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Meet Me at Somerville's
For a Glass of
**Ice Cream and
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Known as the Best in
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Pure, rich Ice Cream, made by the most
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Will receive prompt attention.
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ROLFF HOUSE

BY
C. H. BENEDICT.

CHAPTER XXIII.

It was not usual, in the early part of the present century, for wives to oppose their wishes to those of their husbands, especially when they were men of property and character in the community; still less was it permissible for a daughter to question the authority of her father. But Love has been a rebel in all ages. The conventions of society have never been able to bind the limbs of the sly and sturdy rogue.

Rosa Bruyn was by nature the very pattern of a dutiful daughter. She shrank with a reluctance amounting to anguish from the thought of placing herself in open rebellion to her father's wishes; but there appeared no other alternative save to surrender herself an unwilling victim to a hateful marriage.

Her anguish and conflict of mind caused her to grow paler and sadder of demeanor, but her strong physical nature was not of a kind to bend speedily to trouble, however overwhelming it might be. The anxiety of her mother for her was much increased. The tender-hearted matron at last began to read the secret of her daughter's absorbing love for the errant heir of Rolff House. She was drawn into deeper sympathy with her feelings; and the anguish and suffering on one side and the tender condolence on the other at last broke down the vestige of a barrier to perfect confidence that had existed between them. Rosa confessed to her mother all her hopes and doubts and sorrows, and earnestly sought her advice as to the course she should pursue. It was but meagre comfort the good matron could give.

"It is a decision, my dear child," she said, "that must rest with your own heart. I am from now on, for your happiness is so dear to me that I should I unhappily direct you wrongly. I could never forgive myself. It is easy to see how, from your father's point of view, your marriage with Ralph should appear very desirable. He seems to be a pleasant young man, and his keenness, good character and steadiness are naturally qualities that appeal to the favor of a man like your father. Besides, he will be quite rich; and the fact of Rolff House being likely to be his inheritance is another thing in his favor. Since you were a little girl, your father has talked of your being one day mistress of Rolff House, and of seeing it restored to its old dignity. Although he never liked Claude, this hope induced him to look favorably upon his attentions to you. Had Claude remained home, and seated down as heir to the estate left him, all would have been well. But his strange departure, and the stranger results that have followed, by which the Saybrooks seem to have become the owners of nearly all his property, have greatly embittered your father's feelings toward him. He seems to regard the idea of your marriage with him as a thing to be prevented at all hazards. For my part, although I had always liked Claude, and believed in his truth and sincerity, I must confess his hurried desire to get away as soon as his aunt was dead, his strange sacrifices to raise money, his unaccountable letter—all have shaken my former faith in him. I trust that every suspicion against him may be untrue; but you know, my dear child, that this is a world of temptation, in which the noblest and best sometimes fail; and we can fully trust no one."

"I know Claude's faults," replied Rosa. "I know that he was ambitious and reckless of the opinions of those he did not care for; but I would stake my life on his truth and goodness."

"I, too, have believed as you, my dear child," said the mother; "but yet we must remember that Claude's very generosity and carelessness of the world's criticism would be the qualities that would expose him to the most temptation when cast upon his own resources out in the world."

Rosa was silent. She could see the soundness of her mother's reasoning. It was but an echo of the fear that had always lain at her own heart. And yet—yet she still clung to her faith in her lover, she knew not why; perhaps, as the drowning man clings to a straw, because it was the only hope left of safety to her perishing dream of happiness. Although it consoled her greatly to have her mother's full confidence once more, Rosa could profit nothing by her counsel. She was left still to her own undaunted resolution to make the decision so important to her future weal or woe.

On the morning after her conversation with her mother, Rosa, full of an anguish and undecision, arrayed herself for a walk in the open air, hoping the clear, bright day, the fresh breeze, the songs of the birds, and the cheerful aspect of Nature, would revive the intense strain of her feelings, and enable her to think and decide more clearly. She bent her steps almost unconsciously down the road and into the lane that led to the old woods where she had taken leave of Claude. She was suddenly impelled with an irresistible desire to visit the spot where they had parted. She wandered down into the wood, and soon was seated in the place where she had listened to his last words. She remained a long time, giving herself up to sad reflections, and each moment feeling her resolution grow stronger to dare and endure everything before she would break the faith she had here pledged to remain true to him forever.

