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Get a bottle of H.P. to-day.

**THE BELLE OF RUBYWOOD.**

CHAPTER XII.

The young squire having, no doubt, ever before his mind the familiar adage, "There's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip," hastened the preparation to the utmost.

He ought to have been a happy man, his friends said, for he had a great windfall of wealth, and had secured the prettiest girl in the county; but his own people about the farm half suspected that he was not in such a high state of felicity as he should have been, and more than one hinted that the squire was an altered man.

He had grown, in the short space of six months, from a good-tempered master to an irritable, suspicious, yet feeble-minded tyrant, always laboring under the painful idea that those about him were watching him or striving to overreach him.

Servant after servant had found his manner unbearable, and left him. The farmer himself noticed, and was surprised at the alteration, but he attributed the young man's change to an anxiety born of feverish impatience for the marriage, and backed up all his entreaties for a speedy celebration by needs of acquiescence from himself.

Muriel to whom these entreaties and half commands were addressed, received and responded to them with the same cheerless, indifferent placidity which had marked her conduct in the whole business.

She had, in a few emphatic, but gentle words, given the young squire to understand that if he took her he

**CRITICAL TIME OF WOMAN'S LIFE**

From 40 to 50 Years of Age. How It May Be Passed in Safety.

So, Wellington, B.C.—"For a year during the change of life I was all run down. I was really too weak to walk and was very despondent and thought I was going to die, but after taking Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound and Blood Purifier my health and strength returned. I am very thankful to you and praise your medicine. I have advised several women who suffered as I did to try your remedies. You may publish this if you wish."—Mrs. DAVID R. MORRIS, South Wellington, Vancouver Island, B.C.

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must be satisfied with her esteem and respect alone, and having ascertained that, for the present, these feelings were all he hoped for, she seemed indifferent to the course of events.

Wynter Leigh, the man she had trusted and loved as only such a pure, deep-feeling girl could trust and love, had deceived and deserted her. All the rest was chaos, and it mattered little whether she was sold to Mr. Heatherbridge or any one else.

She knew that she was being sold, notwithstanding her father's affection for her, for she had heard enough fragments of conversation to gather that the awkward corner of the estate was the price at which she was sacrificed.

The days wore on. She went among the poor again—not like the merry, light-hearted Muriel of old, but more like a sister of mercy—and cheered and sympathized with them.

She would sit for half an hour and listen to old Goody, who, with the dimness of decaying perception, would insist upon prattling of good Mr. Leigh and his old shepherd, and sometimes of poor Jaffer, who spent all his holidays at the school, and had never been to see his good old grandmother.

The days wore on with that grim steadiness of progress which, when a great sorrow is looming, is far more terrible than desperate and excited speed, and the day before the wedding arrived.

It was early in May. The weather had been particularly fine for some weeks past, and something like a drought had prevailed.

The farmer was crying out for rain and trudging over the fields and the roads through dust and parched soil. The Holme was in the hands of workmen, who were transforming it into a sort of home farm, and the farmer was enjoying the two delights of his life—his sole right of way in the avenue and his daughter's marriage to the richest man in Berks.

The laborers had knocked off work for the day, and were trudging home in knots, talking of the festivities of the morrow, and glancing between pauses of the conversation at the cloudless sky, as farmers and farm laborers are apt to do when they want the weather they have not.

At the Howe the painters, decorators, and upholsterers were hard at work, commencing the extensive alterations, which were to be finished by the return of the bride and bridegroom.

At Rubywood a host of ruddy-cheeked, strong-armed women were giving the final touches to the eatables which were to deck the wedding breakfast table, and chattering like a cage full of Java sparrows of bygone marriages and marriages that were looming in the future.

"And where's Miss Mur' now?" asked one matron.

"Oh, in her room, pretty birdie!" replied another. "She's as modest and sweet as a throstle, and do keep herself to herself, as is only proper and becoming of a young girl."

"In her room!" said another. "Poor Miss Mur'!" I don't think as she has been so well lately, she do so look so purely white and so sadlike. She be just like Dame Freeman's Luck before she took the consumption."

The farmer, who would not have broken his daily routine if fifty weddings were hovering round him, came rumping in at six o'clock, and, having given an approving glance at the

extensive preparations, dismissed the many cooks with a good-natured nod, and sat down to his tea.

Muriel entered the room as he drew his chair to the table, and the old man, looking up with a fond smile, was struck into silence by the fearful pallor of her face.

With a painful little smile, she seated herself at the table and gave him his tea.

"Why, lass, how skeered you look!" he said. "Beant' you well to-night?"

"Yes, father," said Muriel; "a little headache, that's all. We have been very busy to-day, you know."

He nodded.

"The last day's work you'll do lass, I'll be sworn! To-morrow you'll have as many servants as any lady of the land."

Muriel smiled.

"Don't you get excited," he continued, rubbing his hands, and looking at her. "Keep quiet, lass, and allow Alfred to see a bright face; for he's a good lad, and deserves thee, and that's saying a good deal. Why, it's me that ought to hang the miller's sign out, for I lose the best daughter ever a father had."

Muriel's eyes filled with tears.

