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**PHILLIPS Milk of Magnesia**

W. N. U., Portland, No. 29-1930.

# Beggars Can Choose

Margaret Weymouth Jackson

WNU Service

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## THE STORY

Renewing a childhood attachment, Ernestine Briceland, of a wealthy family, is attracted by Will Todd, newspaper artist. Her sister, Lillian, urges her to break off the affair, but Ernestine refuses. The love-making progresses rapidly and Ernestine consents to marry Will.

## CHAPTER II—Continued

"They'll think I've persuaded you. They'll think I want the money, that I'm seeking for myself," she protested. "If I thought you could live on what I make—but you don't know anything about money. You don't know how hard it is for two people—living on twenty-five dollars a week. I don't know what to do, but I want to do what's right."

He looked most forlorn sitting there, thinking, pondering, trying to contemplate a future without her, trying to reconcile his own pride and self-esteem with the position her family put him into.

"I should never have kissed you," he exclaimed. "I should never have loved you."

"Will," said Ernestine tenderly, "you couldn't help that." For now his sad confusion had caught her in the grip of her first passion. Now she lived in terrible fulfillment the promise her throbbing heart had made weeks ago, when she had talked to Lillian about marriage. Her heart leaped in her like a thing threatened with mortal danger. She flung herself upon him precipitously, her arms strained round his neck. He caught her and held her close. All his being flared up in answer to her own emotion, and his lips sprang to hers in a kiss that was as new to them as though they had never touched each other before. It was a promise.

"Take me today, Will," she cried, and tears streamed down her face. "Now, quickly, before anybody can say a word to us, before they can be reasonable and reassuring and competent about us. Take me and hold me, now, quickly and secretly. I promise you I'll live on what you earn. I promise I'll take my chance with you—completely. I'll never let them have reason to say that you wanted anything but me. (Whatever you have in all I'll have, Will. I promise—")

She was crying wildly. He was shaking, as she was, but he laughed a little, and wiped her cheeks with his own clean handkerchief. "The lady promises, Judge," he said, and kissed her and laughed at her and teased her. "The lady promises never to sue me for more than a million a year alimony. The lady promises—"

He picked her up and set her on her feet. "Come on, then—let's do it now," he cried, and seized her wrist and ran, pulling her along.

It was almost evening when Will and Ernestine came to the Briceland house. In the downstairs drawing room the lamps glowed softly. She had telephoned mamma that she was in town for lunch and would come out with Will at five. Beyond Lillian, Ernestine could see Loring's square shoulders.

They ran up the steps, hand in hand, and at the door Will gave her a reassuring hug and kissed her cheek.

"Let me do the talking," he whispered, and they went on into the hall and ran into the drawing and living room. Ernestine was aware at once that the swift kiss Will had imprudently on her cheek had been seen, for papa was flushed and hostile, and mamma looked at her in pale reproach.

"Mamma," said Ernestine, "do you remember Will Todd?"

Mamma gave Will her hand, and he moved awkwardly forward, looking shabby and ill at ease beside the magnificence and self-possession of papa and Loring.

"We've just been talking about you," mamma said to Will. "I didn't know until yesterday that you were such friends with my little girl. I'm sorry you haven't been here sooner."

Will murmured something, and Ernestine introduced him to her grand-mother, who looked at him severely and gave a slight snort of recognition, and then Lillian came and offered him her hand and said she remembered him. The two men straddling the hearth acknowledged the introduction with silent handshakes. Mamma asked Will to sit down and rang for tea. Ernestine, full of gulls, sat down close beside him and turned to speak to mamma.

The conversation moved haltingly as they waited for tea. Papa, somewhat maliciously, asked Will about his father.

"He's well," Will answered in a calm natural voice. "But my mother has been almost an invalid for a year now. We feel very anxious about her."

"We are sorry to learn that," said mamma, and then went on quickly: "What have you two children been doing all day?"

