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## Rosalind's Choice

She Could Not Be Bought.

By CLARISSA MACKIE

The station platform was crowded with people waiting for the gates to open to admit them to the Boston express waiting down there on the tracks. Rosalind Mereton, with a devoted cavalier on either side of her graceful little velvet clad form, caught a glimpse of her reflection in the narrow mirror of a slot machine, and the tired look vanished from her lustrous hazel eyes. Rosalind in a tip tilted little hat with a velvet strap under her round white chin, with a pink rose tucked under the brim, where two little brown curls dangled coquettishly, was an enchanting sight even to herself.

With a pale youth at either elbow Rosalind was safely piloted through the crowd and reluctantly released at the gate, through which she passed with a farewell smile that included them both. Dear as they believed there was no jealousy between them, because they had a common ground of fellowship—they were both acutely jealous of a third young man, Hanford Beeks, the millionaire, whose bouquet of violets and orchids nestled in the lace frills of Rosalind's coat.

The train left the city and went thundering out the country toward the New Hampshire hills, where Rosalind had been born. She was going there to spend a few days. The stock company of which she was a member was undergoing the throes of reorganization before going out on the road, and there was something that Rosalind wanted to think over in the quiet of the country.

Hanford Beeks wanted to marry her. She pined for the happiness that she was sure must be attained when one had millions of dollars to spend upon pleasure. She saw in her mind's eye the old red farmhouse transformed into a beautiful mansion set in the



BENJAMIN TOLD HER, HIS EYES STUDYING HER FACE.

midst of a formal garden, while her father and mother rode luxuriously in costly motorcars. Gone would be the ancient Surrey and the fat white horse, Becky, who had drawn them to church each Sunday every year within Rosalind's recollection. Riches and ease would follow her beloved parents the rest of their days if she married Hanford Beeks. How glad they would be, too, to have her give up the profession which she had adopted after a brief summer's acquaintance with some actresses who were summering in Putwold.

Because of her ignorance of the world and its evil ways Rosalind had brushed aside all tempting pleasures and thrown herself into her work, for which she possessed some talent. But she was weary of it. Unknown to herself, the call of her blood was for those simple domestic duties which a long line of Puritan ancestors had nobly fulfilled.

But this offer of Hanford Beeks!

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## Dr. Morse's Indian Root Pills

He was a splendid type of young American, and he was honest in his desire to make Rosalind happy. She had been dazzled by his proposal, and she had begged for time.

There was one obstacle in the way. She didn't love Hanford Beeks.

The dining car was attached at Springfield, and Rosalind slipped off her coat and went to dinner. There was just one available seat in the crowded car, and that was at a table where sat a solitary young man.

A waiter drew out her chair and handed her the menu card. Rosalind lifted her eyes in one swift appraising glance of the man who was calmly eating his soup. She had not noticed him at first beyond the fact that he had arisen and sat down after she had been seated.

It was a homely countenance, rugged and strong as her own New Hampshire hills, with steady gray eyes and dark hair that was rusty red at the ends. It was the face of a man who would and could do things, who might surmount obstacles. His big brown hands were capable too. Rosalind looked him over from the crown of his well brushed head to the shoulders of his perfectly fitting gray coat. He was immaculate. Yet the last time Rosalind had seen him he had been garbed in blue overalls, and a ragged straw hat had been tossed on the back of his head. He had been loading cornstalks on a farm wagon the very day she left Putwold to go on the stage.

"How do you do, Ben?" asked Rosalind demurely.

Benjamin Hall looked up quickly and stared at Rosalind. His first careless glance at her entrance had seen nothing save the crown and brim of the tip tilted hat. He had not looked under it because he rather thought girls were a bore, all save one.

"Rosie! Rosie Mereton!" he gasped, holding out one of the big brown hands.

"Ben, do you mean that you didn't recognize me?" asked Rosalind, with tears in her eyes, because it was so good to see a face from home once more.

"I am. And you are, too?" he asked eagerly, his eyes never once leaving her lovely face.

"Yes, just for the week end. Tell me where you have been and what you have been doing," answered Rosalind, feeling an odd embarrassment in Benjamin Hall's presence.

Benjamin told her, his eyes studying her face as if he would read in its clear openness some record of the three years since they had parted.

He told her that he had left Putwold a few months after her own departure. The death of his parents had left him free to start life anew. He had sold some woodland and had rented the homestead to strangers. He had gone west and bought an interest in a mine which his uncle controlled. He had prospered. He was going back to Putwold. He was going back to the land which his ancestors had tilled.

"I'm homesick for the farm," he told her. "I've been west, and I've studied the way they do things out there, and I shall now how to make it pay. Now tell me about yourself, Rosie."

Rosalind told him briefly. There seemed so little to tell in her narrow life of hard work.

"And you are going back?" he asked. "Yes, I suppose so," said Rosalind, flushing warmly.

"Is this true?" asked Benjamin quietly as he took a newspaper clipping from his notebook and gave it to her.

Rosalind read it with down bent head: "It is rumored that Miss Rosalind Mereton, the lovely little ingenue in the popular comedy, 'Lavender Flowers,' is soon to wed one of our most energetic young millionaires."

"Is it true, Rosie?" asked Benjamin. Rosalind shook her head.

"No, not yet," she said impulsively, and then blushed scarlet at her self betrayal.

Benjamin looked at the violets and orchids at her breast and sighed sharply. He had hoped to be in time to offer Rosalind many things, but he was too late. He wondered fiercely what sort of chap this man was. Did Rosalind love him or was she dazzled by the millions? Who could blame her? he asked himself fiercely.

Adroitly he changed the subject, and when the meal was over he accompanied Rosalind back to her seat in the day coach. Sitting there beside her with the rugged scenery of New Hampshire blurring into the dusk, Benjamin felt a growing confidence in himself.

He was nearing his own hills; he was on his own ground, and the girl he had always loved was beside him, wearing another man's orchids, perhaps half promised to this rich man.

"Rosalind," he said suddenly, "are you engaged to this man?"

"No," said Rosalind quickly.

"Do you expect to be?" he demanded bluntly.

"He has asked me," admitted Rosalind.

"Do you love him?" went on Benjamin relentlessly.

Rosalind hesitated. She wondered, because she felt no anger against Benjamin and his questioning.

His hand touched her arm, her hand, and held it warmly.

"Do you love this man, Rosalind?" he asked quietly.

Rosalind looked up into the gray eyes and, looking, could not withdraw her gaze.

"No, no, no," she said intensely.

"Ah, Rosalind, I have always loved you," he said chokingly.

"And I, oh, Ben, I believe I have. That's why I've longed for Putwold and the old farm, and father and mother will be so glad, and Ben, some one will see you!"

"I don't care," said Ben boldly. "The whole world can know how happy I am in winning the girl I love!"

And he kissed Rosalind.

"Did you send word to your mother that you were coming?" he asked as they neared Putwold.

"Yes. Won't they be surprised to see us together, you and I, old playmates?" asked Rosalind gleefully.

Ben bent down suddenly and pressed his cheek against hers. "Rosalind, you are sure—sure that you won't regret the money and the motorcars and yachts and everything that this man has offered you? I've heard he is a splendid fellow," he added generously.

"Sure, Ben," said Rosalind steadily. "There was of thing lacking and that was love. We can never be poor with that blessing."

The train came to a standstill, and Rosalind peered from the window an instant.

"Ben," she cried breathlessly, "there's father and mother, and they're driving old Becky. How dear they all look!"

So the train rumbled on after bringing back to Putwold village two of her children who had gone out into the world to seek wealth and happiness only to come home and find it there after all.

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