

A photograph of a green lawn with a red brick path and a palm tree. In the background, there are trees and a few people walking. The scene is outdoors and appears to be a park or a campus.

**MARY JANE  
HOLMES**

**DORA  
DEANE; OR,  
THE EAST  
INDIA  
UNCLE**

**Mary Jane Holmes**

# **Dora Deane; Or, The East India Uncle**

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**DORA DEANE,**

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**OR,**

**THE EAST INDIA UNCLE**

# CHAPTER I.

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### **DORA AND HER MOTHER.**

Poor little Dora Deane! How utterly wretched and desolate she was, as she crouched before the scanty fire, and tried to warm the little bit of worn-out flannel, with which to wrap her mother's feet; and how hard she tried to force back the tears which would burst forth afresh whenever she looked upon that pale, sick mother, and thought how soon she would be gone!

It was a small, low, scantily furnished room, high up in the third story of a crazy old building, which Dora called her home, and its one small window looked out on naught save the roofs and spires of the great city whose dull, monotonous roar was almost the only sound to which she had ever listened. Of the country, with its bright green grass, its sweet wild flowers, its running brooks, and its shady trees, she knew but little, for only once had she looked on all these things, and then her heart was very sad, for the bright green grass was broken, and the sweet wild flowers were trampled down, that a grave might be made in the dark, moist earth for her father, who had died in early manhood, leaving his wife and only child to battle with the selfish world as best they could. Since that time, life had

been long and dreary to the poor widow, whose hours were well-nigh ended, for ere to-morrow's sun was risen, *she* would have a better home than that dreary, cheerless room, while Dora, at the early age of twelve, would be an orphan.

It was a cold December night, the last one of the year, and the wintry wind, which swept howling past the curtainless window, seemed to take a sadder tone, as if in pity for the little girl who knelt upon the hearthstone, and with the dim firelight flickering over her tear-stained face, prayed that she, too, might die, and not be left alone.

"It will be so lonely—so cold without my mother!" she murmured. "Oh, let me go with her; I *cannot* live alone."

"Dora, my darling," came faintly from the rude couch, and in an instant the child was at her mother's side.

Winding her arms fondly about the neck of her daughter, and pushing the soft auburn hair from off her fair, open brow, Mrs. Deane gazed long and earnestly upon her face.

"Yes, you are like me," she said at last, "and I am glad that it is so, for it may be Sarah will love you better when she sees in you a look like one who once called her sister. And should *he* ever return——"

She paused, while her mind went back to the years long ago—to the old yellow farmhouse among the New England hills—to the gray-haired man, who had adopted her as his own when she was written *fatherless*—to the dark-eyed girl, sometimes kind, and sometimes overbearing, whom she had called her sister, though there was no tie of blood between them. Then she thought of the red house just across the way, and of the three brothers, Nathaniel, Richard, and John. Very softly she repeated the name of the

latter, seeming to see him again as he was on the day when, with the wreath of white apple blossoms upon her brow, she sat on the mossy bank and listened to his low spoken words of love. Again she was out in the pale starlight, and heard the autumn wind go moaning through the locust trees as *Nathaniel*, the strange, eccentric, woman-hating Nathaniel, but just returned from the seas, told her how madly he had loved her, and how the knowledge that she belonged to another would drive him from his fatherland forever—that in the burning clime of India he would make gold his idol, forgetting, if it were possible, the mother who had borne him! Then she recalled the angry scorn with which her adopted sister had received the news of her engagement with John, and how the conviction was at last forced upon her that Sarah herself had loved him in secret, and that in a fit of desperation she had given her hand to the rather inefficient Richard, ever after treating her rival with a cool reserve, which now came back to her with painful distinctness.

"But she will love my little Dora for *John's* sake, if not for mine," she thought, at last; and then, as if she had all the time been speaking to her daughter, she continued, "And you must be very dutiful to your aunt, and kind to your cousins, fulfilling their slightest wishes."

Looking up quickly, Dora asked, "Have you written to Aunt Sarah? Does she say I can come?"