"Not lose me, father," she said. "We shall be very near each other."

"Alas! it was the only comfort she had."

"True, true!" said the old man, chuckling. "The palace—ha! ha! it's my whim, my love, to call it 'the palace,' now the chaps from London have been at it, sticking gold and silver and silks and satins about as if they just owned it all!—the palace isn't a stone's throw from the old place where you were born, and your old father can look out of his window and see his daughter in all her glory."

He laughed long and loud, then suddenly broke off and bade her leave him.

"You'll want a rest, lass, and a little quiet, and I've got a little reckoning to do."

Muriel kissed him, and, as silently as she had entered, stole to her room again.

The old man waited until she had gone, and then tramped downstairs returning in a few minutes with a tin box and a canvas bag. These he put on the table, and after locking the door, emptied from them a heap of banknotes and gold. With one eye closed and his brow wrinkled like a piece of parchment, he set to work counting out the money.

**AGREED WITH BABY**

This Mother Found The Right Food For Her Baby Girl.

Mrs. Arthur Prince of Meaford, Ont., writes, on Sept. 12th, 1911: "Some time ago, you were good enough to send me a sample of Neave's Food. Baby liked it so well and it agreed with her, so I am using it right along and think it is excellent."

"I have a friend with a very delicate baby. She cannot nurse it and has tried six different foods, but it does not thrive at all—is always sick and troubled with indigestion. I strongly recommended your food. Will you please send her a sample?"

Mrs. Prince wrote again on Sept. 27th, 1911: "My friend's baby has grown wonderfully. I can scarcely credit it. Her next baby, which she expects in five months, will be fed on Neave's Food right from the start—she thinks it is so good."

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Neave's Food is sold in 1 lb. air tight tins by all Druggists in Canada.

While the farmer was, with infinite labor, adding up notes and piles of sovereigns, a young man sat in the same attitude of quiet stillness, for fully an hour, and when at last he started up, it was with a sigh that told pretty plainly of the effort the movement had cost him.

He took out his watch and glanced at the window.

"Seven o'clock!" he muttered. "The time seems to spin round so fast that it makes me giddy. How many hours before I shall have lost her forever? Oh, Wynter Leigh, Wynter Leigh! this is neither wise nor manly to sit like a wounded dog, fretting and mooping for a woman who has thrown you over for a wealthier match. Women always have been fickle, and always will be. But could I have dreamed that my Muriel, my sweet, tender-hearted Muriel, would have been so base? I raised her from woman to angel in my mind, and it was there I erred. There's not a woman in the world that gold can't buy if Muriel Holt could not withstand it. Poor girl! for I can pity her while I pity myself. Gold can't buy love, and life without love is worse than death. I know that well enough, for I'm wicked enough to wish that I was dead this minute, sleeping quietly in a corner of the churchyard at home with all the dead and by-gone Leighs, of whom I am most assuredly the most unhappy!"

He caught up his hat as he spoke and sauntered wearily into the bar, the hostess, a smiling widow, dropped a courtesy as he passed, and, with a smile, asked him if he were going to the wedding on the morrow.

He shook his head with a quiet "No," and, groaning inwardly, passed out into the road.

If it was a beautiful night, the sky without a cloud, the air as soft and warm as that of a July night. So hot did it seem that the miserable man felt stifling, and threw open his coat to breathe freely.

For a moment he stood in the road, undecided whether to return to the house or walk on; but some influence, not difficult to name, seemed to draw him toward Rubywood, and, with downcast face that was darker and graver than ever now, he walked slowly down the dusty road.

A man passed, stared at him, and touched his hat.

"Good evening, Maester Leigh!" Wynter Leigh nodded, and turned out of the road into a footpath.

"Why did I come back?" he murmured. "What good will it do? And yet I feel that I must be here, and, though I knew nothing of her marriage, I felt drawn to the spot which has embittered my whole life. And now I would give a hundred pounds to be able to return as quickly as I came. Again I ask myself why I should gather fresh pain and misery being near her when she gives herself to him for life? No, I'll not go farther. I can see the church spire from here. I'll stop. Once within sight of her window, who knows what mad thing I may do? Oh, Muriel! Muriel! if Heaven had only been kind enough to keep us apart!"

As he spoke he threw himself down at the foot of an old oak, and, leaning his head upon his hand, gave himself up to his hopeless, despairing misery.

Two hours passed, and still he lay, going over with weary pain every delicious moment he had spent with the woman to whom he had given his heart, and who to-morrow he would lose forever.

He might have lain there the whole night but for one incident, and that was a strange phenomenon which presented itself in the sky at which he was gazing.

From a deep, blackish-blue it was suddenly transformed to a brilliant, fiery scarlet.

For a moment he stared with indifferent surprise, but the next, as the crimson changed and flushed into another shade, he sprang to his feet and turned almost as red as the sky itself.

It was no phenomenon, but simply the reflection of fire. Some house was burning, and that close to him.

His heart gave a great leap, and threatened to choke him, as it flashed upon him that the light was in the direction of Rubywood, and that the farmhouse itself might be on fire.

(To be continued.)

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1,203	43.17	2,000	2,005.59	4,005.59
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