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CINDERELLA'S SISTERS AND THE STORY OF THEIR WOOING

Showing How a Miss Hopeful Came Within an Ace of Playing Her Cards Successfully, to the Disadvantage of Her Elders.

"If ever there were two disagreeable, hateful, tyrannical old maids on earth, those two are my step-sisters, and you know it, Miss Reade."

Miss Reade looked uncomfortable. "As your governess, you know, Ella, I ought not to listen to your remarks on your sisters—" she began, nervously.

"Step-sisters, please," snapped Ella. "Oh, Miss Reade, if you had only been here before they came. It was so nice."

"Didn't they always live here, then?" asked the governess.

"Oh, dear, no. Their father died twenty years ago, when Laura and Theodora were six and eight years old, and when mother married a year later, Mr. Newton's mother took them to live with her. Then mother died two years ago, and father said I wasn't old enough to take charge, though I was fifteen. So as old Mrs. Newton had died a year or so before, and Laura and Theo were staying with their father's sister, father wrote and asked them to come here. They've done nothing but interfere with me ever since they came. You haven't been long enough here to find out yet, but you will soon. The idea of taking that book away from me."

"Well, you know, Ella, dear, it is not quite a book for young girls; but hush—I hear Miss Newton's voice. Do go on practicing."

The door opened, and a tall, graceful girl entered. She looked as much younger than her real age as Ella looked older, and no one would have guessed her to be more than twenty-three or four. She looked very pale and there were tears in her eyes and a quiver in her voice as she addressed the governess.

"Miss Reade, I have just had a telegram to tell me that my aunt has had a paralytic stroke. My sister and I are going to her with the next train. Will you kindly take charge here? I will give you all directions if you will come to my room. Ella, you will explain to father, dear, and be kind to the little ones."

All was bustle and confusion for the next two hours, and then the sisters drove off to catch their train from the junction.

"It's too annoying," cried Major Leigh when he arrived later in the afternoon and was met in the hall by Ella, eager to tell him the news.

"Just exactly my luck. Why couldn't their aunt take ill at some other time? What on earth shall I do? Write and put them off, I suppose."

"Put who off? Have you asked anybody down?" asked Ella, who was accustomed to her parent's incoherent style of conversation.

"I met two friends in town to-day," explained her father, "whom I haven't seen for six or seven years, and I asked them down for some shooting. I suppose I must put them off."

"No need for that," answered Ella, with a toss of her head. "There are plenty of good servants, and Miss Reade can order dinner and chaperone me. Who are your friends, father? I suppose they are quite old."

"They don't think so," said the Major with a grin, "though no doubt you will. They are some years younger than myself, both on the sunny side of forty. It's too bad of the girls," went on the Major, absently, and half forgetting his auditor. "I always thought there was something between Dot and Ashby, and it would do very well now that he has come into his uncle's property. And Courtenay's always talking about his ideal woman. I wonder what he'd think of Laura. Run away, Ella; I wasn't talking to you. Go and tell Miss Reade I want her."

Miss Reade was a weak and foolish woman, who, being incapable of exercising any control over her strong-willed pupil, managed her by means of gross flattery and unlimited indulgence. She was writing in her own room when Ella ran in to tell her of the expected visitors.

"And I shall have them all to myself," cried the girl, exultantly; "with no sisters to keep me in the background; no hateful Laura to look majestically at me if I venture to speak; no detestable Theo to snub me. I look quite grown up, don't I, Miss Reade?"

"You are grown up, dear," replied the judicious governess. "You look quite twenty. And seventeen is a marriageable age, you know. Wouldn't it be fun to steal a march on your sisters, and get married to one of these gentlemen?"

"Wouldn't it? And the point is, Miss Reade, that I believe father asked these men down to meet Laura and Theodora—I won't call her Dot; so absurd to keep up baby names when she is so old. I mean to have some fun with these men. Wouldn't it be jolly if I were to marry one?"

"It would indeed," Miss Reade assented.

"It is a distinct leading of Providence that the sisters are away," laughed Ella. "If they were at home I shouldn't have a chance. I should be kept in the background; and besides, Laura is handsome and Theo really lovely."

"But you have the charm of youth and your artless ways are more winning than the finished manners of older women."

Ella did not answer. She stood looking absently at the window.

"What is my Cinderella thinking of?" asked Miss Reade, after a pause.

