with cream lace. A little black velvet was used here, and much more of it was seen in the upper right hand model, which was a combination of tucked corn colored Louisine satin and smoked white silk, with lace for yoke and sleeve tops. There remains, a bodice of white satin frouded polka dotted in black and banded with emerald green velvet. Moire and Louisine silks promise to be much favored for fancy waists, and there is no indication of a lessening of black and white combinations.