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tomed tears rose blindingly to her eyes. This was the reason of her unrest,—her homesick feeling of incompleteness and distaste! The years were piling up on her, and she, a woman, had no single person who was her very own to love. She had done nothing with her life, had but one talent to show for the one that had been given her, and a consciousness of failure and of loss swept through her rackingly. Her arms ached with their lifelong emptiness, and with all her heart she envied the tiny feathered creature whose anxious eyes still watched her. The years to come stared her in the face, tragic in their futility.

And then, suddenly, through her tears, Miss Penelope laughed.

Something lost behind the Ranges. Lost and waiting for you. Go!

Why not for her? She had waited long enough for fortune to come to her. Now she would go to it—she would not turn back until she knew what lay behind her Ranges! She wiped her eyes with the back of her glove and turned toward the crest of the hill again, this time with the light of adventure, perhaps of hope, in her eye.

THE road looked uninteresting now, as if it had bestowed all that it had to give, and, leading over the summit, it rambled aimlessly down into a valley very like the one that she had left. Still, though rather disappointed, she rode on, looking for a farmhouse where she might water poor Merry and find luncheon for herself; for, though Miss Penelope's manners and emotions had been carefully pruned all her life, her appetite was still quite normal. At last she caught a glimpse through a grove of oaks of a fine old house bearing something of the aspect of a modest English manor, surrounded by meadows and plowed lands which bespoke the affluent farmer.

As she rode slowly down an avenue of arching trees a flash of color from behind the hedge caught her eye, and she drew over to the side of the road to seek its origin. What she saw there made her forget her hunger in amazement and delight. A bit of a child, in pink frock and sunbonnet, was trying to squeeze closer to the protecting hedge, drawing her curls, like a little ostrich, over her rosy face.

Miss Penelope sprang down and slipped Merry's bridle over her arm, then lifted the child across the hedge and set her gently on her feet before her. The little lass glanced shyly at her, and Miss Penelope caught her breath at a fleeting glimpse of deep, dark blue eyes.

"What is your name, Dear?" she asked, one soft hand resting on the little shoulder.

"Penelope," answered the child quickly, and then buried her face in the skirt of the beautiful lady's habit, overcome by a sudden burst of shyness.

Penelope! A wild, half born wonder sprang to life in Miss Penelope's brain at the name, and she stood staring across the hedge as though she could read the answer in the rolling meadow land. She had never known where James Brompton lived, other than that it was down in the country somewhere; but this child's eyes, her name—

"Where do you live, little one?" she asked at last.

The tiny girl nodded toward the house; but her eyes rested on Miss Penelope's face, and after a second's scrutiny she slipped her soft, pink little palm into hers. Miss Penelope thrilled at the touch of the little clinging fingers, but with children she was shy, and she gave no sign other than a sudden color in her cheeks.

"Are you afraid of horses?" she said now, drawing Merry nearer.

At that the adorable little mite actually laughed, her whole rose-leaf face wrinkling comically, and she reached up to touch the mare's shining shoulder with a little tentative caress. She had known horses all her short life; but she would try the temper of this one before yielding all her confidence. Miss Penelope watched her with the appreciative eye of one who has been a horsewoman from her youth. She had been making up her mind, and now she stooped and lifted the child to the saddle.

"Come," she said, "you shall ride her home and see how gentle she is," and she walked beside her down the avenue toward the house.

Curiosity assailed her, curiosity and an odd envy of those who owned this morsel of delight. If her wild suspicion should be verified—well, she was enough woman of the world to meet James Brompton after sixteen years without embarrassment to herself or to him. And if it was his child, she had a fancy to see his wife, the woman who could supplant her in his affections. The child spoke eloquently of her, she thought, dainty, wholesome little lady that she was. And the picture of that tranquil household rose before her,—the grave, strong man, the fresh and

wholesome country woman, holding to her side this delicious bit of womanhood. Again that pang that was like homesickness shot through her, and she smiled at the child with a face as shy as her own; but, fearful of frightening her, she made no other sign, and walked on in silence beside Merry until they came out on the thick green turf about the house. A woman was sweeping off a side porch, and to her Miss Penelope spoke in her low, clear voice.

CAN you tell me if Mr. James Brompton lives here?" For she had resolved to win answer to her suspicions by one bold question. This woman with the strong, kindly face must be Mrs. Brompton. She had asked; but in her mind she was quite convinced.

The woman leaned on her broom and regarded the slight, fair haired woman in the riding habit curiously. "He did," she said; "but he doesn't now. You, Pen, what are you doing there? You see," she added rather apologetically to Miss Penelope, "her mother died last week, and she's been let run a little while since."

Miss Penelope threw her arm about little Penelope with a sudden loving gesture. She knew what it was to be motherless. "You poor baby!" she cried. "Who's going to look after her now?"

The brows of the woman on the porch drew together in a little worried frown. "That's just what's bothering us all," she said. "Of course, when Mr. Brompton was killed," Miss Penelope gave a little choked exclamation; but the woman had not noticed. "Mrs. Brompton just stayed on here; but she never was strong, and she seemed to go right to pieces after they brought him home that day, and last week she went, sudden like."

"How was Mr. Brompton killed?" asked Miss Penelope a little unsteadily. Her heart was bounding at a sudden glimpse of a delicious possibility, a possibility that took her breath away; but she would not welcome it yet.

"He was thrown from his horse," replied the neighbor, "and it killed him straight out; so o' course he didn't have time to appoint trustees or anything. His will just left everything to his wife. So here's this poor child with a lot of property on her hands and not a relation in the world that anyone knows of!"

A sense of disappointment struck Miss Penelope. She would have liked it better if the little Pen had had nothing at all. But she had money enough of her own not to care for what people might say—and, after all, did anything but the child matter?

"Do you know where I can get something to eat for my horse and myself?" she asked, and flashed a smile at the worthy Mrs. Cummings which transformed her into a hospitable housewife on the moment.

"If you'll wait until I've closed up this house I'll take you straight over to my house," she said. "I just brought Pen over this morning while I swept up a bit. We're keeping her till the lawyers decide what to do with her; though my husband doesn't like it, for he thinks I've too much to do now. Land knows six children are a care!"

Miss Penelope murmured something sympathetic and watched her bustle away. Six children! She glanced up at the little figure within her arm, and met steady, deep blue eyes. Suddenly her own shone, and she drew her close in a quick impulsive clasp.

"Do you think you could try to love me, Dear?" she whispered.

"Think I do!" responded Penelope promptly, and leaning down she dropped a fairylike kiss on Miss Penelope's ear. The latter gasped. Emotions were coming thick and fast today, and she was not accustomed to having them arise unbidden.

As she followed Mrs. Cummings across the fields to her own modest cottage she wondered how she would broach the plan revolving in her mind, and as she ate the plain, abundant fare that that good woman set before her the difficulties loomed large. But when she sat on the vine-hung porch afterward, and Penelope, after a half timid look into her face, climbed confidently into her lap, she would have braved the world to keep the treasure that seemed within her grasp. With that warm little body in her arms, that curly head pressing her unaccustomed shoulder, Mrs. Cummings' surprise, objections, arguments, were easy to meet.

ALL the daring and ingenuity of a starved mother instinct sprang to the defense of her rights to this tiny girl child; for, though she could not tell Mrs. Cummings of it, in the depths of her soul she felt that she had a right, through the memory of the man who had given her those deep blue, thoughtful eyes and the name of Penelope. So she finally prevailed over Mrs. Cummings and routed that woman's only half reluctant