"The letter is written, and Mrs. Gannis will send it as soon as I am dead," answered Mrs. Deane. "I am sure she will give you a home. I told her there was no alternative but the almshouse;" then, after a pause, she added: "I wrote to your

uncle Nathaniel some months ago, when I knew that I must die. It is time for his reply, but I bade him direct to Sarah, as I did not then think to see the winter snow."

"Did you tell him of me?" eagerly asked Dora, on whom the name of Uncle Nathaniel, or "Uncle Nat," as he was more familiarly called, produced a more pleasant impression than did that of her aunt Sarah.

"Yes", answered the mother, "it was of you that I wrote, commending you to his care, should he return to America. And if you ever meet him, Dora, tell him that on my dying bed I thought of him with affection—that my mind wandered back to the years of long ago, when I was young, and ask him, for the sake of one he called his brother, and for her who grieves that ever she caused him a moment's pain, to care for you, their orphan child."

Then followed many words of love, which were very precious to Dora in the weary years which followed that sad night; and then, for a time, there was silence in that little room, broken only by the sound of the wailing tempest. The old year was going out on the wings of a fearful storm, and as the driving sleet beat against the casement, while the drifting snow found entrance through more than one wide crevice and fell upon her pillow, the dying woman murmured, "Lie up closer to me, Dora, I am growing very cold."

Alas! 'twas the chill of death; but Dora did not know it, and again on the hearthstone before the fast dying coals she knelt, trying to warm the bit of flannel, on which her burning tears fell like rain, when through the empty wood-



box she sought in vain for chip or bark with which to increase the scanty fire.

"But I will not tell *her*," she softly whispered, when satisfied that her search was vain, and wrapping the flannel around the icy feet, she untied the long-sleeved apron which covered her own naked arms, and laying it over her mother's shoulders, tucked in the thin bedclothes; and then, herself all shivering and benumbed, she sat down to wait and watch, singing softly a familiar hymn, which had sometimes lulled her mother into a quiet sleep.

At last, as her little round white arms grew purple with the cold, she moved nearer to the bedside, and winding them lovingly around her mother's neck, laid her head upon the pillow and fell asleep. And to the angels, who were hovering near, waiting to bear their sister spirit home, there was given charge concerning the little girl, so that she did not freeze, though she sat there the livelong night, calmly sleeping the sweet sleep of childhood, while the mother at her side slept the long, eternal sleep of death!

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## **CHAPTER II.**

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### **THE FIRST AND LAST NEW YEAR'S CALL.**

It was New Year's morning, and over the great city lay the deep, untrodden snow, so soon to be trampled down by thousands of busy feet. Cheerful fires were kindled in many a luxurious home of the rich, and "Happy New Year" was echoed from lip to lip, as if on that day there were no aching hearts—no garrets where the biting cold looked in on pinching poverty and suffering old age—no low, dark room where Dora and her pale, dead mother lay, while over them the angels kept their tireless watch until human aid should come. But one there was who did not forget—one about whose house was gathered every elegance which fashion could dictate or money procure; and now, as she sat at her bountifully-furnished breakfast table sipping her fragrant chocolate, she thought of the poor widow, Dora's mother, for whom her charity had been solicited the day before, by a woman who lived in the same block of buildings with Mrs. Deane.

"Brother," she said, glancing towards a young man who, before the glowing grate, was reading the morning paper,

"suppose you make your first call with me?"

"Certainly," he answered; "and it will probably be in some dreary attic or dark, damp basement; but it is well, I suppose, to begin the New Year by remembering the poor."

Half an hour later, and the crazy stairs which led to the chamber of death were creaking to the tread of the lady and her brother, the latter of whom knocked loudly for admission. Receiving no answer from within, they at last raised the latch and entered. The fire had long since gone out, and the night wind, as it poured down the chimney, had scattered the cold ashes over the hearth and out upon the floor. Piles of snow lay on the window sill, and a tumbler in which some water had been left standing, was broken in pieces. All this the young man saw at a glance, but when his eye fell upon the bed, he started back, for there was no mistaking the rigid, stony expression of the upturned face, which lay there so white and motionless.

"But the child—the child," he exclaimed, advancing forward—"can she, too, be dead!" and he laid his warm hand gently on Dora's brow.

