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ELIZA THE NIHILIST.

What was I to do? Never was a woman placed in such a pitiable condition. I had been brought to Russia by an English sewing machine company to run their machines at an agency of theirs in — street, in St. Petersburg, where a handsome shop had been taken.

One blustering cold day, toward the close of October, I found the shop door closed, and learned to my dismay that our agent had disappeared, and the machines had all been seized for rent and debts. What was to be done? All the money I had in the world was about equivalent to twelve pounds. What was to me had left in our agent's hands, and I felt sure it was lost.

Fortunately my room had been kept for the month, and I had been paid for in advance. I had at least a roof over my head for a few weeks. As this suddenly struck me, I had been making an evening dress on the machine for a Russian lady who spoke English. She had some idea of buying a machine. In order to hasten with the work I had taken to my room the body of her dress, and having a machine there had sewed at it of nights. That machine I would certainly keep. It would go very little toward the payment of the debt the agent owed me.

I hurried home. Perhaps there was a letter with some money in it. There was nothing. I must find the lady, but how? She had left no address. She had hardly spoken to me. I thought I had heard her say that she would come again, and I believed she had fixed on this very day. There was but one chance in a thousand. I went stand in the street and wait until she appeared. I hastened back, and took up my position near the shop. I counted every women passing by. It was bitterly cold and raw, and the wind chilled me; I was faint with anxiety. Suddenly a carriage drove up, a footman opened the door, and a lady, elegantly dressed, alighted. I ran across the street—it was the Russian lady.

With my heart in my mouth, I told her my painful story and begged her to help me. If she wanted a servant, would she only try me? I had a sewing machine and would make her dresses for nothing! I would only stay with her until I could write to my people at home; they would send me money and I would get back to England.

"And my dress—am I to lose it?" the lady asked impatiently.

"Not all of it. The skirt is in the shop, the body is in my room, almost finished."

It seemed to me dreadful that in my agony she should talk about her dress.

"Where do you live?" she inquired abruptly.

I told her.

"Get into the carriage," she said.

I did so. When we were off the main street she stopped the carriage, got out with me, and we walked, to my lodgings. I opened the door. On the table was my dress body. It did not seem to interest her. She picked it up, her eyes glanced at it a moment, then threw it down on a chair and examined the sewing machine.

"How long would it take me to become proficient in working this?" she inquired, as she sat down before the machine and tried the pedals.

"Two weeks—perhaps less."

"Would it injure my hands?"

She took off her gloves, showed her well cared for hands, her fingers glittering with rings.

"Your beautiful hands would hardly be spoiled."

"Well, then give me a lesson at once—at once. I will pay you for your trouble."

She sat down, and under my instruction worked for an hour. She was wonderfully clever with her fingers, and seemed to seize the peculiarities of the machine at once.

"At the rate of progress, madam, you would become quite a good workwoman in ten days," I said approvingly.

She made no reply, but worked away for another half hour.

"It is not so tiresome, after all," she said. "But I have had enough for today. Tomorrow I will call, and you will then take the machine to pieces, and show me how it must be put together again. You will oblige me very particularly by not going out today. I have to think you for your patience. Mary, my child, silent, I hope you have learned that it is Russia it is better to keep a quiet tongue. Do not return to the shop. Pay take this for my first lesson," and she placed on the stove table table a piece of gold.

I felt very much inclined to kiss her. She looked cold and haughty, but my heart was so full of thankfulness that, overcoming some but the awe I felt, I ventured to take her hand in mine and put it to my lips. She did not withdraw it.

"Your child," she said, "you do not look more than twenty, and at your age to be in such trouble! This must be a hard country for you. Goodby, until tomorrow." She gave it me scornfully, as if she would look me through, and then bowed left me.

Next morning early there was a low knock at my door. I opened it, and a woman plainly dressed entered. She did not say a word. She placed a bundle she held in her hand in a chair, and at once went to the machine and commenced sewing.

"You will kindly forget the lady of yesterday, and know me as Eliza simply, or rather, as Eliza in French, we will say Eliza. I want to learn your trade. It is a white of mine. Do you think that in a month I could earn my bread this way? I offer you a partnership. I can find the funds. The contents of the bundle will probably be sold out, and you will be able to buy one of the machines for me. Now, will you take this one apart?"

I had not a word to say. I brought a wrench, a screw driver, an oil can, and showed the working parts of the machine. She took the oil can and bent over the machine, studying it. I noticed that she touched with her white fingers all the glittering parts, until her hands were soiled.

"It is by no means so complicated as a revolver," she said.

I made no comment as I put the working parts together. She was very silent, working incessantly on some coarse material she had brought with her. I sat near her—watching her she went to do. She worked on until it was past noon.

"Is it not time now to eat something?"

"It is," I replied. "Will madam partake of my simple meal?"

"Madam! Yes Eliza—and you say your name is Mary. Mary, I shall be very glad to share your food with you, if you will let me. If you have too much for two, I will go out and buy what is wanted. What shall it be? I have my I can stop better than you. With you look on your shawl, your face and your avenoline."

