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Winnipeg, May, 1910.

"Will you allow me to say," he said, "that I don't think you were created for a consolation prize!"

He spoke somewhat grimly, but his tone was not without humor. Molly sat quite still in his hold. She had a feeling that she had grossly insulted him, that she had made it his right to treat her exactly as he chose.

After a moment he set her quietly free.

"I see you are serious," he said. "If you weren't—it would be intolerable. But do you actually expect me to take you at your word?"

She did not hesitate, "I wish you to," she said.

"You think you would be happy with me?" he pursued. "You know, I am called eccentric by a good many."

"You are eccentric," said Molly, "or you wouldn't dream of marrying one of us. As to being happy, it isn't my nature to be miserable. I don't want to be a countess, but I do want to help my people. That in itself would make me happy."

"Thank you for telling me the truth," Wyverton said, gravely. "I believe I have suspected some of it from the first."

and kissed first one and then the other of the hands he held.

No one, save Phyllis, knew of the contract made on that golden morning in June on the edge of the flowering meadows; and even to Phyllis only the bare outlines of the interview were vouchsafed.

That she was free, and that Lord Wyverton felt no bitterness over his disappointment, he himself assured her. He uttered no word of reproach. He did not so much as hint that she had given him cause for complaint. He was absolutely composed, even friendly.

He barely mentioned her sister's interference in the matter, and he said nothing whatsoever as to her singular method of dealing with the situation. It was Molly who briefly imparted this action of hers, and her manner of so doing did not invite criticism.

Thereafter she went back to her multitudinous duties without an apparent second thought, shouldering her burden with her usual serenity; and no one imagined for a moment what tumultuous hopes and doubts underlay her calm exterior.

Lord Wyverton left the place, and the



"Molly seated herself on the top bar and surveyed him."

And now listen. I asked your sister to marry me—because I wanted her. But I will spoil no woman's life. I will take nothing that does not belong to me. I shall set her free."

He paused. Molly was looking at him expectantly. His face softened a little under her eyes.

"As for you," he said, "I don't think you quite realize what you have offered me—how much of yourself. It is no little thing, Molly. It is all you have. A woman should not part with that lightly. Still, since you have offered it to me, I cannot and do not throw it aside. If you are of the same mind in six months from now, I shall take you at your word. But you ought to marry for love, child—you ought to marry for love."

He held out his hand to her abruptly, and Molly, with a burning face, gave him both her own.

"I can't think how I did it," she said, in a low voice. "But I—I am not sorry."

"Thank you," said Lord Wyverton, and he stooped with an odd little smile,

general aspect of things returned to their usual placidity.

The announcement of the engagement of the vicar's eldest daughter to Jim Freeman, the doctor's assistant in the neighboring town, created a small stir among the gossips. It was generally felt that, even if slow as young Freeman undoubtedly was, pretty Phyllis Neville might have done far better for herself. A rumor even found credence in some quarters that she had actually refused the wealthy aristocrat for Jim Freeman's sake, but there were not many who held this belief. It implied a foolishness too sublime.

Discussion died down after Phyllis's return to her work. It was understood that her marriage was to take place in the winter. Molly's hands were, in consequence, very full, and she had obviously no time to talk of her sister's choice. There was only one visitor who ever called at the Vicarage in anything approaching to state. Her visits usually occurred about twice a year, and possessed something of the nature of a Royal favor. This was Lady Caryl,

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