

ALL FOR LOVE.

CHAPTER I.
BETROTHED BY WILL.

"You can perhaps imagine something of what happened up there in the tree after they were gone. It was a hot time I can tell you, and—well, I'm not going to live it over now, but I kept out of Philip's sight after that, and could not be found to bid him good-bye before he sailed. Now, daddy dear, do you think I will ever marry Philip Walton after that?" demanded Lady Beth, in conclusion, lifting a pair of glittering eyes to her father, but having absolutely no color in her face.

Silas Russell sat staring at his plate for a full minute after she had concluded, while his countenance expressed varying emotions. Then he looked up and smiled fondly upon her.

"You certainly are not a 'freckle-faced little fright with red hair and a pug nose' now," he observed in such an emphatic tone that her color came back with a rush, and the girl dimpled and sparkled like her own self once more.

"Thank you, papa; that was very pretty. But how about the 'absolutely unbearable temper'?" she mischievously queried.

"I can stand it," the man dryly returned, but with a responsive twinkle in his fond eyes.

"Guess you will have to for a while longer, at any rate," she retorted, nodding saucily at him. Then she added reflectively: "I know I was a veritable little spitefire as a child, especially when those boys used to twit me about my red hair and pug nose. Oh, daddy, the hours I've labored over that nose! It isn't so very objectionable now, do you think?" she interjected with an assumption of comic anxiety as she caressingly stroked that dainty though slightly reticent feature.

"The nose is all right, your ladyship," said the gentleman with much gravity. "It is just enough out of the ordinary to let the world know that its possessor has a mind of her own, and is eminently capable of looking out for number one."

"Now you are laughing at me, sir," returned the girl severely, "but there is many a true word spoken in jest as I'm going to prove to you, for I'm not going to marry Philip."

"Pshaw, Beth! It isn't like you to nurse a spite for so many years," said her father in a conciliatory tone. "Philip is a high-spirited fellow, and

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doubtless spoke rashly under the impulse of the moment. I know he used to be fond of you."

"Oh, yes, in the way a fellow would be fond of a pet monkey that he plays with one moment and teases the next," the girl responded with a touch of bitterness in her tone. "But aside from the point at issue, what does he say about himself after all these years?" she concluded with a furtive glance of curiosity at the open letter lying beside her father's plate.

"He hasn't been a very good correspondent, I admit," said Mr. Russell as he ran his eye again over the letter. "It is dated from London," he resumed. "He refers to his father's death, which you remember he notified us of about three years ago, then adds that it took him two years to settle his affairs and get the business in shape. Since then he has been travelling extensively in Europe, but is now prepared to return and locate in his native land. He says he longs for home and home friends, and desires his kindest remembrances to be given to Lady Beth—let me see, it was Philip who bestowed your title upon you, wasn't it?"

"Did he? I never heard that before," said Beth, flushing again. "I only know you have called me so ever since I can remember. I think it rather silly, too," she concluded, suddenly resenting what had been her pet name all her life, among her nearest friends.

"Yes, Phil gave it to you. You were only three years old when the Waltons came to be our neighbors. The first time he called here with his mother he saw one of your dolls lying on a chair, and picking it up, gravely examined it. You slipped down from the nurse's lap, toddled over to where he sat, stamped your foot angrily at him and cried out: 'Boy, my Peggy—give me my Peggy!' He meekly placed the doll in your hands, whereupon you stamped your foot authoritatively again and said: 'Boy, go home!' Phil laughed heartily at the command, then made you a very gentlemanly bow, saying, 'My Lady Beth, your will is law,' and walked straight out of the room. It amused everybody immensely, and so, ever since, you have been My Lady Beth to us all."

"How interesting, especially as it emphasizes the fact of Philip's varied experiences in connection with my 'unbearable temper' from his earliest acquaintance with me," observed Beth with a shrug of her shoulders.

Mr. Russell bit his lips and wished he had not allowed himself to become reminiscent.

"Well, according to this, we may look for him in about four weeks, for doubtless he will come to us as soon as possible, after landing," he observed after a moment of silence.

"But, papa, you know we go to

Aunt Prue's the eighteenth of this month to remain six weeks," Beth objected.

"We must not be away when Philip arrives," Mr. Russell gravely observed. "We will write and explain the circumstances to Prue. And, little girl," he continued, growing suddenly white about the mouth, "I hope you will make up your mind to carry out the conditions of your Aunt Eliza's will, or—"

"Or what?" questioned Beth, startled by her father's look and tone.

