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CLASS: IX

SUBJECT: ENGLISH LITERATURE

Chapter: The Model Millionaire

### Workbook Questions:

#### Passage - 1

- (i) He refers to the protagonist i.e., Hughie Erskine in the extract. He was handsome with <sup>crisp</sup> brown hair, clear cut profile and grey eyes.
- (ii) Our protagonist Hughie Erskine had various accomplishments to his credit. However, he lacked the quality of making money consistently although he had tried various businesses.
- (iii) Hughie's father had bequeathed him his cavalry sword and a History of Peninsular War in fifteen volumes.
- (iv) Hughie had failed in all the ventures he had undertaken in order to sustain his life. The only mean of sustenance now was 200 pounds allowed by an aunt.
- (v) He i.e. Hughie is compared with a butterfly which is charming but delicate insect. The comparison suits Hughie's personality aptly because like a butterfly Hughie too kept switching from one profession to another in order to earn money. People talk about bulls and bears on the Stock Exchange indicating rise and fall of prices at different stocks.

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Passage 2.

- (i) 'He' was good looking with brown crisp hair, chiseled face and grey eyes. In short he was a fascinating man who never said an ill-mannered thing to anybody. He was kind. He was not intellectually gifted. He had no permanent income except the monthly allowance left by his aunt.
- (ii) While in India, the Colonel had lost his temper and his digestion and never recovered either of them. Due to these two reasons he used to be irritable.
- (iii) Laura's father, a Colonel desired that Hughie must have ten thousand pounds with him before thinking of his engagement with Laura. As he did not have any permanent source of earning money so this challenge was a great hindrance.
- (iv) The Colonel was extremely fond of Hughie. Still being a loving and wise father he did not allow him to marry his daughter because Hughie was not satisfactorily settled in life.
- (v) The sentence: "and he was ready to kiss her shoe-strings" shows that 'he' was madly in love with Laura and wanted to marry her at any cost.

### Story in Detail

Hughie Erskine was a handsome young man. He was popular with his male as well as female friends. But he was poor. All he had was one cavalry sword and a 'History of Peninsular War' in fifteen volumes, that he inherited from his father from his father, besides two hundred pounds a year from an aunt. He had tried many occupations but had failed to achieve success in any profession. As a result he was jobless "with a perfect profile and no profession."

Hughie was in love with the lovely Laura, whose father was a retired Colonel who had served in India. He demanded Hughie to have at least 10,000 pounds before getting engaged to Laura.

Hughie had an art lover friend, Alan Trevor. One day on his way to meet Laura he went to his friend, Alan Trevor's studio. He found him giving finishing touches to the portrait of a beggar. He was working on the picture of a wrinkled old man wearing tattered rags, holding out in his hand a battered hat for alms. Hughie pitied the model who was getting only a few shillings compared to two thousand guineas that the artist was getting for his painting.

Meanwhile, a servant informed that the frame maker wanted to speak to Trevor. When Trevor went out, the (model) beggar relaxed. Hughie pitied the beggar, and gave him the only sovereign he had in his pocket and left to meet Laura. Laura scolded him for his generosity while Trevor had a hearty laugh when Hughie met him later that day. Trevor explained to Hughie that the old man whom he thought to be a wretched beggar was one of the richest men in Europe. Trevor informed him that the old beggar, was Baron Hausberg who had commissioned Trevor to paint him as a beggar. Trevor also said that he had told him everything about Hughie and Laura as the Baron was impressed with him and had enquired of him. Soon after, Hughie feeling ashamed and angry went home.

Next morning, a messenger came to Hughie's house saying that he had come from Baron Hausberg. He had brought a cheque of 10,000 pounds as a wedding gift to Hughie and Laura. Soon their marriage was solemnised in which Trevor became the best-man and the Baron made a speech at the wedding breakfast. Alan remarked, 'Millionaire models are rare enough but model millionaire are rarer still!'

## TITLE

Baron Hausberg was the model millionaire i.e., the model, who was a millionaire. He was one of the richest men in Europe. He could buy all London and has a house in every capital. He took his food in gold plates. He could even stop Russia from going to war.

The Baron had commissioned Alan Trevor to paint a life-size picture of him dressed as a beggar. As a model he looked so forlorn and wretched that Hughie was moved to pity. After the departure of Hughie, the Baron made enquiries about him. He learnt from Alan that Hughie had financial difficulty in marrying Laura. The Baron decided to help Hughie to overcome his difficulty. He sent a wedding present of 10,000 pounds for Hughie and Laura. The millionaire model was actually a model millionaire. The rich people in Victorian times were seldom known to be liberal in money matters. The Baron showed his generosity by helping a poor but kind young man in his hour of need. Hence, the millionaire model acted as model millionaire by helping a poor boy and the title of the story is apt.

This story especially in light of the last phrase categorises both the Baron as well as Hughie as 'a model millionaire' because the Baron gave away a huge sum of money to a good cause i.e., enabling the marriage of the kind young man to his love interest and Hughie, moved by compassion gave the largest coin he had in his pocket to a poor beggar.

