

ALL FOR RICHES.

CHAPTER III.

Love Comes to Goldie.

The following morning dawned bright and clear.

In the afternoon the young people went to church, riding all together in the family wagon. Christopher drove the horse and Goldie sat beside him, while an extra seat was put in the centre of the carriage, facing the back seat. Upon this the young gentleman sat, and Belle and May occupied the back seat.

They were a merry party, and gayly enjoyed the ride home.

The long Sabbath day at length drew to a close, and in the twilight the young people, joined by others, rambled to the top of Maple Hills, according to a custom of many years' standing.

A delightful walk home in the moonlight finished the day, and when the hour for retiring came, Goldie Mellen laid her bright head upon her snowy pillow, to dream of a handsome dark face, with glorious black eyes that had looked into her heart. She took every glance of Frank Whitney's eyes and every tone of his rich voice, close to her young heart, and treasured all there, not knowing that it was love that thrilled her soul and bid her yield her thoughts and affections at his command.

The weeks flew by on golden wings. Ned Cameron was more than ever devoted to gentle May, and had no thought for any other, although he treated all with respect.

But Frank Whitney was in a state of indecision and unrest. He did not wish to give Belle up entirely, for he was proud of her royal beauty, and wished to claim her as his wife.

She would not disgrace him in his own circle of society, and he often thought of the sensation she would cause when he introduced her there.

Yet he could not deny to himself that he loved Goldie better than Belle. More than this, he had whispered his passion to the sweet maiden, and she had listened to his words.

She idolized Frank, and was never happy for a moment unless he was near her.

Belle was obliged to be much with her mother, as they kept no hired help outside the farmhouse, and Mrs. Mellen could not do all the work alone.

Besides this, Belle had felt the change in Frank, observing from the very first, his devotion to Goldie, and her proud spirit held itself above trying to win him back.

She loved Frank, and the one dream of her life had been to become his wife. In place of that love a bitter hatred was now stealing, and it extended to Goldie, too. Crushing out all the tender sister love, this hateful feeling gained until it ended in a complete hatred.

Frank and Belle were together by the little bridge over the falls one twilight.

Ned and May strolled away by themselves, and Christy had persuaded Goldie to ride over to the village of Riverbrook with him.

Belle was proudly silent, answering Frank's words with cool indifference. At last he said:

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"Why do you seem so careless and cool, Belle? It was not so last summer, when"—he lowered his voice to a tender tone—"when I won your promise to be my bride."

She turned a scornful look upon him, and replied:

"Goldie was not here last summer. Had she been here, it would not have been that would have listened to your vows."

A guilty flush mounted to his brow, but he laughingly answered:

"So you are jealous of that child?"

"She is not a child, Frank. Although but little more than a child in stature or in years, she has rapidly developed her heart since you came here. You know you love her, and you know it is no child's heart that responds to this love. She will please you for a while, but you will tire of her pretty, coaxing ways and baby face after a little while, and then you will punish her for making my life desolate! I am willing that her punishment should come through you. It will be more bitter, more perfect. You have won her; now keep what you have won!"

Frank Whitney could not deny that he loved the sister of the proud scornful girl beside him. He rapidly resolved the question in his mind:

"Can I give Belle up and marry Goldie?"

His heart clung to Goldie, but pride spoke loudly for Belle. He knew that Goldie would not be so great a credit to him in polite society. She was too impulsive and willful; too apt to laugh and sing whenever she pleased, in defiance of etiquette, or even good breeding. Goldie was beautiful and charming.

Belle interrupted his thoughts, exclaiming:

"You are possibly waiting for me to tell you that you are free. Consider our engagement at an end, if you please."

A scornful laugh followed her words, and before Frank was aware of her intentions, she turned away from him and walked toward the house.

His first impulse was to follow her and make up their quarrel, and he would have done so had not a white-robed form bounded down the hill to meet, and two warm little hands, nestled in his own, while Goldie asked:

"What did you wish to tell me, Frank? I met Belle out here, and she said I must hasten to you, for you had something to tell me. What is it?"

Frank Whitney always acted on the impulse of the moment, and the impulse of that moment was to let Belle go and take Goldie to his heart, to keep and to hold forever, trusting to time and his love to fit her for society. So he folded her close to his heart, and pressing love's kisses upon her sweet face, whispered:

"It is this: I love you more than all of earth beside—will you consent to be my wife?"

