

BEGGARS CAN CHOOSE

by Margaret Weymouth Jackson

WNU Service

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THE STORY

Renewing a childhood attachment, Ernestine Briceand, of a wealthy family, is attracted by Will Todd, newspaper artist.

CHAPTER I—Continued

He looked down at her, the light from the drawing room window streaming on to his face, and Ernestine paused, surprised. She was filled with an inward dismay for she had never seen him like this. His face, usually complacent, was keen now, his blue eyes were brilliant sparks, his whole countenance quickened and fired. His voice, when he spoke again, had a barely perceptible quaver.

"Why were you running, Ernestine? You're still a kid half the time. When I heard you running, I knew it was you, because my heart began to run, too."

"Nonsense," said Ernestine briskly, but he was persistent.

"I was just going away, disappointed that I hadn't seen you, and here I have you alone for a moment at last. I've been waiting to tell you how beautiful you are, since you're grown. Where have you been? Your face is shining. I could see it luminous in the dark street. Ernestine—don't be silly. I'm trying to tell you I care for you—I—"

She pulled away from him with determination.

"You're the silly one," she said impatiently. "And dumb, as well." She passed him quickly, and closed the door behind her, shutting out his handsome, desirous face.

In her room, dressing for dinner, she was furious with him for intruding on the enchantment of her hour with Will. Didn't he know that she had made herself conspicuous, all last year, with his attentions to Lillian? He was not her lover. What was the matter with him?

Lillian came in from her room, which adjoined Ernestine's, and the younger sister looked at the elder one with old but ever-fresh admiration.

"Loring was kidding me," she told herself. "Of course he's crazy about Lillian."

Lillian was ash blond, and very lovely. Her eyes were a kind of deep violet, serene, calm eyes, and her lips were thin and bright red, beautifully cut. Her nose was patrician, her skin a clear milky white, and she wore just enough rouge to give her a faint rose color and make her eyes more lovely. The two girls plunged at once into the conversation of sisters, without beginning or end.

"I've been to the matinee with Sadie and Juel. Sadie's seen Delancey's show ten times. She's as crazy as she can be. Imagine falling in love with an actor. She's written him letters and letters. But he won't see her."

"She is kind of old for that line," said Ernestine, perched on the edge of her bed, a silk stocking in her hands. "I saw Will Todd today."

"Will Todd? Who is he?"

Ernestine reminded her, and Lillian admitted that she remembered.

"He's charming," Ernestine said. "I thought I'd ask mamma to invite

"Well," said Ernestine, "what of it? You can't marry unless you're asked. I can be friends with Will without marrying him, can't I?"

"I doubt it," said Lillian calmly. "You always go to such extremes, Ernestine. You are always blundering around, taking such awful chances and making wild friends. You've been spoiled and have had your way about lots of things. But this is one thing you can't have."

Ernestine pook-pooked Lillian, but felt at the same time that she would say nothing about Will just now.

"Beth's going to be married. She's going to marry Johnnie Allison."

"I'm not surprised, are you?" asked Ernestine, thinking of Will's gestures—the way he moved his hands continually.

"No, I'm not surprised. It's just what she wanted. One ought to know what one wants. I do. We talked about it today."

"I can tell you what you want without talking to you about it," said Ernestine with sisterly decision. "You want a house in Hubbard Woods, or else one of those big co-operatively owned apartments on the drive, near downtown. And you want a limousine, and a rich handsome husband. You've got it all planned out."

"In detail," agreed Lillian, unperturbed. "Pretty much as you named it. I want Loring, for myself."

"Why don't you ask him?" exploded Ernestine, her feelings a confusion of resentment that Lillian had showed her the fallacy of her own dream, of hurt for her sister, that Loring should have been such a fool, of scorn for these plotters.

"I probably won't need to," Lillian answered, and went on, before Ernestine could interrupt her again: "If not Loring, then somebody much like him. I merely mentioned him as an example. After I've been married a few years, I want a son, and if I get along nicely, I wouldn't mind a daughter. I want everything right. A man who is already a member of good clubs, so that the money he makes will take us in the right direction, and we won't have to stand and wait. All right, go on and boot. I know what I want, anyhow, and that's more than you know."