## CHARACTERISATION

Oscar Wilde's characters are always of an eccentric nature. In this story, we come across both good virtues (compassion) and the frivolous extravagance (giving almost all the money as alms).

### 1. Hughie Erskine

Hughie Erskine was a young man, who was good looking with *crisp brown hair and grey eyes*. He was charming, he was not only popular among men but also among women. But '*Intellectually, we must admit he was not of much importance*'.

He was simply unable to make money. He survived on an allowance of two hundred pounds a year given by an old aunt. His father had left him with an inheritance of a cavalry sword and History of the Peninsular War in fifteen volumes. In order to earn money he had tried the stock exchange, worked under a tea merchant and sold dry sherry. Thus, he was '*a delightful, ineffectual young man with a perfect profile and no profession*'. He was in love with a girl named Laura Merton, daughter of a retired Colonel. The Colonel liked Hughie but was against the engagement. He would allow them to get married only if Hughie had ten thousand pounds of his own. This made Hughie sad. Though he was unable to marry Laura because of the condition put up by her father, both he and Laura were madly in

love. He would visit Laura every day. The rest of the time he would tire out his friends talking about Laura. One day on his way to Laura's place he dropped in to see his friend Alan Trevor who was an artist and an excellent painter. Trevor liked Hughie for his good looks, bright disposition and *'his generous reckless nature'* so he had given him *'the permanent entree to his studio'*.

Here Hughie saw Trevor finishing the portrait of a beggar. The model for the painting was a poor piteous beggar. The state of the beggar moved Hughie to dig in his pockets and give him (the beggar) the largest denomination coin he had. Hughie left the studio. Laura scolded him for his 'extravagance'. Later that evening he met Trevor who claimed to have *'finished and framed'* his painting. Trevor told Hughie that the model was interested in the latter and had made enquiries about him and Laura. Hughie was afraid that the beggar had seen that he had a soft corner for the beggar would harass him for more money. Hughie became *'red and angry'*. But the next moment he felt shocked and ashamed when Trevor told him that the beggar was actually Baron Hausberg a very rich man who had commissioned Trevor to paint him as a beggar. Hughie confessed to giving the richest man *'a sovereign'*. Alan had a hearty laugh and the embarrassed Hughie rushed home. The next morning he had a visitor, a messenger from Baron Hausberg. The Baron had sent Hughie a cheque of £10,000 as a wedding gift. Hughie was able to finally marry Laura and Trevor was the best-man in the wedding and the Baron made a speech at their wedding breakfast.

## **2. Alan Trevor**

He was a painter and also an artist. He has been described as a *"strange rough fellow, with a freckled face and a red ragged beard,"* whose art is well received by critics and patrons. He believed that beautiful people should rule the world. He liked beauty and intellect. But Alan's definition of beauty even included someone wearing rags. Alan was a hard worker in comparison with Hughie's more relaxed nature. He was totally amused by Hughie's act of giving a sovereign to the beggar-man. When the Baron dressed as an ugly beggar enquired about Hughie he gave him all the information—Hughie's poverty and his inability to marry Laura. At some level he must have felt that the Baron might help Hughie. He served as Hughie's best-man at his wedding.

## **3. Baron Hausberg**

The Baron was one of the wealthiest men in Europe. But he was eccentric. He had commissioned Trevor, a master artist, to paint him as a piteous beggar rather than the grand man he was. Dressed as a beggar he has been described as:

*He was a wizened old man, with a face like wrinkled parchment, and a most piteous expression. Over his shoulders was flung a coarse brown cloak, all tears and tatters; his thick boots were patched and cobbled, and with one hand he leant on a rough stick, while with the other he held out his battered hat for alms.*

Hughie, felt so sorry on seeing his piteous condition that he gave him a sovereign—almost all the money he had. The Baron was attracted to the kindness

Hughie showed and when he came to know about Hughie and Laura, he decided to help them by giving Hughie a check of ten thousand pounds as a wedding gift. And with this money, Hughie was able to finally marry Laura.

#### **4. Laura Merton**

Laura Merton is Hughie's love interest. She is smitten with her boyfriend. "*Laura adored him, and he was ready to kiss her shoe-strings.*" She too is poor as both had *nor a penny-piece between them*. Laura is apparently quite good-looking herself, but has a protective father in Colonel Merton, who won't allow her and Hughie to marry unless he has 10,000 Pounds.

#### **5. Colonel Merton**

He is a minor but important character in the story. He is the father of the protagonist Hughie's love interest, Laura. He had served in the army and had been posted to India. He has a nasty disposition as he had 'lost his temper and his digestion in India'. He was not rich either. He wanted a better life for his daughter, hence he put the condition of Hughie having ten thousand pounds for the lovers to get engaged. He liked Hughie but he knew that Hughie was neither smart nor rich.

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