"Of—Cinderella," answered the girl, with a little gleeful laugh. "I have a plan, Miss Reade, and if you help me, I'll take you to live with me when I am married. I'm going to act a little comedy. I am Cinderella; ill-treated by my step-sisters, who are old, ugly and jealous, but I am too noble to complain. I am resigned, gentle, ever obliging."

"I see. 'Pity is akin to love.' And you think you can interest these men by playing Cinderella. Well, it is not a bad idea. But how can I help you?"

"I'll tell you later. Meantime you had better go to father. I quite forgot to tell you he wants to see you."

Colonel Ashby arrived next evening. Sir George Courtenay was not expected for a day or two, and Ella felt rather relieved. One man was enough to begin with. The Major mentioned casually at dinner that his elder daughters were from home, and Ernest Ashby felt a pang of disappointment. He had hoped to meet Dot, for he had heard of the death of her mother and of the sisters having gone to live with their step-father. His brief love story had been played out one autumn in a country house where Dot had been visiting alone. Ashby had fallen violently in love with Dot, but although she had returned his affection, their engagement was never announced, for they had quarreled almost at once, and Ashby had gone abroad in a fit of temper.

As soon as the Major had fallen asleep over his dinner, Ashby made his way to the drawing-room, where he found Miss Reade at the piano, and Ella prettily reposed in a window recess. He quickly joined the latter, and began to make conversation.

"You have sisters, haven't you?" he asked, after a time.

"Step-sisters, and three darling little brothers."

"Your sisters are from home just now?"

"Oh, yes," with an arch smile, "or I shouldn't be here."

"Shouldn't you? Why not?"

"Oh, well"—a pause. "You see, I am rather young, and my sisters keep me in the school-room. They are very good and kind, but quite old; they think me a child."

"Quite old!" he exclaimed. "Why, they cannot be. At least the one I knew cannot be much over twenty."

Ella bit her lip in annoyance at her blunder. She had forgotten that Ashby had known Dot.

Ella hesitated a moment, then risked a daring step.

"Darling Dot," she murmured. "Ah, Colonel Ashby, did you not know? Dot died two years ago."

"Dot dead!" he cried, in a voice of anguish. It was over, then; his dream of reconciliation. He could never ask forgiveness now; never explain away his harsh words; never hear her dear voice whisper pardon. "I am sorry to have distressed you," he said, wearily, after a pause. "I had not heard of your sister's death."

Ella smiled through her tears like an April morn.

"I can't quite talk of darling Dot

yet," she said, unsteadily. "We were so much to each other, and I am so lonely now she's gone."

"You must be," he answered, almost tenderly. "You must miss her terribly."

"Oh, I do," cried Ella, pressing her handkerchief to her eyes, and there was a long silence. At last Ella looked up. "I must say good-night now, Colonel Ashby," she said, with a little smile.

"Already?" he remonstrated. "Why, it's very early. Don't go yet."

"Oh, but I have such a lot to do to-night," she answered, simply.

"Do you still do lessons, then?"

"Oh, no," cried Ella, earnestly. "I am going to the nursery. Baby Bertie won't let anybody else put him to bed. And then, my sisters have left me things to do."

"Tasks?" asked Ashby.

"Mending, and things like that. They have taken their maid with them, you see."

"Rather hard lines on you. Don't they ever take you out with them?"

"Oh, they are very kind," said Ella, "and they have promised to take me somewhere some day, when the boys are old enough to be at school and I am not so much needed at home."

"Rather a distant prospect," remarked Ashby. "I'm afraid it's a case of Cinderella and the cruel step-sisters."

Ella rather forgot her part next day. Her father was laid up with a sudden fit of gout, and Miss Reade was kept busy looking after household affairs and subduing a mutiny in the nursery. Ella sauntered round the grounds with the Colonel, chatting gaily, and then insisted on rowing about on the pond, as unlike a household drudge as possible. This occurring to her very forcibly, she made an effort to resume her role.

"What a nice holiday I'm having!" she remarked, accordingly, resting on her oars, and fixing gleeful eyes on him. "That dear Miss Reade has undertaken all my duties this week that I may have a complete rest. Isn't it sweet of her?"

"Poor little woman," he rejoined—they were on quite familiar terms now—"it's a shame you should be so overworked, and I shall tell your father so."

"Oh, no, you mustn't," cried Ella, in quick alarm. "I can't have dear father worried, especially now he is ill. You mustn't think I'm complaining. My sisters are very good to me. Promise me you won't say anything; please promise me."