She looked at Ernestine with some severity, and added darkly: "What's more, I'll get it. Watch me."

Ernestine could see Lillian as she had planned it all out. A correct house, a correct husband, perhaps even a correct boy or two. The same old business over and over, with correct people coming and going and Loring stalking handsomely about.

Not for her. She knew what she wanted. She wanted love! She wanted something not mentioned on Lillian's list. She wanted passionate, romantic love. She wanted adventure, an inevitable great adventure.

Suddenly she stood trembling, her heart beating with great strong strokes. She was terrified with the intensity of her feeling, with the vivid, almost material picture of Will Todd's violent personality before her. One person, one in all the world, and never anybody else. She wanted love, and all her wakening instincts warned her that she had found it.

CHAPTER II

The Lady Promises

Again and again Ernestine resolved to tell mamma all about Will, but again and again her confidences faltered before mamma's bright energy, before mamma's staccato bossiness. It was really her first secret from her family, and she did not feel right about it. Of course she was old enough to have a friend if she wanted one, a friend of her own choosing, but Lillian's attitude that she was having an "affair," a romance on the side, purely for the thrill of it, dismayed her. Yet she couldn't tell mamma, and an incident occurred which sealed her silence.

She had called Will on the telephone the next morning after her encounter with him on the street, and that had been the beginning of an absorbing intimacy. He worked in the afternoon and at night six days a week. He had nothing better to do with his forenoon and his luncheon hour than share them with Ernestine. But the very time of these engagements made Ernestine safe from curiosity. It was a time of day exclusively the property of women in mamma's world. It would never have occurred to mamma that a love affair could have proceeded during a succession of forenoons.

And a love affair was what it rapidly became. Ernestine could not prolong the time with Will enough to suit her, and his eagerness soon matched, then outdrew, her own. His enthusiasm, his energy were compelling, and Ernestine felt the rousing and stirring of her own personality in touch with his. Within a week she was desperately in love. She had no room for any thought and feeling but those which concerned Will Todd. Presently she realized that the termination of their friendship would be a true catastrophe, and with this realization she began to practice secrecy with skill and determination.

One blowy, gusty Sunday morning in December she had escaped church and met him and talked, hand in hand, as they always talked, quickly, starvedly.

Eventually a little silence fell between them, and in its magic, without speaking a word, they turned and kissed each other, and smiled a little dimly and leaned together. The touch of lips, and then the pressure of cheek to cheek was magic. His arms slipped about her, and for a long, long time they sat in a swing of joy.

There was no word spoken, no promise, but Ernestine knew now that she must tell mamma. The family was home from church when she reached the house, sitting in the big living room, all of them engrossed in gossip. Mamma looked at Ernestine sharply.

"Why didn't you come to church?" "I went for a walk," evaded Ernestine, and her face flamed with color, for they all looked at her, and she felt that Will's love-making was visible upon her. Mamma said no more, however, and Lillian turned to her with the news.

"You remember I told you Sadie Hall was in love with the actor, Lon Delancey?" Ernestine nodded, and Lillian said with some satisfaction, "Well, she finally succeeded in meeting him, and they were married last night. Every one was talking about it in church this morning."

"Well, what of it?" said Ernestine. "She can marry him, can't she?"

"Ernestine!" said her father sternly. "You know it isn't suitable." He was a big man, a little too stout, with a handsome florid face. His brown eyes were warm and kind, but his big nose was acquisitive, his mouth stern and hard, a man of brilliant mind, but limited by prejudices.

"It is her money he wants," said papa, "and nothing else. The girl's a fool, and was not brought up properly, or she would never have done such a thing."

Loring put in his oar. He was always there on Sundays, thought Ernestine, who was tired of having him around.

"Any man who urges a girl to keep her love affair a secret from her folks is a blackguard, and a girl may as well realize it first as last. No real man would do such a thing. He would be honorable." He looked at her when he said it, with such meaning that Ernestine felt a faint dismay.

"But how ridiculous," she exclaimed. "You all know, every one of you, that if she had told her folks of her infatuation, they would have carried her off to Europe, or had him forced out of town. They would have separated them instantly."

"But that's why she ought to tell her people," said papa. "No girl can trust her own judgment, when she gets out of her own class. Her people know best, and she should confide in them."

