

## NO!

BY ROSE TERRY COOKE.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## MISS RIGHT!

MANICE all this time had been as anxious as only a mother can be. She heard, from other sources, of Miss Blythe's engagement just about the time that Jack did, and trembled for her boy, while she thanked God, who had taken away the temptation Jack might not have been able to bear. But her boy did not forget his mother; he found a chance to spend Sunday at home, and once more with his head on his mother's knee and his hand in hers he told her all that he had passed through, not without a breaking voice and wet eyes, for though Jack was a man the child-heart beat in him yet toward his mother, and he was not afraid to express the grief she both understood and consoled.

Mimy, with her usual keenness, perceived that there had been some sort of crisis in Jack's affairs, and with unusual discretion forbore to comment on it; but she made her sympathy known in her own fashion. Every dish Jack especially enjoyed figured on the table that Sunday, the heavy rain that fell all day excusing Mimy to herself for staying from church.

Jack did his best to enjoy Mimy's entertainment, but he felt something like a child that has cried itself to sleep, and woke up happy and languid.

He went back Monday morning, Manice longing to go with him, but comforting herself with the prayer that could follow him wherever he went, and staying her soul on the Father who had so guided and kept her boy, to whom an earthly father's care was denied.

Manice felt Jack's disappointment more keenly because she knew how great was his need of a home. She would have moved into the city herself but for her daughters, who needed her care and her house even more than Jack did; but she had always hoped that he would marry, as most young men do, and have a home of his own as a man should.

It is true she was fervently grateful that he had escaped the misery that a marriage with Jessie Blythe would have brought him. The old proverb says, "Marry in haste, and repent at leisure," and half the marriages among young people justify the proverb. Manice had seen enough of life to know this.

Now she was still more strongly tied to Danvers, for Mr. John Boyd had become such an invalid as to require constant care. He could not leave the house at all, and his mind being weakened as well as his body, he clung to Manice like a child.

Will had gone into the city and become a partner in a broker's business, his whole life absorbed in making

and saving money. Manice was always obliged to write once or twice for his payment of Mr. Boyd's board, for it was never punctually sent. Disagreeable as this was to her, willingly as she would have kept her husband's only brother as a guest, she kept Will up to this duty as a matter of principle.

Jack and Will had no mutual friends or interests, so they rarely met in the city, and it was not a great surprise to any of Will's relatives when they heard he was about to marry a widow, much older than himself, with no charm but a million of dollars all her own, and an unaccountable infatuation for Will Boyd.

None of the Boyds were asked to the wedding. Mimy's comment was, "Well, folks don't usually ask their kin to see 'em hanged. I'm proper glad he's got enough sense left to be ashamed on't. If I was a-goin' to sell myself 'twouldn't be at auction. I'd be consider'ble private about it, now I tell ye! And I'd hev it done by a justice o' peace, too. I wouldn't have the Lord's name took in vain over sech an ungodly piece o' work. But there's one solid comfort, an' that is he'll get his pay. I've lived in this world quite a spell, and seen quite a little o' the way things work; some buyin' an' sellin' is all fair and shipshape, 'n' you get as good as you give; but I never yet see man nor woman that married for money but what got cheated o' their bargain. Seems as though the Lord said to 'em the same as Peter said to Simon, 'Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be bought with money,' for Scriptor says elsewhere that a good wife is from the Lord."

And Mimy's keen eyes saw truly. Will's wife soon found out why he married her—it does not take a woman long to make that discovery—and though she could not entirely alienate her property from him by will, she kept a tight hold over her income, spent as little of it as possible, and invested all she could save in the name of her sister, who had married a poor minister and gone West.

Some year after Mrs. Will Boyd's marriage she suddenly died, and the hard-working Mrs. Brown, living in a log hut in Wyoming Territory, worn out with the labours of a missionary's wife, was astonished out of all belief by hearing from her sister's lawyer that all Mrs. Boyd's property except the share assured by law to Mr. Boyd for his life, had been left to her; and also that he held the certificates of very heavy investments in Mrs. Brown's name.

So Will was left sorely disappointed, with memories of a loveless, childless home, and a total failure in the intention of his marriage.

Soon after Jack went back to his work in the city he was struck one night at prayer-meeting with the sweetness and fervour of a voice

behind him singing that beautiful old hymn,

"Know, my soul, thy full salvation,"

a hymn whose words are as strong, calm, and fervent as the contralto voice that bore them upward.