The touch aroused her, and starting up, she looked around for a moment bewildered; but when at last she turned towards her mother, the dread reality was forced upon her, and in bitter tones she cried, "Mother's dead, mother's dead, and I am all alone! Oh! mother, mother, come back again to me!"

The young man's heart was touched, and taking the child's little red hands in his, he rubbed them gently, trying to soothe her grief; while his sister, summoning the inmates from the adjoining room, gave orders that the body should

receive the necessary attention; then, learning as much as was possible of Dora's history, and assuring her that she should be provided for until her aunt came, she went away, promising to return next morning and be present at the humble funeral.

That evening, as Dora sat weeping by the coffin in which her mother lay, a beautiful young girl, with eyes of deepest blue, and locks of golden hair, smiled a joyous welcome to him whose *first* New Year's call had been in the chamber of death, and whose *last* was to her, the petted child of fashion.

"I had almost given you up, and was just going to cry," she said, laying her little snowflake of a hand upon the one which that morning had chafed the small, stiff fingers of Dora Deane, and which now tenderly pressed those of Ella Grey as the young man answered, "I have not felt like going out today, for my first call saddened me;" and then, with his arm around the fairy form of Ella, his affianced bride, he told her of the cold, dreary room, of the mother colder still, and of the noble little girl, who had divested herself of her own clothing, that her mother might be warm.

Ella Grey had heard of such scenes before—had cried over them in books; but the idea that *she* could do anything to relieve the poor, had never entered her mind. It is true, she had once given a *party dress* to a starving woman, and a *pound of candy* to a ragged boy who had asked for aid, but here her charity ended; so, though she seemed to listen with interest to the sad story, her mind was wandering elsewhere, and when her companion ceased, she merely said, "*Romantic*, wasn't it."

There was a look of disappointment on the young man's face, which was quickly observed by Ella, who attributed it to its right source, and hastened to ask numberless questions about Dora—"How old was she? Did he think her pretty, and hadn't she better go to the funeral the next day and bring her home for a waiting-maid?—she wanted one sadly, and from the description, the orphan girl would just suit."

"No, Ella," answered her lover; "the child is going to live in the country with some relatives, and will be much better off there."

"The country," repeated Ella. "I would rather freeze in New York than to live in the dismal country."

Again the shadow came over the gentleman's brow, as he said, "Do you indeed object so much to a home in the country?"

Ella knew just what he wanted her to say; so she answered, "Oh, no, I can be happy anywhere with you, but do please let me spend just one winter in the city after—"

Here she paused, while the bright blushes broke over her childish face. She could not say, even to him, "after we are married," so he said it for her, drawing her closer to his side, and forgetting Dora Deane, as he painted the joyous future when Ella would be all his own. Eleven o'clock sounded from more than one high tower, and at each stroke poor Dora Deane moaned in anguish, thinking to herself, "Last night at this time *she* was here." Eleven o'clock, said Ella Grey's diamond set watch, and pushing back her wavy hair, the young man kissed her rosy cheek, and bade her a fond good-night. As he reached the door, she called him back,

while she asked him the name of the little girl who had so excited his sympathy.

"I do not know," he answered. "Strange that I forgot to inquire. But no matter. We shall never meet again;" and feeling sure that what he said was true he walked away.

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## **CHAPTER III.**

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## **DORA'S RELATIVES.**

There hundred miles to the westward, and the storm, which, on New Year's eve, swept so furiously over all parts of the State, was perceptible only in the dull, gray clouds which obscured the wintry sky, shutting out the glimmering starlight, and apparently making still brighter the many cheerful lights which shone forth from the handsome dwellings in the village of Dunwood. Still the night was intensely cold, and, as Mrs. Sarah Deane, in accordance with her daughter Eugenia's request, added a fresh bit of coal to the already well-filled stove, she sighed involuntarily, wishing the weather would abate, for the winter's store of fuel was already half gone, and the contents of her purse were far too scanty to meet the necessity of her household, and at the same time minister to the wants of her extravagant daughters.

"But I can economize in one way," she said, half aloud, and crossing the room she turned down the astral lamp which was burning brightly upon the table.