Before I could say a word she had then all on. Then she laughed for the first time "Sister Mary, Sister Mary," she cried, in great glee, "our experiment begins from today. I am to be capital and you genius. I know their cunning I shall be great more than a counter of an hour."

I was so astonished at her speechless. In a trice she was back, loaded down with packages. She had a loaf of bread, a piece of cheese, a pot of preserves, a bunch of smoked game and some salted cucumbers.

"I get a samovar, but it was too heavy for me to carry. The man I bought it of will bring it here at eight. It is second hand, but as good as new. I see you have a teapot. My only tea extravagance when some good soup and a glass of the best tea. Come, let us eat. I can arrange anything. I am to wait on you."

In a day I learned to love that woman. All the haughty, proud manner was gone. She waited on me. Kiss was my first in the morning. She called me always Mary. The power of the home evidently stunned her for one of the two girls who had been in the employ of the sewing machine company for one or two years of them had offered her in my room. Some small extra compensation was given him for the new lodger. She never spoke save in English, and her coming to me had been so mysterious that I felt quite certain the porter was entirely ignorant of her condition.

Curiosity is wasted on a great deal. More than once I ventured to ask for an explanation, but Eliza would place her hand on my mouth so that my speech was interrupted. It showed me to see how hard she worked, for I felt sure that the new life was hurting her. I could see that from her pallor. If anything more than another made me feel sorry it was for her beautiful hands. She seemed to take in Rainy pains in spoiling them.

"They are filthy, horrible," she would say, "and still I think I care for them more than I should. If I could only get a thick, red, rough skin on them!"

As she said, the owner of the shop was only too glad to sell me a machine. Eliza furnished the money. Work came to us in a mysterious way—left down stairs with the porter.

My companion, save for daily purchases made in the immediate neighborhood for food, never went out. No one called on her. Not one never received a letter. For days over the month had passed, when one morning, as I was running up a seam in a piece of cloth, my needle struck something. It was a piece of paper.

"It is for you, Sister Mary," said Eliza.

She took the bit of paper, held it to the stove, appeared to read something, and then opened the stove door and burned it. I did not question her. She worked on absorbedly all day, chatting on different subjects.

That night, when we were to bed, taking me in her arms, she said: "Poor Mary, your troubles, your anxieties, are now over. Tomorrow, early, apply for your passport. It will cost you to go from her to London, say thirty pounds. I wish I could have been more, but you will have altogether £300, which, after deducting your traveling expenses, will leave you some money to begin your life with again. For me—who have learned to love a simple lady honest and simple minded woman—you shall have this ring," and she slipped on my finger a ring, "but don't wear it, the diamond might betray me. So far, Mary, you have run no risk; but next week you might be ruined forever, for you have learned—"

I was speechless with terror.

"Only a woman," she continued, "knows every life—or the life of any one she who stood in her way—he would care no more of taking then a rock would of wringing a chicken's neck. Do not be shocked, Mary. I shall sleep so sweetly tonight as if death did not threaten me. My story, so far as it relates to you, is soon told. It became necessary for me a month ago to disappear. The simplest change in the world throw you in my way. Had you been of any other nationality than English I would never have trusted you. You might go out, Mary, and sell me, Judas-like, for a sum of money that would make you rich for life."

I clung convulsively to her and bade her go on.

"Through my veins, child, there runs the best blood in Russia, but every drop of it I will shed for the cause. Thank heaven for your lonely estate. You must go away tomorrow, and now good night."

I begged her to come to England with me. She said:

"No, my place is here. I should be useless there.

Then she complained of heartache, and presently went to sleep. I looked at her, her face pillowed on her arm, breathing so calmly as an infant, and thought her the loveliest woman I had ever seen.

Next morning, out of a package of some rough material, she produced, as if by magic, a suit of men's clothes, without measuring, she handed it to me.

"Later in the day there ought to arrive some furs for me, for poor Mary must not get cold. Throw away with you."

Her old manner had returned.

"Get your passport. Go by Bremen to England, or the ice will delay you. Do not wait."

Still I was immobile. I could not bear to leave her. She knelt to me and implored me to go. At last I consented.

My passport was given to me at police headquarters without a word.

"Is it all right?" she asked, very quietly. "Yes, your face tells me so. They are very beautiful and so warm."

"I have permission to leave."

"Thank God! See my work. I think I could do now without you."

"You do not love me, Eliza," I said.

"Not love you—my sister! I love my husband—he was shot. I loved my only child, in the agony of my grief—because his father was killed—he sucked poison from my breast and died. After those I love you not."

Then for the first time she burst into a paroxysm of tears.

"It is because I love you—that I might be your death."

As she wrung my hand she felt the ring on my finger.

"Off with it. You were your mistress at the police office! If they believe it! Quick, let me hide it!"

She took off my shoe and hid the ring in my stocking.

