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TRU-BLU BISCUIT CO.—Spokane, Portland, Seattle

## Daughters of Midas

by Anne Austin

### THIS HAS HAPPENED

T. Q. Curtis, millionaire owner of the Curtis Department Store, selects three girls from his establishment to come into his home as his wards for one year, because he believes they have worthy ambitions and he wants to give them the opportunity to fulfill them. Billy Wells, who is sincerely desirous of becoming a concert violinist, is the only one of the three who has truthfully stated her ambition. The other two girls—Nyda Lomax and Winnie Shelton—lie in order to enjoy the Curtis home, wealth and position for the year. Clay Curtis, son of the store owner, tries to get Billy to give up the proposition. She disregards his advice. Clay has disinherited himself and is living in the poor section of the town with the Wells family, working in the Truman au-

tomobile factory in the daytime, and writing music at night. Mrs. Meadows, the widow of a former governor, is hired as a hostess for Curtis' new "daughters." Billy is interested in Mrs. Meadows' nephew—Dal Romaine. With his fascinating personality, and his Oriental looks he has woven a spell about Billy. Billy returns in the Curtis limousine from the first week-end to see her mother and Clay. Clay is sulky when Billy says she cannot stay to bear a new musical composition of his. Billy admits to her mother that she has been so busy shopping that she has done nothing about her music, but promises to see it promptly. Billy hastens away, knowing that Dal Romaine and other guests are assembled for tea in the Curtis home, and she fears to leave Dal alone with eth-

er Nyda or Winnie, so badly does she want him for herself.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

### CHAPTER XXIII

Professor Vacay Navratil was a short, round, beaming little man, whose near-sighted blue eyes peered through thick-rimmed, round glasses upon an embarrassed but staunch little girl who believed that she could become a great violinist. Billy had heard him play two or three times, and her native impudence and truculence bowed down before him humbly.

"Play something," he told her, interrupting the story of her musical career almost rudely. "Anything!" He waved his surprisingly beautiful white hand impatiently.

She was disconcerted, frightened, but she lifted her violin to her chin and began to play the first thing that she could think of—Schubert's "Ave Maria." She played the first measures very badly, because her hand was trembled with fright, but as the slow, sweet beauty of the music took hold of her, she lost her fear of the great teacher, gave herself wholly up to making the lovely old violin sing and sob.

"Play something else," he ordered her gruffly. "Have you studied Tschakovsky? Ja? Of course!" He nodded triumphantly at her admission.

She chose a movement from a Tschakovsky concerto, one which called for difficult staccato bowing. Half way through the movement, she dropped her bow and stared at him, her eyes round with dismay.

"I thought I could play that well, but now—I can't. There's something wrong. I don't know anything wrong. I don't know anything right!" she wailed.

"Good!" His eyes grew wide in delighted surprise. "Ver' good! We make a beginning—a grand beginning. We know we are not perfect. Good! Let me see your hands, your wrists."

She submitted her slim white hands for his inspection. He bent her fingers back and forth, tested her delicate wrists for suppleness, nodded with great satisfaction.

"Your hands—they are joosn right. We make you a violinist, in three years, five years—"

"Oh! Her cry was sharp agony. "I have only a year. I have studied violin all my life. Oh, I realize my teachers were poor, but I did have one reason in a conservatory in Chicago, before my mother's health became bad. She worked so hard that I might study. I was only fourteen then. Professor Schma-

mpfennick said I had—talent." She suppressed the word genius, which seemed grotesquely important now.

"So we get to work," the master told her imperiously. "In three years, five years, maybe more, we make you a real violinist. If you work hard, hours and hours every day. You can work!" he asked suspiciously.

"Yes," she nodded miserably, not realizing that he had paid her a greater compliment in his prophecy than he had ever paid to any other pupil in college.

as he beamed upon her, tearing her concert to shreds, then making her glow for a moment with the assurance that she had achieved, in the "Ave Maria," absolute pitch, the first great essential to becoming a real violinist. He told her, too, that she played with imagination, that she made her violin "sing" to her, that she really interpreted. Then he shattered her with violent attacks upon her bowing, her fingering, even upon the way she held her instrument.

"Nothing but scales for a long time, no!" he inquired, as if that were a happy thought.

She arranged for three hours a week, a concession which she wrung from him against his judgment. And she could not retract when he told her, frowning prodigiously, that his fee was ten dollars an hour.

"Four hours' practice a day," he warned her, beaming as he bowed her out.

She telephoned her mother, dutifully, as she had promised, stopping in at a drug store off the university campus, but at her mother's first loving, eager words, Billy burst into tears.

"He thinks I can really play in three or four or five years," she sobbed. "And, oh, mother, I only have a year! What's the use?"

When she reached the Curtis mansion, it was half past twelve. There were two Ford's, a small sedan and T. Q.'s coupe, in which he drove himself to and from the store, parked in the driveway.

Wondering what had brought so many visitors to the house at luncheon time, she slipped into the hall, using the latchkey which T. Q. had presented her.

There was a babble of voices from the drawing room, and as Billy was about to ascend the stairs, her violin case in hand, Winnie darted out into the hall and hailed her excitedly.

