

# GROVE'S O-PEN-TRATE SALVE

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## The Romance OF A Marriage.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Perhaps," he says, hesitatingly, "Mr. Palmer wouldn't mind if I gave you a puppy?"

"Oh, no!" she says, looking up brightly. "Will you, really? I should like it so, really?"

"Really? Of course!" he says. "Why—and his voice falters—"what's a puppy? If I had my way, and I might—and—and—I'd give you everything I possessed if you'd take it. Oh, May!" and the great hungry heart speaks out—"May, I wish you were a poor farmer's daughter, as you said; or I wish I were as rich as you are. May, don't be angry; but, May, I was going to say what I should say if you weren't a great heiress, and I wasn't simply Bob Estcourt of the arm."

He taps suddenly, and his handsome face flushes, then turns pale with the effort at self-command and restraint.

"There! never mind; you'll keep the pup for my sake, May? Don't give him too much milk—poor Bob!"—and we'd better go now," with a clumsy attempt at careless ease.

With a little, startled pallor, May hugs the pup to her, and turns to the door.

"Yes," she says, meekly; "we'd better go now."

Bob takes up the lantern.

"Let me carry him," he says. "He'll tear you all to pieces," and he takes hold of the restless, little imp; but May clings to her treasure.

"No, I'll keep him; he is mine now. Let me, please!" and she presses the pup to her. In so doing, all unconsciously, she imprisons Bob's hand. It is so near her face, bent over the dog, that it nearly touches it.

Bob chokes back a sigh.

"Very well," he says.

Then, with his hand on the door, he says:

"You—you are not angry, are you?" She raises her blue eyes to his face, and then drops them again.

"No, oh, no!" she says, hurriedly. "It doesn't matter," rather inconsequentially.

"No, it doesn't matter, of course," says Bob, ruefully, "but I wish it did!"

This retort, which for a simple, unsophisticated fellow like Bob, is not at all bad, causes the pale face to bend still lower, and the large, blue eyes to turn suddenly moist.

"Oh, no; it doesn't matter," she says. "And I'm not angry, and thank you very much for the puppy. I—then she stops with a little gulp—"I'll take great care of him, indeed I will!" and a big tear rolls down her cheek, which, though she turns her head aside to hide, Bob sees.

"Why, May!" he says, with a sudden flush and a strange terror, "you—you are crying?"

"Oh, no, I'm not," she retorts. "But you are, and—and I've made you!" he says. "What a brute I must be. What have I said?" remorsefully.

"Nothing—nothing at all!" says May, forcing a smile.

"I'm always blundering into something," he says. "But you won't mind it; you must forgive me, May. Don't cry; I can't stand that! If you do, I shall put my foot into it worse than before. I couldn't bear to see you unhappy, you know! It's bad enough to love you as I do without seeing you cry!"—then, as the crimson floods her face, he stops short and stares aghast.

"Now I've said it!" he says. "What an idiot I am! I thought I should! Well—with a long breath—"I couldn't help it! I couldn't, indeed, May! And—I do love you, and that's the truth. Don't cry; I'm very sorry."

She turns her face to him, a sudden light in her blue eyes, a soft gleam of swift happiness and delight that staggers Bob and makes his heart bound.

"Why—why—you're not angry!" he says. "You don't mind! Why, May—boldly—"didn't you hear what I said?" and he draws nearer to her—wistfully, fearfully—his great strength awed

by her sweet, meek maidenliness. She turns her head.

"Yes, I heard," she says, just audibly. "I think. Say it again." And she looks up at him with parted lips and softly gleaming eyes.

Bob draws a long breath and stands for a brief second like a man overwhelmed, then he puts out his great arm and draws her to him, the lantern swinging in the other hand.

"I love you!" he says. "There! Say it again! Why, I'll say it a hundred times if you'll let me. I love you, May! And you're not angry? You—"

He stops short, for with a half-fearful utterance she tries to draw away from him, then with a little sigh, as if the strong arm were too much for her, ceases to struggle, and sinks on his broad breast. There is silence for a moment, while Bob fights against doubt, and vanquishing it, grasps his great happiness.

"Why, May," he breathes, bending his head, "you don't mean to say that—that you love me?"

So incredulous is his tone, so full of a strong man's self-depreciation that May's lips curve with a smile, and her eyes raise themselves with a sweet mockery.

"Is it so very wonderful, Bob?" she breathes, blushing like the child-woman she is.

"Wonderful!" ejaculates Bob, amazed. "It's stupendous! For why should you—you, such a dear, soft, little thing, like—like a flower or a—a fairy—think of such a—a clumsy, stupid fellow like me?"