All this while mamma had been watching Ernestine. Mamma was so pretty, with her violet eyes, and smooth fair hair, and her slender vigorous body. But mamma was sharp.

"Neither of my girls would do such a thing," she said now in her soft quick voice, but with a meaning that Ernestine and Lillian both sensed. "I am sure that neither of my little girls would do such a thing to me—have a secret love affair. Would either of you?"

"Don't be nutty, mamma," advised Lillian, and Ernestine was silent.

Later, alone, Lillian turned to Ernestine eagerly.

"You'd better come across. I think the folks are on to you."

"You haven't told them?"

"Of course not," said Lillian impatiently. "It's your own business. But, Ernestine, you aren't really going to fall in love with him, are you? Papa would be furious."

Ernestine shook the bright tears from her eyes and smiled at Lillian. After a moment, Lillian went on uncertainly.

"Loring saw you yesterday morning. He asked me who the young man was, and I told him, but asked him not to mention it. Still he may tell. He's awfully fond of you, Ernestine. He's always telling me that you are just like a little sister to him. He might feel it his duty to tell papa about you and Will."

"But there's nothing about Will that anybody could object to," protested Ernestine. "I'm not engaged to him, but if I should become engaged, I don't see who could care. He's fine and good and gentle. He's brave, too, a real man."

Lillian shook her head.

"It's your funeral," she said, with the heartless laissez-faire of her generation, which feared, above all things, that it might become its brother's keeper. "But you know just how papa would react to Will Todd. He's the son of papa's old carpenter. He's poor, and he hasn't been to school, and he's not very strong—there's nothing but objections to such an idea. Ernestine. Anyhow, I can't see why you could tell yourself even think of such a thing as getting engaged. Imagine taking a chance like that!"

Will said nothing about marriage. He was full of talk, overflowing with

his own vitality, enraptured with Ernestine's beauty and dearness. One day, however, when they had gone for their usual walk north along the lake shore, he seemed oddly silent and thoughtful, and at times he looked at her, as though wondering whether to speak his mind or not. When he left her, he kissed her again and again, and said oddly, "Remember me," as though it were farewell.

"I'll see you tomorrow," she whispered to him, and turned her fur collar up against the wind.

But she did not see him the next day, although she waited at their rendezvous for an hour past the time. Nor the next day. By the third day she was filled with deep dismay and fear. All sorts of questions whirled through her mind. Perhaps he had tired of her. It might be that the affair had run out for him, that he had never intended to make more than a sweetheart out of her.

But she had only to think of his bright honorable face to know that there was some other reason behind his attitude. She had only to think of his eager kisses to know that he cared. She called him on the telephone at his home, at ten o'clock. His mother answered and said, in a low voice, that he was sleeping.

"Would you wake him. It's important," she said, and stood shaking in the telephone booth, until she heard his voice, husky with sleep.

"This is Ernestine," she said, trembling.

At once there was an electric silence, and then he said, in a voice now thoroughly awake:

"Well?"

She could have cried. "What's the matter, Will? Aren't you going to see me again?"

"Where are you?"

"I'm at the drug store, at Wilson and Sheridan."

"I'll be there within an hour," he told her.

He had not had breakfast, he said, shaking hands with her formally when they met. They went into a little white tiled coffee shop, and he ordered his breakfast and sat opposite her in silent waiting. He looked terrible. His face, often white, was ravaged, and his eyes burned. But he was calm. He had reached some decision, and Ernestine knew that the initiative rested on her.

"What's the matter, Will?" she asked him, trembling again, and hating herself for it. It was awful to be such a slave.

"Your mother phoned me yesterday."

"Mamma!"

"Sure—she asked me to come there to tea this afternoon. I told her I had to work. Didn't you know she was going to ask me? I thought perhaps you told her to invite me," said Will.

A little light dawned in Ernestine's mind.

"Is that the trouble?" she asked. "Do you think I ought to have invited you to my home?"

"Well," he said slowly, "why shouldn't you—unless you were ashamed of me?"

How could she explain without wounding him?