"Don't, pray mother, make it darker than a dungeon!" petulantly exclaimed Eugenia, herself turning back the lamp. "I do like to have rooms light enough to see one's

self;" and glancing complacently at the reflection of her handsome face, in the mirror opposite, she resumed her former lounging attitude upon the sofa.

Mrs. Deane sighed again, but she had long since ceased to oppose the imperious Eugenia, who was to all intents and purposes the mistress of the house, and who oftentimes led her mother and weaker-minded sister into the commission of acts from which they would otherwise have shrunk. Possessed of a large share of romance, Eugenia had given to their place the name of "Locust Grove;" and as Mrs. Deane managed to keep up a kind of outside show by practising the most pinching economy in everything pertaining to the actual comfort of her family, they were looked upon as being quite wealthy and aristocratic by those who saw nothing of their inner life—who knew nothing of the many shifts and turns in the kitchen to save money for the decoration of the parlors, or of the frequent meager meals eaten from the pantry shelf, in order to make amends for the numerous dinner and evening parties which Eugenia and Alice insisted upon giving, and which their frequent visits to their friends rendered necessary. Extensive servant-hire was of course too expensive, and, as both Eugenia and Alice affected the utmost contempt for anything like *work*, their mother toiled in the kitchen from morning until night, assisted only by a young girl, whose mother constantly threatened to take her away, unless her wages were increased, a thing which seemed impossible.

It was just after this woman's weekly visit, and in the midst of preparations for a large dinner party, that Mrs. Deane received her sister's letter, to which there was added



a postscript, in a strange handwriting, saying she was dead. There was a moisture in Mrs. Deane's eyes as she read the touching lines; and leaning her heated forehead against the cool window pane, she, too, thought of the years gone by—of the gentle girl, the companion of her childhood, who had never given her an unkind word—of *him*—the only man she had ever loved—and Dora was their child—Fanny's child and John's.

"Yes," she said, half aloud, "I will give her a home," but anon there came stealing over her the old bitterness of feeling, which she had cherished since she knew that Fanny was preferred to herself, and then the evil of her nature whispered, "No, I will not receive their child. We can hardly manage to live now, and it is not my duty to incur an additional expense. Dora must stay where she is, and if I do not answer the letter, she will naturally suppose I never received it."

Thus deciding the matter, she crushed the letter into her pocket and went back to her work; but there was an added weight upon her spirits, while continually ringing in her ears were the words, "Care for John's child and mine." "If I could only make her of any use to me," she said at last, and then as her eye fell upon *Bridget*, whose stay with her was so uncertain, the dark thought entered her mind, "Why could not Dora fill her place? It would be a great saving, and of course the child must expect to work."

Still, reason as she would, Mrs. Deane could not at once bring herself to the point of making a menial of one who was every way her equal; neither could she decide to pass the letter by unnoticed; so for the present she strove to

dismiss the subject, which was not broached to her daughters until the evening on which we first introduced them to our readers. Then taking her seat by the brightly burning lamp, she drew the letter from her pocket and read it aloud, while Alice drummed an occasional note upon the piano and Eugenia beat a tattoo upon the carpet with her delicate French slipper.

"Of course she won't come," said Alice, as her mother finished reading. "It was preposterous in Aunt Fanny to propose such a thing!" and she glanced towards Eugenia for approbation of what she had said.

Eugenia's quick, active mind had already looked at the subject in all its bearings, and in like manner with her mother she saw how Dora's presence there would be a benefit; so to Alice's remark she replied: "It will sound well for us to have a *cousin* in the *poorhouse*, won't it? For my part, I propose that she comes, and then be made to earn her own living. We can dismiss Bridget, who is only two years older than Dora, and we shall thus avoid quarreling regularly with her vixenish mother, besides saving a dollar every week—"

"So make a *drudge* of Dora," interrupted Alice. "Better leave her in the poorhouse at once."

"Nobody intends to make a *drudge* of her," retorted Eugenia. "Mother works in the kitchen, and I wonder if it will hurt Dora to help her. Every girl ought to learn to work!"

"Except Eugenia Deane," suggested Alice, laughing, to think how little her sister's practise accorded with her theory.

