

**MARGARET MALIPHANT;
A NOVEL; IN THREE
VOLUMES VOL. II**

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Margaret Maliphant; A novel; In three volumes vol. II by Mrs. Comyns Carr

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MRS. COMYNS CARR

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MARGARET MALIPHANT

A NOVEL

BY

MRS COMYNS CARR

AUTHOR OF 'LA FORTUNINA,' 'NORTH ITALIAN FOLK,' ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. II.

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MARGARET MALIPHANT.

CHAPTER XV.

I GOT up the next morning just as usual. Nothing should have induced me to confess that there was anything the matter with me, although my arm was so stiff that it was with the greatest pain that I carried in the breakfast urn, and my head ached so from my fall that it was hard enough to put a good face upon it when mother remarked again upon the disfigurement that I had upon my cheek. But although I gave no sign, I was not used to being ill, and it did not improve my temper.

Things were not comfortable in the house, and I did nothing to make them better. To

be sure, I kept my promise of talking to Reuben, but I'm afraid that I did not even do that in a manner to be of any use. I met Mr Harrod as I passed out into the stable-yard, and he asked me how I did. That alone put me out. To have been asked how I did by any one that morning would have annoyed me, but to be asked how I did by the man who was somehow connected with my doing ill, annoyed me specially. I fancied it would have been in better taste if he had not remarked upon a body's appearance when she was looking her worst; and anyhow, it seemed to me an unnecessary formality. I feel really ashamed now to write down such nonsense, but there is no doubt that these were my feelings at the time. I do not think that I even answered him by anything more than a "good morning," but passed on as though I had the affairs of the world on my shoulders.

I found Reuben rubbing down the mare who was to go into town with father. She neighed as I came in, and stretched out her neck. I had no sugar, but she licked my hand, nevertheless; and I remembered Reu-

ben's compliment to me about my ability to win the love of beasts. It consoled me a little at a time when I thought I should always stand aloof, not only from the love but even from the comradeship of human beings. And it gave me courage to say what I wanted to say to Reuben. It was something to know that I was at least the old man's favourite.

"Reuben," I began, plunging boldly into the matter, "whatever made you behave so badly to father's bailiff when he came round the place?"

There had been a special cause of complaint that very morning when father had first taken Mr Harrod round the farm, so I had a handle upon which to begin.

"Don't you know," I went on, "that this gentleman has got to be master over you?"

"Master!" repeated Reuben, stopping his work, and looking straight at me; "no, miss, I knows nothing about that."

I had used the word on purpose to draw out the whole sting at once.

"Yes," continued I, "he's going to be father's bailiff."

“Bailiff!” repeated Reuben, again putting on his most stolid air. “I knows nothing about that.”

“Well,” explained I, trying neither to laugh nor to be annoyed, “that means that he is going to manage the land and give orders the same as father, so that there’ll be two masters instead of one.”

Reuben continued rubbing down the mare’s coat till it began to shine like satin.

“I’ve heard tell,” answered he at last, “there’s something in the Book that says a man don’t have no call to serve two masters.”

This time I did laugh outright. “Oh, that’s different, Reuben,” said I, — “that’s different; but these two masters will both be good, and both will want you to do the same thing.”

“Do ye know that for sure, miss?” asked Reuben again, and I had a lurking suspicion that he did not ask in a perfectly teachable spirit. “I’ve heard tell as when there be two masters, they always wants a man to do just the *opposite* things.”

I paused a moment. I did not know what

to answer, for it seemed to me as though there might be a great deal of truth in this.

But I said bravely, "Oh no, Reuben."

Reuben scratched his head. "Well, miss, Farmer Maliphant, he have been my master fifteen year come Michaelmas, and he have been a good master to me. Many another would have turned me away because o' the drink. It was chill work at times down there on the marsh when I was with the sheep, and the drink was a comfort. I nigh upon died o' the drink, but Farmer Maliphant he have been patient with me, and he give me another chance when others would have sacked me without a word. And now I be what parson calls a reformed character."

"Well, you are quite right to avoid drinking, Reuben," said I, chiefly because I did not know what to say.

"Yes; but I don't mind tellin' you, miss," continued Reuben confidentially, "that farmer he have more to do with making a pious man of me than parson had: not but what I respect's the Church; but bless you, parson wouldn't ha' given me nothing for giving up