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The True Heir To the Place

How the Old Mansion Was Turned Into a Real Home

By ALICE VAN ZARAN

The old house, with its coat of fresh paint, gleamed among its magnificent elms in the bright August sunshine. In the upstairs front room Priscilla stood before the mirror giving a last critical look at herself. Her hair was done high on her head in a style of bygone days, and an ancient shell comb was at the back. Her dress was a gorgeous brocaded silk which had belonged to her great-great-grandmother. It had never been altered, and it fitted her tall, straight figure to perfection.

"There," she said, "I guess that will do! Now I will sit down and wait till they come."

She went over to one of the west windows and sat where she could look down the road. Her face was alight with joy. This was the happiest day of her life. It was what she had looked forward to and worked for.

As she sat waiting for her expected guests her mind traveled back over the years that had led up to this day, which seemed to her to be the fulfillment of all her hopes.

She remembered how when she was a little girl and lived with her grandmother in the house she could see from where she sat she had looked with awe upon the mansion which stood on the hill, and all the stories she cared to hear must be about the old house.

Her grandmother could tell her many stories of the old place, of the young people who had lived there and made it gay with their happy voices, of the noted general who courted and married his fair bride there and of the sad times that came when the young people all went away and the old folks grew feeble and died and the old house fell into alien hands.

Priscilla remembered how she teased and teased till her grandmother took her to see the man and his wife who lived as caretakers in three or four rooms in the ell. After that she used to slip away to see them, and they got to be fond of her and let her roam over the house at will.

When she got to be eighteen she determined to earn money enough to buy the old house and restore it. The owner took no care of it, and it was going to destruction. It seemed such a bad thing to Priscilla to see the blinds sagging, the shingles and clapboards coming off and the chimneys losing bricks in every high wind. She would buy it and save it from ruin, and it would stand there in all its old time dignity, a Chamberlain's Cough Remedy Most Effectual.

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valuable historic landmark.

She told no one of her plan, but set about deciding on her work. She had always intended being a nurse, and this work would serve her purpose as well as any.

So by the time she was twenty-one she had finished her course at the training school, had taken her first case and deposited her first money in the bank toward buying the old place.

Then came a disappointment. The great-aunt for whom she was named sent for her to come and take care of her. Priscilla rebelled inwardly, for the old woman was crossgrained and miserly and grudge her the food she ate. But Priscilla knew that it was her last sickness, and she could not find it in her heart to leave her alone in her misery.

For two long years, therefore, she devoted herself to her kinswoman and gave her as good care as if she had been a wealthy, paying patient. And the aunt's disposition softened wonderfully at the last, and Priscilla confided her secret about the old house to her.

After her death there was a great surprise for Priscilla. Her aunt had left all her property to her. There was more than any one had suspected, and the will expressed the old lady's wish that Priscilla should use the money to buy and repair the old place on the hill.

After the place was actually bought there was much to be done. Carpenters and masons and painters were kept at work for weeks. The yard was made tidy, and after that the inside of the house was cleaned and repaired.

It was in June that everything was done and Priscilla had moved her aunt's old fashioned furniture into the house. The old couple who had lived in the ell still stayed, and the woman was Priscilla's housekeeper.

Then Priscilla found that her legacy was greatly reduced and that she must go to work. So she went to nursing again with a light heart.

And now it was old home week, and as one feature of the occasion she had thrown open her house and was to read a paper to the guests telling some of the most interesting stories about the place. She had furnished the rooms as nearly as possible like what they had been when the family lived there. There was not a modern piece of furniture in the whole house, and she had even been able to procure some of the very articles that had once furnished it.

At last she saw her guests coming. She colored as she recognized one figure among the others. He was the only one of the old family name who had taken the least interest in the old place. To be sure,

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he was merely the great-grandson of the last of the family to live there, and he had never seen it till this week. But he had taken an intense interest in what Priscilla had done, and somehow she had seen a good deal of him during the week.

Priscilla's heart beat high as she went slowly down the old staircase to meet her guests.

The afternoon passed pleasantly enough, but something seemed to be lacking. Twice Richard had approached Priscilla with an intense look in his eyes and was on the point of saying something when they were interrupted, and he turned away. Then all the guests had said farewell, Richard among the rest, and left Priscilla alone in the now darkening room.

After Richard had gone some distance, he remembered he had dropped his handkerchief in the big parlor. He returned to the house and, finding the door ajar, entered and went to the room, thinking as he did that he heard a low moan.

Richard looked uncertainly about the dim old room. In a moment his eyes became accustomed to the darkness, and he went quickly over to where Priscilla crouched sobbing on the floor. Her old brocaded gown lay in folds about her, and the arm on which her head was bowed rested on the old chair by the fireplace.

"What has happened?" cried Richard in alarm. He lifted her gently to her feet, and for a moment she rested heavily against his shoulder. Then she drew away and sank into her chair.

"I am very sorry you found me this way," she said tremulously. "I—I thought you were gone and that I was all alone."

"Wait a minute," said the young man, with practical thoughtfulness, "till we have some light, and then you must tell me what troubles you."

Priscilla sat silent. She could hear the low murmur of voices in the next room, where the housekeeper and her husband were. Richard lighted the candles on the high mantel and one on the table; then he drew his chair nearer and sat down facing Priscilla.

They were two striking figures in the dim setting of the old room. Both were very good to look upon, she in her gown of a century ago, he in modern dress.

"I suppose it is foolish," she said, "and hysterical and all that, but I couldn't help it. I was so happy this afternoon, and this is the reason."

"But what is it?" he asked, looking perplexed.

"It all seems so futile!" she cried. "You know how I have worked and planned to restore this house to what it was, but it is no use. It was a home, but it is not now, and I cannot make it a home. Besides that, it seems, now that I have done all I could, that I was presumptuous to undertake it. Every one seems to think I have done great things, but what right had I? Oh," she cried passionately, "why couldn't you have done it? You are one of the family!"

"Priscilla," he said, and she gave a little start and looked at him with dilated eyes.

"I understand how you feel, and I wish I had done it, but there is a better way—a way in which you can make it a home and even bear the old family name." His face was very serious, and he looked at her with searching earnestness.

He rose to his feet and held out his arms. "Don't you understand, Priscilla?" he said in a thrilling voice.

And Priscilla understood and smiled at him through happy tears.

E. H. HOBSON, M. D. Physician and Surgeon

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