"I promise, I promise," he soothed her. "I won't say a word, you loyal little soul. It's hard lines just now, Cinderella, but remember how the fairy tale ends, and this may end sooner than you think."

"How? What do you mean?" asked the child, with wide, innocent eyes, and Ashby hastily changed the subject, resolving to say nothing more to disturb her "heavenly innocence."

As soon as Sir George Courtenay arrived, Ella turned her attention to him. He, at least, could not bore her about the defunct Dot. Ella really was a clever girl, and she knew that simple pathos becomes wearisome in time, so without abandoning her role of Cinderella, she kept it rather in the background, and prattled so happily and even wittily that both men were amused and fascinated by her. So skillfully did she play her part (developing histrionic talent in a way that quite dazzled Miss Reade) that by the end of a week her success had far outstripped her wildest hopes. Both men had resolved to propose for her. Ella had determined to accept Courtenay. If she chose Ashby, he must inevitably discover her deception about Dot, but Courtenay had never met her sisters and could not hold her responsible for any discrepancies he might notice between her description of them and reality.

"I may as well own it to you, little one," he said, one afternoon, as they strolled on the lawn. "I was engaged to your sister. It was rather a hopeless affair, for I was wretchedly poor, so we kept it to ourselves. But a secret engagement is an awfully trying thing, and I was a jealous fool. We quarreled, and parted, and so—and so—I lost her."

Ella was silent.

When she was gone, Courtenay fell into conversation with Miss Reade, and Ashby went indoors. Running upstairs, he stumbled over a bundle which, on investigation, turned out to be a sobbing child of tender years.

"What's wrong, little one?" he asked, picking it up carefully.

"Ella snipped baby," sobbed the child.

"Ella did? Where is Ella, then?"

"Don't want Ella," wailed the baby so heartbrokenly that Ashby felt quite touched. He was trying to console it when to his relief the nurse appeared with a flood of apologies.

"I'm so sorry, sir, but I had to go downstairs for something, and Master Bertie ran after me. We're all at sixes and sevens just now, sir, for the young ladies being away makes such a difference."

Baby burst into renewed sobs, wailing, "Me no want nurse; me want Dot. Oh, me do so want Dot."

"Ah, poor little man! I, too, 'do so want Dot,'" sighed Ashby.

That evening the Major received a letter from Laura, informing him that her aunt was better and she and Dot would return the following afternoon. He kept this to himself, intending a pleasant surprise, and had himself established on the lawn next day at tea time. Ella made such a pretty picture of filial love as she hung about her father's chair that Courtenay made up his mind to delay no longer, but to ask her at once to submit to be trained—after marriage—into his ideal woman. So he presently asked her to come for a stroll around the lawn, and Ella, reading his purpose in his face, rose with alacrity. But, alas! in the very act of raising the costly cup to her lips it was dashed to the ground. At this very moment there appeared two ladies, hastening from the house across the lawn to join the party around the tea table. Ella turned white. Her father held out welcoming hands.

"The girls!" he exclaimed, joyously. "Welcome home, dears!"

At this moment—whence, no one could tell—three children dashed across the lawn and up to the newcomers, uttering shouts of welcome.

"Oh, sisters, we're so glad you're back!" cried the eldest. "Ella's been horrid. She's made us live in the nursery and never come downstairs."

The two guests had been looking on mystified, but as the ladies came nearer Ashby fairly gasped for breath. For the lady round whose neck baby was clinging was no other than his lost Dot. As for Courtenay, he was stricken speechless by Laura's calm loveliness. Here—at least in appearance—was his ideal woman.

"Don't you know my daughter, Ashby?" asked the Major. "Dot, I mean."

"It can't be," gasped Ashby, hoarsely. "It isn't possible. Dot is dead. Ella told me she died two years ago."

"Dot dead," repeated the Major, stupefied. "What—on—earth do you mean?"

"But—there must be—some awful mistake. Ella told me," faltered Ashby, and then Dot raised her eyes to his and said: "Ernest!" and he had no more doubts.

Ella, meantime, had most judiciously disappeared and her mystified father postponed inquiries till next day. Then, however, her little brothers, who had hung about the gardens many an evening and been unsuspected witnesses to tender scenes and pathetic plaints, told enough to reveal to the astonished and wrathful Major Cinderella's little plot.

Some months later a double wedding took place in the village church. The bridegrooms were Colonel Ashby and Sir George Courtenay, and the brides were Cinderella's sisters.—New York News.

