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GLOVERDALE MERCANTILE CO GLOVERDALE, OREGON

HIS FIANCEE

Continued from first page

"And now," he said, releasing her, "where is baby?—I must see her at once."

"You forget that baby is no longer baby; she is a schoolgirl."

"Where is she?"

"Why, she is at school."

"At school! Not here to welcome her papa? But she will return presently?"

"She is at a boarding school some distance from here." This was said falteringly as a falsehood would be spoken.

"Surely you are deceiving me. It cannot be that!"

"Clara is well; nothing has happened to her."

"Clara?"

"Of course. Have you forgotten that her name and mine are the same?"

"Oh! I have always been accustomed to think of her as 'baby.' For my life I cannot understand how you can have preserved your youth. Are you sure that no rouge?"

"Not a particle."

"Surely by this time you should have a few faint lines around your eyes. I see no trace of age whatsoever. Your lips are as red as they were when I last kissed them."

And he kissed them again.

"But why," he continued, "do you welcome me in this dim light?"

"Perhaps when you see me in a brighter one you may see what age has done for me."

As she spoke lights were turned on from another part of the house, and a woman entered the drawing room

whom Edgerton did not remember to have seen before.

"My mother," said Clara Pomeroy.

"Happy to meet you, madam," said Edgerton, bowing. Then, turning to Clara: "Your mother! Why, I supposed your mother!"

"Hugh!" said the lady who had entered.

Edgerton started. He looked again at Clara's mother, and there came to him a feeling that he had made a grave mistake. He turned from her to the daughter. Under the brighter light he saw that she could not be more than twenty. Turning again to the mother, he recognized his fiancée of sixteen years ago turned into a woman who, though not quite forty, looked at least fifty. Her hair was white, her skin was wrinkled, her neck under her chin was shriveled.

"I am Clara," she said, "and that is 'Baby.' When you went away I did not believe that on your return I would be a fit age for you. I look older than I am, but no man of your age should be tied to a woman of mine. Clara so nearly resembled me as I was when you left us that I was tempted to put her forward as myself. The result has been as I expected. In me you looked for the youthful person you left sixteen years ago. You have found an old woman. You supposed that in Clara you would find a little girl. You have found her what I was when you parted from me."

Edgerton listened to this speech with a countenance which, despite his efforts, betrayed that it described the situation. At its conclusion he began to stammer objections, but the lady took his hand, pressed it warmly and laid



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it in that of her daughter.

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Edgerton married Clara Pomeroy, but she was of a different generation from the love of his extreme youth.

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