

**STORY OF A
GENIUS; OR,
COLA MONTI**

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Story of a Genius; Or, Cola Monti by Dinah Maria Mulock Craik

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DINAH MARIA MULOCK CRAIK

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STORY OF A GENIUS ;

OR

COLA MONTI.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"HOW TO WIN LOVE," "MICHAEL THE MINER," ETC

rank

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STORY OF A GENIUS.

CHAPTER I.

THE NEW PUPIL

"HERE is a new schoolfellow for you, my boys," said Doctor Birch, as he entered the playground, where his "limited number of pupils" were assembled, leading by the hand the last addition to the flock.

Now Doctor Birch, in spite of his unfortunate name, was the very best of pedagogues. He was by no means an old man, for his doctor's honors had come very early upon him. A tall, awkward frame; a face which could look severe, and ugly too, at times, though it was very pleasant when he smiled; and an accent in which the strong Northumbrian burr bespoke his Northern birth, complete the description of the good doctor.

The boy whom he led was about twelve

years old, at least you would have thought so by his face; but he was small, slight, and delicate in figure. His clear skin, of a pale olive, had none of the ruddy glow which mantled on the cheeks of the other boys; and his large dark eyes wandered restlessly from one to the other of the frolicsome group, whose game of leap-frog had thus been interrupted.

"Now, boys, be kind and considerate to this little fellow," said Doctor Birch. "He has never been to school before, and he is a stranger. Never mind, my young friend, you'll soon get acquainted with them all," continued he, as he patted the child's crisp black curls, and strode off out of the playground with his careless shambling gait.

The little fellow stood timidly in the midst of his new playfellows, who gathered round him like a swarm of bees.

"Well, young one!" said the biggest boy, the dux of the school, "let's set to business. What's your name?"

"Niccolo Fiorentino del Monti."

"Eh! Nick what?" cried the inquirer, opening his eyes with astonishment.

"Niccolo Fiorentino del Monti," repeated the new comer, drawing himself up with a

slight gesture of pride; and dwelling on the soft liquid Italian syllables, as if he thought the name both honorable and beautiful.

All the boys set up a loud laugh.

"Why, what a strange fish of a foreigner the old doctor has caught!" cried one.

"My little fellow, we shall have to teach you English," said another, taking the child by the arm. But Niccolo angrily shook off the rude touch; and the warm Italian blood rushed to his dark cheek, as he answered with a foreign accent, but distinctly enough to be understood:—

"Thank you, I can speak English; my mother taught me: she came from your country."

"Oh! she was an Englishwoman then," said Morris Woodhouse, the dux, and inquisitor-general over all new boys. "And I suppose she married some poor Italian fiddler."

"My father was no fiddler," answered Niccolo, his black eyes flashing fire. "He was a Count, and his family were princes once. They lived in a beautiful *palazzo*; my nurse Mona used to show me the walls. I come of the noble family of the Monti."

"Bravo! my little prince!" cried Morris,

laughing immoderately. "And, pray, how happened it that your small lordship came over here?"

"Because my father died, and— But I will not answer any more questions: you are very cruel to me, you rude English boys, *ragazzaccj Inglesi*," answered the poor little fellow in his distress, using his own language to express his feelings.

"I suppose *rag*—what's the rest of it?—means *rascal*; and I should like to know how any imp of a foreigner dare call me 'rascal.' Mind what you're about, my young prince," said Morris, flourishing his stick very near little Niccolo's head. The other boys looked on, not daring to interfere with one who, by his cleverness and his fighting capabilities, had got to be dux in the schoolroom, and tyrant in the playground. At last, one of the later comers, who did not stand so much in fear of him, took hold of Morris's arm.

"Come, come, Woodhouse! you are playing the same game with this young—what's the lad's name?—that you did with me a month ago; and I must say it's rather cowardly, considering he is such a little fellow."

"Don't interfere, my lad," said the big