"Should you ever marry, sell the ring or the stone in it, and you will not be penniless. Now off with you. I have made a bundle for you. The rest of your things you will give me. Here is a photograph of yours—you will let me keep it?"

She took me by the hand, gave me one long kiss, closed the door on me, and I never saw her more.

My trip home was without a single incident. My dear mother transformed, one full there was some vague feeling of dread. My mind wandered, in spite of all I could do, toward my room companion. Picking up a newspaper where at home, some two weeks after my arrival, I read in the telegraphic dispatches:

"St Petersburg, Dec. 31.—An arrest of great importance has been made. One of the chief actors in the nihilistic plots, a Russian princess, was taken, but only yesterday, and killed one of the police. Disguised as a sewing machine woman, she had hitherto baffled the detectives."—N. Y. S. in Pall Mall Gazette.

Vassar Students, of course, women that we has found women in all the Boston statistical offices, and the directors of these offices declare themselves entirely satisfied with their work. In the Newport statistical bureau, too, women are employed, and are spoken of in the highest terms by their directors. The Boston ministry has apparently stipulated that women shall be employed for a particular branch of statistical work.

ARE WOMEN MERCENARY?

Two Diverse Opinions on the Question of Feminine Acquisitiveness.

Two women were discussing a very delicate subject: is women as a sex mercenary and acquisitive?

"I think I am very well acquainted with my sex," said one, "and I am forced to acknowledge to myself that women are apt to be in the continual search for what may be gained from friends. They make themselves particularly agreeable to people of influence and ignore those that are of small consequence. The more innocent young girls smile more brightly on the young man who sends flowers and candy, and the fast ones play a regular game to get gifts of a more substantial sort. Men are so foolish too. They fancy women sincere and honest, and consider it a privilege when they are allowed to make a present of value to a beauty that has flattered their vanity.

"Also I assure that my sex is so hypocritical and grasping. I remember the time when it was considered an insult for men to give presents to young ladies. Now, however, woman has changed all that, and after a man has known a girl a week he asks her to accept a diamond bracelet or some other expensive trinket. It is really too bad."

The other lady laughed heartily at what she called her friend's pessimistic misconception. "Nonsense," she cried. "I'm as mercenary as you. Where are you been living of late? Among wild Indians? I'll warrant. Why, my dear friend, I insist that you are all wrong in your conclusion, and I claim that, except for a little community of women found in every large capital, the general modesty and pride of the feminine sex are as pronounced as they were when we were a good deal younger than we are now. You know well enough that you would not allow one of your daughters to accept a gift from a man, and you know that you would resent every attempt of maneuvering for one. Now, are you so conceited as to think you are different from other mothers, or your daughters superior to all other girls?

"Why, the world is crowded with just such people, and is there in the great spirit that keeps the race alive. The only way that your conclusion is to be arrived at is by combining your studies to a narrow colored ill lived, high strung and badly regulated women that make itself conspicuous in a city like New York. These women make a noise and are vulgar, and it is their aim to get all they can out of people they seek. But you ought to know that they are a awfully small part of the world, and cannot affect that the feminine character that objects to common contact, and whose chief feature is the quality of pride. Fie! Believe in your sex, my dear. Woman is not mercenary or calculating."

The last speaker was so earnest and convincing that the other smiled over her teacup and said: "Well, dear, perhaps I was mistaken. I'm sure I hope so." And every one else must hope so too.—New York Sun.

About Smiling.

There is one big "dock" which also tenths of womankind might with advantage hang up over their dressing tables, and it is this: "Don't smile personally!" In there anything more wearisome than the person who sensuously expands and contracts the lips over the teeth, without mirth or meaning, for that is what the continual smile eventually becomes. Let any women stand before a mirror and attempt to produce an unclouded smile of serious. She will be surprised at the written grievance that will respond. That is what smiling is with an ill bred lady. Learn to smile with the eye, and keep the mouth and facial lines in repose. We speak of the pleasing gravity of the orientals. This is the secret of it—a kindly light in the eye, with a quiet expression of the face. There is no complaint upon it. Let her and him who will criticise it.—Her Point of View in New York Times.

Preferences of the Princess of Wales.

The following is the full list of the "preferences" of the Princess of Wales, as she recorded them in a scrap book at Balmoral castle soon after her marriage:

Her favorite king and queen are "Queen Dagmar" and "Richard Cœur de Lion."

Her favorite hero, poet and artist are "Wellington," "Byron" and "Sir Joshua Reynolds."

Her favorite author, "Charles Dickens."

Her favorite virtue, "Charity."

Her favorite color, "Blue."

Her favorite dish, a "French tart."

Her favorite flower, the "rose."

Her favorite music, "Mozart."

Her favorite exercise, "Reading aloud."

Her favorite amusement, "Driving my ponies."

Her favorite motto, "Dieu et mon Droit."

Her favorite location, "Abroad."

Her chief ambition, "Not to be fat."

And she is now fast nearing her goal.—"Notes."—London Tit-Bits.

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