There was a dramatic pause, but Ernestine took it up quickly. "Mamma, you forget that I am twenty now."

They laughed politely. The tea saxon came, mamma poured tea for them all, and they talked of things about which Will knew nothing. Ernestine could see how they were making him feel like an outsider. Sit-

ting in the deep chair, his long legs drawn up before him, Will was not so disturbing. Her heart was full of tender loyalty.

"You have changed a great deal," mamma said to Will. "You used to be a shy little boy."

"I don't feel very shy today," he told her, and smiled at Ernestine. His bright black eyes, like shiny bits of anthracite, under his white, domelike forehead, were beautiful, but Ernestine knew that the others could see nothing but his queer clothes.

"Tell them, Will," she said at last, putting down her cup and taking his from him.

They all stopped, and turned startled faces toward the two. Will squared himself and turned first to mamma.

"We've gone and done it," he said, smiling.

"Gone and done what?" asked mamma sharply, and her pallor startled them all.

"We've gone and got married—to-day."

"Married! Who?"

It was papa's voice, harsh, protesting.

"Ernestine and I," answered Will steadily, and Loring said, "Married!"

In a hoarse, incredulous tone, and Ernestine, looking up, saw his face, as pale as mamma's, and as startled, with deep chagrin and consternation written on it. But none of the others noticed him.

"You see," said Ernestine gently, "we were engaged anyhow, and when mamma invited Will to tea, today, I thought we might just as well make it an announcement party."

"You thought!"

"Certainly, papa. It was my idea."

"Not at all," said Will quickly. "But anyhow, we are married. I know this strikes you suddenly, sir, but we just decided in haste, and as we want nothing but your blessing—"

"Be still!" exclaimed papa passionately, and he turned to Ernestine. "Where were you married? By whom?"

Will took the conversation into his own hands with deliberation.

"We went to town about noon, went to the courthouse and got our license, then to a jeweler and bought the ring and waited while it was engraved."

Ernestine held up her slim hand, and showed the astonishing gold band on her third finger. "Then we took a taxi out to my mother's house, got her and went to the church I was reared in, in Avondale, and were married."

"But why this mad haste?" spluttered papa, who was almost incoherent. "Ernestine," turning to his daughter, in renewed determination to have nothing to do with Will, "what's got into you? I am sure you have been under some dreadful influence. I can't understand how you could act this way. I can't believe it."

He was furious, he was undone, but he still had a note of command in his voice. Ernestine felt his strength with terror.

"Papa—" she began, but Will cut in resolutely, so that in spite of papa's determination to talk to Ernestine the situation narrowed itself constantly to papa and Will.

"Ernestine was afraid, sir, that you might try to separate us. My own instinct in the matter was that we should talk this over with you, but I see, now, that she was right. You must understand, sir, that we are married, and your objections are futile."

"Ernestine had reason to fear me," papa said in a voice none of them had ever heard from him before. Ernestine felt herself shiver under it. Papa had no intention of considering himself futile.

"She had reason to fear me, and so had you. I suspect your fear was more important than her own. Even if she were a fool, you might have been decent about it. I have no intention whatever of letting her go away from here with you. You'll learn, sir, that there are such things as annulments, even as divorce. Just because she has made one foolish mistake, is no reason why I should let her ruin her whole life. You have behaved very badly, but your behavior ends here and now. Ernestine stays here. You may go, and I will deal with you outside the house."

Ernestine felt that everything was lost, but Will only laughed. If papa were new and strange, so was her young husband, for he seemed to glow, to fill out, to be bigger and stronger.

"Don't be silly," he said. "Ernestine is of age. She married me of her own free will, and if you tried any such stunts, she would say so. Our marriage is entirely legal. It stands before everything else. She is now my wife, and my home is her home, and you can't detain her."

"We'll see," said papa grimly, and then mamma broke in.

"You shouldn't have, Ernestine. You shouldn't have run off and got married, without telling mamma. It's the biggest, the most important thing in your life—and to take such a step without your people knowing it! I can't bear to think you'd go off and be married—and not tell me."