After awhile, she arose and walked on, following the path that wound in the direction of Rolff House. Suddenly she came on the figure of a man, seated on a rock by the path, and partially concealed by a large tree. She stopped and uttered a little cry, when he turned his head and she saw that it was Carl Crum.

The old fellow arose and greeted her with outstretched palms, in which she placed both her own hands. "Well-a-day," he exclaimed, "who would have thought to meet you here, rosebud? But I am glad to see you taking the good medicine of air and sunshine, although, judging from your pale cheeks, you do not take enough of it. Ah, I love to see the cheeks of the

Rheumatism..

is Uric Acid in the blood. Unhealthy kidneys are the cause of the acid being there. If the kidneys act as they should they would strain the Uric Acid out of the system and rheumatism wouldn't occur. Rheumatism is a Kidney Disease. Dodd's Kidney Pills have made a great part of their reputation curing Rheumatism. So get at the cause of these fearful shooting pains and stiff, aching joints. There is but one sure way—

Dodd's Kidney Pills

young rose, and their eyes orient with happiness. You do not appear happy, Rosa."

"I am not happy," replied Rosa, feeling all reserve depart in the presence of the old man's pleasant face and kindly smile. "I am very, very unhappy."

"And no doubt I can guess the reason therefor," replied old Carl, shaking his grizzled head. "I hear it reported that you are to marry Ralph Saybrook. Ah, it grieves me to hear so. I am no judge of human nature if that young man is not as cold and heartless a villain as ever graced the face of the poor of the earth. He is a woman by slow degrees. No, no, he is no mate for you, rosebud, and I need not ask to know that you can never give him your heart."

"There is a promise—no engagement," replied Rosa, anxious to clear herself from the implied rebuke of the old man's words; "but, alas, my father urges me to accept him, and it is only by a sacrifice of filial duty that I can escape a fate I shudder to think of."

These sad words aroused old Carl's sympathy as well as curiosity, and, determined to fathom what he already conceived to be a plot of his hated enemy, he gradually and skillfully drew from Rosa the whole story of the scheme to force Ralph Saybrook on her favor as a suitor.

"So, so," muttered the old man, after he had learned every detail of the matter, "they would force you to marry young Ralph, and they are to fit up Rolff House as a bridal present, eh? Now, by all the good angels, that scheme should never prosper. Let me advise you, rosebud. I am old enough to be a little wise, and in this matter I feel so deep a sympathy for you that I plan to help you, and I think I have a plan in my head that will do it. I can see that you shrink from disobeying your father, although the thought of marriage with Ralph is as repugnant to you as can be. Well, as I understand that old fox has caught your father with a promise that he will fit up Rolff House for you and Ralph when you are married. Perhaps he means to, but there may be difficulties in the way that he little dreams of. Ah, he's a crafty villain; but we will be crafty too. Now, rosebud, mark me. You go back home, and tell your father that you have made up your mind, and that you will marry Ralph on one condition. Let that condition be that the wedding shall not take place till Rolff House is repaired and restored to its former grandeur. Now, don't look astonished; trust an old fox like your father will give his life for you, and would rather see you dead than married to Ralph Saybrook. My word for it, they will never go far in the work of repairing and restoring Rolff House. Strange things have happened in the old house; and stranger things may yet come to pass. The popular belief is that it is haunted. Of course, this is silly; yet there is a mystery about the house, and my word for it, it will never be repaired and restored save by the rightful heir. At least, the plan I propose would give you time, and relieve you for awhile from the strain of anxiety that is undermining your health; and so far it would be good. It will take a long time to repair Rolff House, and much may happen in the meantime. I feel assured we can trust the future. The good Lord will help us. He always helps those who trust in him. Do as I counsel, rosebud, and if all does not turn out well, we shall at least have time to arrange new plans."

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