Goldie's blue eyes gazed into his own, big with wonderment. She asked:

"Are you not promised to Belle?"

"Belle has broken our engagement. She bid me win you," he replied.

"Oh, Frank! How good Belle is. If she does really and truly give you up, you know how happy I should be, and how proud to be your wife."

She clasped her hands, and her breath came softly as she spoke, while the moonlight streamed upon her upturned face.

In that hour there was nothing in all the world that Frank Whitney would have accepted in exchange for his beautiful, willful little Goldie, lying so still upon his breast.

They remained silent for a few moments. Then Goldie spoke.

"I was thinking, Frank, if Belle could give you up willingly," she said.

"You didn't say anything to vex her or make her cross, did you?"

"What an absurd idea, little girl!" he replied, laughing in his old merry way.

Goldie drew a deep breath, and murmured:

"Poor Belle! I pity her; for in all the world there can be nothing so terrible as giving up your love to another. You will never put me away?"

"Never, love!" he answered, drawing her tenderly to his bosom. "Never, love!"

And all the time Belle was walking under the apple trees in the orchard back of the house, with clasped hands and white lips. She was tearing from her heart the image of Frank Whitney, and with it came her sisterly love for Goldie. It left her heart bleeding and torn, but she threw them both out of her life forever, and the struggle was over at last.

She met them upon their return, with a cold, calm smile, and when Goldie asked:

"Do you give him up freely?" she only put away the clinging arms from about her neck, and answered, carelessly:

"Yes; I am tired of him."



"Tired of Frank! The noblest—the best!"

"There, there," answered Belle; "he is as noble and as good as the rest of his kind—no better!" and swept away from them.

She never spoke with Frank Whitney alone after that, but remained in doors while the others rambled over the hills and dells, sometimes on foot, in pairs, sometimes on horseback.

The family knew that Frank had exchanged Belle for Goldie, although Belle deceived them all with her assumed gaiety and careless manner.

"He was never suited to me, and Goldie loved him, so I gave him to her," she said.

CHAPTER IV.

GOLDIE'S SECRET.

The golden hours flew all too fast at the Home Farm; and one day in August there was a sad leave-taking. Christy Mellen and Ned Cameron were going back to college, and Frank Whitney was going abroad. A letter from his uncle, Major Grant, who was traveling in Europe, had been received, and he had been advised to suspend his education here, and finish it, after a year of travel, at a German university.

Frank bailed the change with joy, although reluctant to part with Goldie, whom he loved passionately.

Goldie went herself sick, and for several days, after his departure, did not leave her room.

Farmer Mellen muttered something about "there being grown-up girls enough for young men to court, and not upset children with their silly love talk."

"Goldie is young enough ten years from now," he said to Belle. "Why didn't you keep him yourself, and leave Goldie to me?"

"Because I did not want him, and Goldie did," was the calm reply.

Finally, Goldie mingled with the family again, but she changed. Where now was the gay, saucy girl who had kept the house in an uproar of fun or pique all the time?

Not in the quiet, sad-faced little girl who seldom spoke, unless directly addressed, but seemed the exact opposite to all her former ways.

What could have caused the change?

Listen to Belle Mellen's words as she sat in Goldie's room one evening early in November. Goldie was sitting in the little low chair by the window, gazing out upon the moonlit fields.

Suddenly the quick, ringing sound of silver bells fell upon the ears of the inmates of the farmhouse.

Belle, who had entered the room but a few moments before, glanced inquiringly at her pale-faced sister, who remarked:

"It is only Tim going to the post office."

"Who sent him to the office to-night?" demanded Belle.

"I asked him to go, Belle. It is the first of the month, you know," responded Goldie.

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There was a mournful accent in her once happy, ringing voice, which did not escape the notice of the proud, handsome Belle, whose heart, nevertheless, failed to thrill with a thought of pity or tenderness. She only closed her lips firmly, and whispered, under her breath:

"Her punishment has begun. Let her suffer."

"What were you saying, Belle? I did not hear."

"I say that you are a fool for your pains, when you send to the post office upon such a night as this for a letter from Frank Whitney."

Goldie glanced into her sister's face with pained surprise, then replied in a tone scarcely above a whisper:

"He wrote to me last month, you know, Belle."

Belle laughed scornfully, and replied hastily:

"But he will never write again. He will not remember you long."

To be continued.

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