"Or you may wake up some morning to find yourself homeless and penniless."

"Papa! what do you mean?"

"My dear, the recent panic in Wall Street has knocked all my props from under me. My business is in a terrible tangle—the firm of Russell & Gage is on the brink of failure."

CHAPTER II. AUNT PRUE'S ADVICE.

"Don't do it, my dear; don't ever marry anybody for money. It's a crime, it's sacrilege, and I'm sure I can't see what induced Eliza Crawford to make such a foolish will to hamper a couple of children, like you and Philip Walton, from your youth up."

"But papa wants me to do it, auntie. He says that at his time of life it is doubtful he ever recovers his financial footing, and after his affairs are settled, there may be little or nothing left for us to live upon, unless he can have this money to start him again."

"I can't help it. It is belittling to my good woman, or man either, to take such a vital step for greed of gold. I'm surprised that Silas would think of such a thing! And you will surely repent it, unless, dearie, you love this young man."

"Love!" A vivid red suffused the face of the speaker. "The word has never been mentioned between us. I've never even seen him since that day I hid in the beech tree and overheard what he said. I could not bear to speak to him, not even to bid him good-by when he went away to Ja-

san. They said he was hurt; but the 'freckle-faced little fright' had been hurt too." Lady Beth's voice was suspiciously tremulous as she concluded.

Her companion, a sweet-faced woman about fifty years of age, leaned forward and softly kissed the hot cheek nearest her, a queer little wrinkle in her kind eyes as she did so.

"There isn't a single one left," she said with a musical little laugh, "so don't ever think of that unpleasant speech and episode again. Has Philip ever written to you?"

"A couple of times, the first year after he went away—patronizing, self-sufficient letters, such as a boy of twenty might write to a girl of twelve. But I never answered them."

"Then you know practically nothing about each other during the nine or ten years which have elapsed since you parted," Miss Prudence Russell thoughtfully observed, adding: "He probably has a mental picture of you as you appeared in short dresses with a long braid between your shoulders; and you think of him only as he looked when he stood that day under the beech and angrily denounced your Aunt Eliza's absurd meddling with his destiny and yours—that is, unless you have exchanged pictures meantime."

"We haven't."

"Then I think there may be a surprise awaiting you both, when you meet," said Miss Prue, a tender light in her kind, gray eyes as they rested upon the beautiful girl beside her.

"When we meet," repeated Beth, with suggestive emphasis. "If papa

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is well enough to spare me, I'm going to York Harbor to Muriel next week." "Surely, dear, you would not refuse to welcome home an old friend after an absence of ten years! Mr. Walton is, of course, ignorant of the fact that you overheard his rash speech, and he would be wounded by your apparent avoidance of him," said Miss Russell gravely, adding: "I have an idea that Philip is a fine man. Even in the midst of his hot anger that day, he betrayed a nice sense of honor in remembering that if he failed to fulfill his part of that arbitrary contract, he would deprive you of the half of the fortune which, as he said, should have been wholly yours. Then, too, he has kept himself free all these years, and has now returned, before the stipulated time expires, with the evident intention of securing to you your inheritance."

"And his own to himself," interjected Beth somewhat sharply.

"I do not know about that, of course," gravely replied Miss Prue. "It may be he has grown avaricious, but I think you told me he said if he could make over his share to you and settle the matter that way, he should be glad to do it; which goes to prove that he was a generous-hearted fellow at that time. How do we know that he has not met some one, during these ten years, whom he would like to marry, but has held himself free because he believed he was bound by honor to secure to you your Aunt Eliza's legacy?"

"Aunt Prue, I never thought of that!" cried Beth, sitting erect and growing suddenly white.

Miss Russell studied the girl's face for a moment; then she placidly remarked: "You see there are a good many things to be considered from his point of view, as well as from your own; but, as I have already said, do not for a moment contemplate this marriage simply to secure this money. I know your father favors the idea, and will be disappointed if it fails, especially after his recent misfortunes; but you are both welcome to share what I have, and there is plenty; besides, what I have, together with the farm, will all go to you, dearie, when I am through with it."

"Oh, Aunt Prue, don't breathe such a thought. I pray that time may not come for years and years," cried Beth, with a queer catch in her breath. "It is dear of you to always make us so welcome here, and I love to be with you. What could I have done alone, with papa so ill, if he could not have come here to you?"

(To be continued.)

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