"But you see, Will—it has nothing to do with being ashamed. My first thought was to tell the folks, but then, it seemed they might disapprove of our friendship, and I want to keep it. And then—"

"But don't you see, Ernestine, I can't meet you any more, like this—out on the street, and in the library, and in restaurants and tearooms? I can't do that to your parents. If they don't want you to go with me, I can't coax you to do it—clandestinely."

Unidentified

Buddy has two older brothers, and, of course, picks up many of their choice expressions. The other day his three-year-old remarked: "Mamma, you're a big fool!" "Indeed, I'm not," replied his mother, and promptly spanked him. "Then daddy's a big fool," insisted the youngster. "No he's not," returned his mother, and spanked him again. Then through his tears Buddy had his final say-so: "Well, somebody's a big fool."

"Your mother's been telling you all this."

"Yes," he said. "I confided in her. She showed me how it looks."

"Well, then, that's all there is to it. You aren't willing to make the effort to be friends that I am. You don't understand how they'd be. They'd be so nice and so reasonable—and they'd separate us. Just as sure as fate. You don't know them as I do. It wouldn't be your character they'd object to, or your folks. It would be your position and your lack of money and such things. Anyhow, it seems to be a little late to—to—" she faltered into silence.

Will looked at her with agitation. "What do you mean—it's late, Ernestine?" he demanded.

But she could only look at him. If he did not understand, she could not explain.

"You mean—you care?" he asked a little breathlessly, and she smiled tremulously.

"What did you think?" she asked him.

"I didn't think, I guess," he said. "I never meant to make you love me—it was so natural. I shouldn't have touched you."

"But you did, Will."

"Let's go," he said, and paid the bill.

They walked out, swept now into a unity which had been increased, not broken, by their talk. They walked a

half mile or so and came to a deserted beach, where they sat down side by side upon an upturned row-boat.

"You see, Ernestine," he told her solemnly, "we just kind of jumped into it all. But it's real with me. It's love—and marriage, with me. I never thought much about such things—just took you at what you were willing to give. Everybody has dates out around town, and I didn't want to go to your house especially, nor think about that. And then, we got to earning—and as soon as I began to think about you as my wife, I began to think about all these other things: your money, your family position, and the damned Broadway pride that I know more about than you do. And then, I wondered why you never took me home. And finally I talked to my mother. And I made up my mind to quit."

"Without even giving me a chance?" she asked him.

She was in his arms now, and he said to her:

"Will you marry me, Ernestine?"

"Of course. Today, if you like."

"You'll have to tell your folks first," he insisted.

"Oh, Will," she cried. "Don't stand with them against me. They'll separate us. Why do you suppose they asked you to the house today, if not to find out about you and how intimate our friendship had become, and to begin the business of breaking it up? I know." She told him what papa said about Sadie Hall and the actor Delancey. His arms grew slack about her. He sat a little away, now distraught, silent.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Monarch and Minister Both Soldiers at Heart

I have said that Louis was military; from the childhood when he ranged little toy silver regiments and triumphed through organization. He could not ever have handled great numbers of men.

Richelieu had all those qualities. But both men differing so vastly in the degree of their military talent, were military to the core, and there is found the true point of contact between them.—From "Richelieu," by Hilaire Belloc.

Not as Bad as It Sounds

If you heard a West Point cadet say casually, "I saw a beast come out of the hoodler's with his drag, all spone-up, and start on a P. S. with a skin in his face," it would mean simply this: "A young cadet, leaving the end restaurant with the girl he is to take to a hop."

You must understand that the girl is adequately torqued out for the dance, and that the cadet, smoking a cigarette, was taking her for a stroll before starting for the hop. A "hop" is a dance, of course.

Country Boy's Advantage

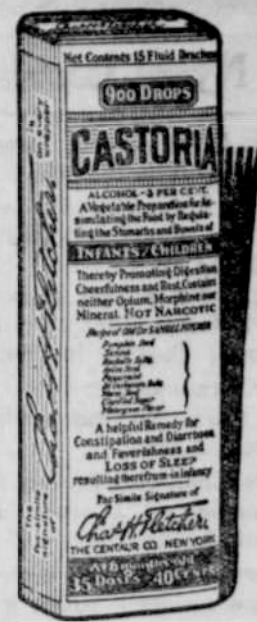
Insurance statistics show that the life expectancy of a boy who lives in the country is seven years greater than that of the city boy.