"It is strange, isn't it?" she murmurs. Then, with a sudden abandonment, "Oh, Bob! Bob! you call yourself clumsy and stupid; you—you the handsomest, the dearest—oh, Bob, you are stupid after all, for you haven't seen that—that—that—the voice grows fainter, and Bob bends his head till his short, chestnut curls rest on her soft, silky hair—"that I've loved you for ever so long."

Bob draws another long breath.

"You have?" he says. "Ah, May, you are laughing at me. I can't believe it! It isn't possible!" Then suddenly, with a happy thought that sends the blood dancing to his face, "If it's true—but, of course, it can't be—you won't mind, you'll let me kiss you, May?"

"It is true," she says, softly; and Bob, pale with a man's first passion, takes her to his breast and kisses her.

There is silence for a moment; the puppies waddle back to their straw blink at the two figures; the coil rests his nose in the stall and stares at them; the moon pours down into the open door-way. The world seems to stand still for a space to give these two foolish young mortals time to come to their senses.

Bob regains his first. With some-thing like a start he raises his head.

"By George!" he says, "what a row there'll be!"

May looks up into his face with a strange, new confidence.

"Will there?" she says.

Bob laughs again, rather gravely.

"I'm afraid there will," he says; "the deuce of a row. What will Mr. Palmer say, I wonder?"

"Ah, papa!" breathes May, awakened to a tardy remembrance of her father.

"Yes," nods Bob, "I'm afraid he won't be overdelighted, May. The stern and heavy father in the drama will be mild and forbearing to Mr. Palmer, when I go, hat in hand, to inform him that I've stolen his daughter—the Court heiress's heart; and I have, haven't I, May?"

She smiles and puts her tiny hand about where his heart should be.

"Yes, Bob, it was very wicked of you. You stole it ever so long ago. Do you keep it somewhere here?" and she lays her head on his breast again.

"Never mind, dear, you may keep it altogether. I can't take it back for all the fathers in the world."

Bob stares at her with delighted surprise.

"I say, May, what a brick you are! I didn't think you'd talk like that. But there's Mr. Palmer, all the same. May, I'm afraid he won't like it; that he'll cut up very rough. You see, it's just as if I'd walked off with—with all the family plate, only worse. I'm so confoundedly poor. Oh, dear, I've never wished for all the land back again until to-night."

May looks up.

"What does it matter about the money?" she asks, but with a little sinking at her heart. "You said I should be very rich, dear."

"That's it," says Bob, ruefully. "It's a curious thing, but the richer a man's daughter will be the wilder he gets if a poor man wants to marry her. It's



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unreasonable, but it's a stubborn fact. I shouldn't wonder if Mr. Palmer hasn't made up his mind that you shall marry some fellow with a title—"

"Oh, Bob!" nestling closer to him with a shudder, "nothing should make me marry anyone but you."

"Nothing shall, depend upon it," says Bob, calmly. "But all the same there will be a deuce of a row. I say, May," suddenly.

"Yes, Bob," as if she were hanging upon the words of wisdom dropping like pearls from his lips.

"I think," tilting his cap on to the back of his head, and staring down at the sweet face solemnly, "I think I won't mention it till harvest. We can keep our secret till then."

"Yes, yes!" Bob heaves a sigh of relief, and he kisses her.

"I'll wait till harvest," he says, with determination.

"But you don't mean to wait in the stable, do you, Bob?" says a voice, and Paula comes into the door-way with a laugh.

May slips from Bob's arm like water from a rock.

"I'm showing May the pups," says Bob, very red, and bending over the lantern with a look of great concern for the candle.

"And boring her to death with endless pedigrees, I suppose," says Paula, holding the end of her shawl under her chin, a smile of amusement in her dark eyes. "Why don't you run away from him, dear? The stupid boy has nothing to talk about except dogs and horses."

"No," says May, falteringly. "But—I like dogs and horses, Paula, dear."

(To be continued.)

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She smiles and puts her tiny hand about where his heart should be. "Yes, Bob, it was very wicked of you. You stole it ever so long ago. Do you keep it somewhere here?" and she lays her head on his breast again. "Never mind, dear, you may keep it altogether. I can't take it back for all the fathers in the world." Bob stares at her with delighted surprise. "I say, May, what a brick you are! I didn't think you'd talk like that. But there's Mr. Palmer, all the same. May, I'm afraid he won't like it; that he'll cut up very rough. You see, it's just as if I'd walked off with—with all the family plate, only worse. I'm so confoundedly poor. Oh, dear, I've never wished for all the land back again until to-night." May looks up. "What does it matter about the money?" she asks, but with a little sinking at her heart. "You said I should be very rich, dear." "That's it," says Bob, ruefully. "It's a curious thing, but the richer a man's daughter will be the wilder he gets if a poor man wants to marry her. It's