Jack held his curiosity in check till the meeting was over, and then contrived to see, without any rude or inquisitive staring, that there was only one young woman in the seat back of his.

She was a plainly dressed girl, with a dark, sweet, tranquil face; full of feminine strength in the quiet lips and square dimpled chin. Her eyes were dark and steady, no wondering glance shot from them among the crowd; her black hair waved naturally, but was drawn back from her brow in becoming but unfashionable simplicity, neither "banged" nor frizzed; and her whole expression was that of content, sweetness, and repose. It was a face good to look at, restful, tender, and strong. Jack wished he might see it again, but yet not so strongly that he took any steps to find out who she was, though that countenance returned over and over to his thoughts.

The next week, however, there was some misunderstanding or mistake about a check sent in with the deposit of a great dry-goods firm in the city, and Mr. Gray asked Jack to step down after bank hours and set the matter right.

On entering the store he was directed to the cashier of the wholesale department, and a cash-boy was sent to show him the way.

"There she is!" snapped the urchin, pointing his thumb over his shoulder at a railed enclosure with a high desk, and shouting at the top of his squeaky voice, "Miss Carter!"

The lady at the desk raised her head.

There she was, indeed! and in a fuller sense than Jack knew.

It was the young lady who sat behind him in the prayer-meeting. She bowed, as if to a stranger, but there was an expression of recognition in her eyes. Jack introduced himself, and entered at once on his business.

Ruth Carter had a clear head and a thorough knowledge of her work, so the mistake—which was not hers, but made by one of the firm—was soon righted. Her words were few, and to the purpose, and when the matter in hand was adjusted she bowed and returned to her desk.

Jack recognized at once the lady who knew her position, and the trained book-keeper who had neither wish nor time for conversation with a stranger.

Jack felt a little "snubbed," nevertheless. That is the word he used to himself, for he would have liked to make acquaintance with this young lady. He had not the least idea of falling in love with her. There was no such witchery about her as en-

vironed Jessie Blythe, whose remembered loveliness and fascination still cost him a pang now and then in memory. This girl, he thought, would be a good comrade, a good friend. She was no beauty or belle; probably she went into no society, certainly not into that where Miss Blythe moved.

Jack sighed a little. He needed companionship much. But there seemed no way of making a friend of Miss Carter. He had not an idea where she lived.

A month after this, one warm June Sunday, the class next his own had a new teacher—the regular teacher being absent for the week. Jack felt like echoing the squeaky cash-boy, "There she is!" as the owner of that little white-ribboned bonnet turned her head and showed the face of Ruth Carter.

Never had Jack seen that class of boys so interested, so eager about their lesson; and as now and then he caught a glimpse of the teacher he saw how the dark face glowed with feeling, the eyes shone, the full red lips smiled, losing their firm expression in one of radiant sweetness; and when the school took up their singing-books he heard again that rich, pure voice join in the closing hymn.

When they reached the door they found large drops of rain spotting the stones, and a thunder-shower coming up rapidly.

Jack had expected this from the sultry heat of the day, and had been prudent enough to bring with him an umbrella. How glad he was! He stepped up to Miss Carter, whose pretty white bonnet and delicate muslin dress made her hesitate to face the shower, and offered to see her home.

"I think you will remember seeing me before," he said. "I am the teller of — Bank, and came to Holmes & Hallam's to see you about the check of Stuart Holmes's. My name is John Boyd."

"Oh yes, I remember; I shall be very much obliged," and with the simple cordiality of a well-bred girl she put her hand on Mr. Boyd's offered arm and came under the shelter of his umbrella.

He found that she lived six squares from the church, in the third story of a small house of flat tenements. The storm was still so violent that Jack did not hesitate to accept her invitation to walk in and wait till it abated, given as she opened the door into a parlour where a delicate elderly lady sat, evidently anxious about her daughter, and glad to find she had been protected from the rain.

"I am glad, too, that I happened to be there with an umbrella," said Jack, in answer to her acknowledgments.

"I don't believe in 'happenings,'" said Mrs. Carter, smiling; "but it was a good thing you were so prudent. Mr. Boyd. Ruth would not have liked to be out in such a rain in her