When Babies CRY

Babies will cry, often for no apparent reason. You may not know what's wrong, but you can always give Castoria. This soon has your little one comforted; if not, you should call a doctor. Don't experiment with medicines intended for the stronger systems of adults! Most of those little upsets are soon soothed away by a little of this pleasant-tasting, gentle-acting children's remedy that children like.

It may be the stomach, or may be the little bowels. Or in the case of older children, a sluggish, constipated condition. Castoria is still

the thing to give. It is almost certain to clear up any minor ailment, and could by no possibility do the youngest child the slightest harm. So it's the first thing to think of when a child has a coated tongue; won't play, can't sleep, is fretful or out of sorts. Get the genuine; it always has Chas. H. Fletcher's signature on the package.



Jap Astronomers Proud of Great Observatory

The largest astronomical observatory in the Far East, and one which is surpassed only by observatories in Germany and the United States, has just been completed in Sanaka, a small suburb of Tokyo. The total cost of the work is put at \$200,000. The length of the telescope is 11 meters and the diameter of the lens 23 inches. Work on the building to house this and many other scientific instruments which are included in the observatory equipment has been going on for more than three years under the direction of Doctor Hashimoto, a noted specialist in astronomical instruments. "At last the time has come when Japanese astronomers can work freely," the doctor said after the observatory had been opened. "Although we have had the will to go more deeply into astronomical lines in this country, we have been unable to do so because of lack of equipment. The situation was tantamount to being at war without weapons. We shall now be able to engage in friendly rivalry with our brother astronomers in all parts of the world."

Sports by Television Near

Football, baseball, cricket and other games may be projected by television, according to Sir Ambrose Fleming, inventor of the Fleming valve. In a recent address before the physical society in London he said this could be accomplished by the use of mirrors. Operators could employ a large mirror in throwing a small and very brilliant scene on a scanning disk. Behind this mirror could be placed a photo-electric cell, which would have projected on it a brilliant image spot by spot, as the scanning disk rotated. For this to be successful it would be necessary to make the photo-electric cell much more sensitive than those at present in use.

Sundial Made of Cement

One of the suburbs of San Francisco has undertaken to attract some attention to itself by erecting the largest sundial ever made. It is made of concrete and its top is high above the heads of the spectators and its shadow is cast upon the ground which is marked off for the purpose of indicating the time. The inclined surface of the dial is often irreverently used by children for the purpose of a kelly slide.

Blundering Fool

"My husband is forty. You wouldn't believe it, but there is ten years difference in our ages."

"Impossible! I'm sure you look quite as young as he does."—London Tit-Bits.

COULD HARDLY DO HER WORK

Strengthened by Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound

Mission, Tex.—"I have used a good deal of my medicine and always find it gives wonderful help. I was feeling so weak and miserable that I had to lie down very often and I could hardly do my housework. I read in the paper how Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound had helped other women who were

in the same condition so I said I will try it for myself. I am very much better now and I recommend this medicine, and will answer letters from women asking about it."—Mrs. J. W. ALBERTSON, 1015 Miller Avenue, Mission, Texas.

Real Living Rooms

The beds have been taken out of the American living room. "Living room" now means something in our lives.—Woman's Home Companion.

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Nature's warning—help nature clear your complexion and you'll find roses in your pale, yellow cheeks. Truly wonderful results follow thorough skin cleansing. Take NATURE'S REMEDY—to regulate and strengthen your eliminative organs. Watch the transformation. Try N.R. instead of more lotions. N.R. is pure vegetable—no drugs, only 25¢.

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Spray clean smelling

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Talcum 25c. Ointment 25c. Soap 25c.

Prepared by: Potter Drug & Chemical Corporation, Malden, Massachusetts



"Why Were You Running, Ernestine?"

him here for tea some afternoon, or for dinner, some night when he doesn't work."

Lillian stared, then laughed. "I want to see him again, if you want an affair with him, don't tell mamma," she advised Ernestine, "or that will be the end of it. A little lame boy about the house one summer is quite a different matter from an attractive grown man. Mamma will make him miserable."

Ernestine considered this. "I don't see why," she said stubbornly. "Certainly you see, darling," said Lillian. "We are not to have any irregular affairs now. We are to marry."