CAPITOL "WHISPERING GALLERY."

What Causes Its Remarkable Peculiarity—Attempts to Remedy It.

The "whispering gallery" of the old Hall of Representatives in the National Capitol, now known as Statuary Hall, has long been an object of interest, and, to the uninitiated, of curiosity. In an apparent erratic manner, but with actual mathematical accuracy, the voice of a speaker, even when uttered in a whisper, echoes with remarkable distinctness from one place to another, and a person standing in the gallery on the extreme east may express a whispered remark, audible only at the opposite side of the chamber 110 feet away. From a scientific standpoint this phenomenon may be easily explained. The chamber is in the form of a quarter of a sphere, the centre of which would come five or six feet below the floor. Sound waves projected against the spherical ceiling rebound as a billiard ball carroms.

While this peculiarity is interesting and curious it always seriously interfered with the use of the chamber for legislative purposes, and numerous expedients were resorted to with the hope of remedying it. At one time a canvas false ceiling was stretched across the room and the objectionable acoustic properties of the hall were destroyed. In recent renovations the old wooden ceiling has been replaced with fireproof construction, but the echoes may still be heard. When the chamber was renovated last summer, in painting the columns to resemble marble the artist worked into the marbling excellent likenesses of Presidents McKinley and Roosevelt, but their presence, in form similar to the newspaper picture puzzle, was deemed inappropriate and they were subsequently removed. Although not generally known there are many curious pictures in the real marble columns of Statuary Hall which cannot be removed, for they are in the natural veins of the marble, which is known as pudding stone. An Indian, a deer, a girl's head and some emblems are clearly discernible once they have been pointed out.

There are other echoes in the Capitol, notably in the Supreme Court room and the various committee rooms, and even in the rotunda, but they can be heard only when perfect quiet prevails.—New York Tribune.

Disraeli on Love.

The sale of a batch of letters to Disraeli to his sister, written before the days of his fame, brought to light some interesting passages in which "Dizzy," as he always was to his sister, was very candid.

In describing a visit to Wyndham Lewis's he writes: "By-the-by, would you like Lady Z. for a sister-in-law? She is very clever, has \$250,000 and is domestic. As for love, all my friends who married for love or beauty either beat their wives or live apart from them. This is literally the case. I may commit many follies in life, but I never intend to marry for love, which, I am sure, is a guarantee of infelicity."

Within four years Disraeli married Wyndham Lewis's prosperous widow.

In a letter written four years before he became a Member of Parliament, Disraeli thus described a debate in the House of Commons: "It was one of the finest we have had in two years. Bulwer spoke, but is physically disqualified, and in spite of all his exertions can never succeed. I heard Macaulay's best speeches and Shell and Charles Grant. Macaulay was admirable, but between ourselves I could floor them all. This is entre nous. I have never been more confident of anything than that I could carry everything before me in the House. 'The time will come.'—New York Sun.

Out of His Class.

"There was a dog fight going on just around the corner out of sight," explained the man who was telling the story, and who always sees the funny side of life. "Back of me, coming as fast as his little legs could carry him, was a small dog not much bigger than a rat. As a matter of fact the biggest thing about him was his bark, but his every action seemed to say: 'Oh, I do hope that scrap won't be over before I get there!' I and that small dog came in sight of the fight at the same moment. There were six dogs in the mix-up, and not one of them was smaller than a calf. The way that small dog suddenly stopped, took one look and then turned and legged it for home caused me to laugh aloud. He acted as if he had suddenly remembered that it wasn't his day to fight."—Detroit Free Press.

The stingy man may keep everything except his promises.

Temper and Self-Respect.

When one loses command of himself and throws the reins upon the neck of passion, he may have for the moment a certain enjoyment in the license; but there must surely come a reaction of regret. When he is calm again, and the fit has passed away, every serious person must be ashamed of what he said and what he did, of the manner in which he gave himself away, and the exhibition which he made of himself.

He will recall the amazement on the faces of his friends, and the silence which they adopted as a protective measure, and the soothing language which they used, as if they were speaking with a baby, and the glance which passed between them. He will not soon be thought the same of with them as he was before this outburst, nor will he have the same claim upon their confidence as a sound and clear-headed man. He has acted like a fretful, peevish child, and has for the time forfeited his title to manhood and the place of a man.—New York News.

Lots of Fun.

The hopeful man never gets anything, but he has lots of fun keeping on guessing.—New York Press.