At this point in the conversation, Bridget entered, bringing a letter which bore the India post-mark, together with the unmistakable handwriting of Nathaniel Deane!

"A letter from Uncle Nat, as I live!" exclaimed Eugenia. "What *is* going to happen? He hasn't written before in years. I do wish I knew when he expected to quit this mundane sphere, and how much of his money he intends leaving me!"

By this time Mrs. Deane had broken the seal, uttering an exclamation of surprise as a check for \$500 fell into her lap.

"Five hundred dollars!" screamed Eugenia, catching up the check and examining it closely, to see that there was no mistake. "The old miser has really opened his heart. Now, we'll have some *genuine* silver forks for our best company, so we shan't be in constant terror lest some one should discover that they are only plated. I'll buy that set of *pearls* at Mercer's, too, and, Alice, you and I will have some new furs. I'd go to Rochester to-morrow, if it were not Sunday. What shall we get for you, mother? A web of cloth, or an ounce of sewing silk?" and the heartless girl turned towards her mother, whose face was white as ashes, as she said faintly: "The money is not ours. It is Dora's—to be used for her benefit."

"Not ours! What do you mean! It can't be true!" cried Eugenia, snatching the letter, and reading therein a confirmation of her mother's words.

After a slight apology for his long silence, Undo Nat had spoken of Fanny's letter, saying he supposed she must be dead ere this, and that Dora was probably living with her aunt, as it was quite natural she should do. Then he expressed his willingness to defray all the expense which

she might be, adding that though he should never see her, as he was resolved to spend his days in India, he still wished to think of her as an educated and accomplished woman.

"Accompanying this letter," he wrote, "is a check for \$500, to be used for Dora's benefit. Next year I will make another remittance, increasing the allowance as she grows older. I have more money than I need, and I know of no one on whom I would sooner expend it than the child of Fanny Moore."

"Spiteful old fool!" muttered Eugenia, "I could relieve him of any superfluous dimes he may possess."

But even Eugenia, heartless as she was, felt humbled and subdued for a moment, as she read the latter part of her uncle's letter, from which we give the following extract:

"I am thinking, to-day, of the past, Sarah, and I grow a very child again as I recall the dreary years which have gone over my head, since last I trod the shores of my fatherland. You, Sarah, know much of my history. You know that I was awkward, eccentric, uncouth, and many years older than my handsomer, more highly gifted brother; and yet with all this fearful odds against me, you know that I ventured to love the gentle, fair-haired Fanny, your adopted sister. You know this, I say, but you do not know how madly, how passionately such as I can love—did love; nor how the memory of Fanny's ringing laugh, and the thought of the sunny smile, with which I knew she would welcome me home again, cheered me on my homeward voyage, when in the long night-watches I paced the vessel's deck, while the stars looked coldly down upon me, and there was no sound to break the deep stillness, save the heavy swell of the sea.

At the village inn where I stopped for a moment ere going to my father's house, I first heard that her hand was plighted to another, and in my wild frenzy, I swore that my rival, whoever it might be, should die!

"It was my youngest brother—he, who, on the sad night when our mother died, had laid his baby head upon my bosom, and wept himself to sleep—he whose infant steps I had guided, bearing him often in my arms, lest he should 'dash his foot against a stone.' And *his* life I had sworn to take, for had he not come between me and the only object I had ever loved? There was no one stirring about the house, for it was night, and the family had retired. But the door was unfastened, and I knew the way upstairs. I found him, as I had expected, in our old room, and all alone; for Richard was away. Had he been there, it should make no difference, I said, but he was absent, and John was calmly sleeping with his face upturned to the soft moonlight which came in through the open window. I had not seen him for two long years, and now there was about him a look so much like that of my dead mother when she lay in her coffin bed, that the demon in my heart was softened, and I seemed to hear her dying words again, 'I can trust you, Nathaniel; and to your protection, as to a second mother, I commit my little boy.'

"The little boy, whose curls were golden then, was now a brown-haired man—my brother—the son of my angel mother, whose spirit, in that dark hour of my temptation, glided into the silent room, and stood between me and her youngest born, so that *he* was not harmed, and *I* was saved from the curse of a brother's blood.