"We've been waiting for you! The reporters and photographers are here, Billy, and they want to write as girls up for the papers. Isn't it thrilling? T. Q. came home from the store to be photographed with us. Don't wait to change. Nyda and I have been arranged separately and with T. Q.—Mr. Curtis—and they want to get you alone, then all of us—Mrs. Meadows, too—for a group picture. Isn't it marvellous? They've been asking the craziest questions—"

T. Q. abandoned the reporter who had been questioning him, and advanced upon Billy, his hands held out deprecatingly, as if asking her forgiveness.

"The newspaper boys got hold of the story somehow, and I thought it was best to give them the whole story frankly, my dear. I hope you don't mind. As a business man, whose prosperity depends, in a measure, upon advertising and the good will of the press, I can't resist to give out news, even of a

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strictly private nature like this. "I see," Billy nodded, dazed. She started to lift the little taupe-colored suede hat from her mop of chestnut curls, but a photographer sprang forward, with upraised hand.

"No, just as you are, Miss Wells, if you don't mind. In coat and hat, with your violin case in your hand. Look this way, please. Now—smile just a little."

Another photographer joined the first, fussed busily with notes and the black shroud over a big camera box on a tripod.

"There! That's fine! Head a little more to the left! Now steady!" Nyda sauntered up, and Billy was amazed to see her in the black lace evening gown, the great red rose swaying on her undulating hips. Then she realized that Winnie too was "dressed up" in a new turquoise blue chiffon, twinkling with rhinestones.

"I'll look queer in the group picture, dressed as I am." She opened her moleskin coat and surveyed her old brown velveteen frock with dismayed blue eyes.

"Run up and slip into that darling autumn leaf dress you wore at the party," Mrs. Meadows rustled forward, majestic in black velvet evening dress. "I am sure we can wait five more minutes."

When Billy returned, the group was quickly formed. T. Q. standing proudly in the center, flanked on one side by Mrs. Meadows and Billy, on the other by Nyda and Winnie.

When several plates had been used on the group picture, three reporters hove down on Billy, with

a barrage of questions. "How does it feel to be a Cinderella girl?" "What is your opinion of Mr. Curtis' novel philanthropy?" "What do you intend to do with your year of opportunity?"

And because T. Q. stood near, she answered as she knew he would want her to answer.

Before the photographers had folded up their tripods and their cameras, Dal Romaine appeared, unannounced, as if he were expected by his aunt. He drew back when he became aware of the reporters and photographers, and was bowing himself hastily from the room when Mrs. Meadows summoned him to her side.

"This is my nephew, young men, Mr. Dalhart Romaine, of New York and Paris." Mrs. Meadows laid a hand proudly, possessively upon the slim shoulder in a perfectly tailored morning coat.

"I'd like a picture of you and Mr. Romaine together, Mrs. Meadows, for the society page Sunday." A reporter seized his opportunity, and beckoned to a cameraman.

"No, really," Romaine protested courteously. "I never pose for pictures. You'll excuse me?" He included reporters, girls and T. Q. Curtis in a hasty bow, paid honor to his aunt with a bow for her only, and retreated with what, in a less graceful man, would have been ludicrous haste.

But Billy saw nothing funny in the situation. When his eyes had flashed upon her for a second as he made his bow, she saw something like terror in their smoldering, black depths. And the smooth, rich brown of his cheeks was shaded paler when he left the room than when he had entered it.

Dal Romaine was afraid, she told herself wonderingly, but the words hardly registered in her brain. She felt numb, dazed, then the terror she had caught in his eyes struck like a needle-sharp icicle into her own heart. She, too, was afraid, afraid of herself, afraid of Romaine—afraid, afraid.

She, the staunch, independent little spinster, as T. Q. had named her, was afraid of something which she could not name, but which made her whole body cold and rigid.

She wanted to run, to run and run until she could fling herself in her mother's arms, safe from all these swift currents that were bearing her away from all that she had known, away from her very self. She would tell T. Q. what Navratil had said, then run away.

(To be continued)



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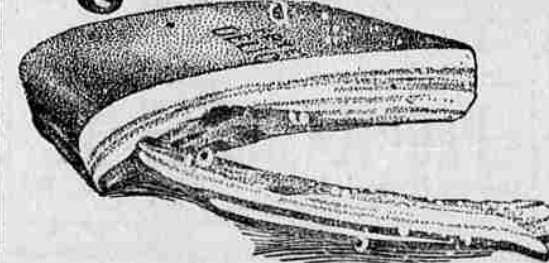
MARSHFIELD, April 29—All save three of the 25 acres on Coos river have been signed for in the broccoli endeavor being promoted by J. C. Kendall to determine whether or not this crop can be profitably grown in this locale. The earth is still too wet for plowing, but the plants for the field are being grown in Roseburg and the

plowing will be started within a short time.

COMPLAINT FILED

COQUILLE, April 29—W. W. Wallace of Roseburg was charged with fishing in upper Rock Creek, a closed stream, in a complaint filed by State Deputy Fish and Game Warden A. M. Fish in the justice court yesterday. Wallace was arrested Sunday.

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