"I'm sorry, mamma," said Ernestine in distress, and papa took things up again. He had made a decision.

"Go to your room, Ernestine," he said in a voice of stern command, "and stay there until I can talk to you."

you. If you ladies will excuse us, we will settle this among ourselves. Do you hear me?" he said sharply, turning his furious eyes upon Ernestine. She faltered, half turned to go in automatic command, for papa had always ruled his home, without much effort, but Will put his hand on her arm.

"Stay here, Ernestine," he said in a low voice, and she paused, undecided, while mamma and Lillian seemed to be grouped together on the other side of the room.

"I can understand your distress, sir," said Will. "I can see just how you feel about this, not knowing me at all and not understanding my motives. But you exceed your authority. If you should detain Ernestine here by force, I have only to go out and get the nearest policeman and come back for her. You can't do it."

There was a moment of incredulous silence, and papa half turned to Loring, in appeal, and Loring said in a low tone, "He's right."

Will followed this advantage swiftly. "After all, what have you against me, except you think I may want Ernestine's money? We have decided



Of Course Papa Was Helpless, and He Said So With a Shrug.

to do without that. I'm not a stranger to you. You've known my father for thirty years. You know my people, that they are honorable and decent. There's no reason at all why I shouldn't make my marriage I choose, even with Ernestine. I'm working. I can take care of her."

Papa raised his clenched fist above his head, as though he would strike Will, and Ernestine made a little moan and mamma screamed. But Loring put his hand on papa's arm, and drew him back. And in that moment Lillian went to Ernestine and put her arms around her and kissed her.

"Oh, Lill!" Ernestine cried, and burst into terrible tears. "Papa, papa," she cried, turning from Lillian to her father, and holding out her hands, "don't quarrel with us. I can't bear it. I love Will. I wanted to marry him. Let us go ahead with our own married life, now, but don't quarrel with us."

"It's you who have broken faith," said papa. "Not your mother and I. You've put this stranger before us. You can't have both."

Ernestine was appalled. "You mean that I can't come home?" Papa attained a grim smile.

"That's what I mean," he said, but now mamma broke in hysterically. "I won't be separated from Ernestine. I won't permit it," she cried, and went to her younger daughter and took her in her arms. "Darling, you can come home as long as mamma lives here. I will see you every day. It's dreadful. It's hard on all of us, and it will be terrible for you. But mamma will not let her little girl go away like this."

"Elaine!" said papa, but she turned to him, as full of anger as he.

"The child is married," she exclaimed. "She may have made a mistake, but if she has, it is only a reason for standing by her. This is my home, as well as yours. I won't be instructed to let my little girl go out friendless. You may do what you like with me, and send me away, too, if you can, but I am going to see Ernestine. I am going to have her here."

Of course papa was helpless, and he said so with a shrug.

"Mamma," said Ernestine, "I am willing to take the responsibility for my marriage. After all, it's I who married Will."

"Not you alone," said mamma vigorously. "The whole family has married him, and we may as well realize it. For nobody marries just one of the Bricelands. We are all going to stand together, always. Papa, we all have to make the best of it. The marriage will have to stand."

Papa would not look at her, nor answer.

"We'll have to go," said Will, and embraced her. "I'll see you soon."

"Goodbye, papa," Ernestine faltered, but papa held his stubborn attitude. "I'll have to go upstairs and get some things," murmured Ernestine, as they went into the hall.

Lillian went upstairs with Ernestine. Mamma came out and put her hand on Will's arm.

"Be good to her," she implored.

"If you can't take care of her, if she's not happy, let her come back."

"I will, Mrs. Briceland," he said soberly. "I appreciate what you have done."

Mamma wept afresh. "It is hard for her father. He worships her. You must understand him. It is a terrible blow to him. He will come around."

The girls came down the stairs, and after a moment Ernestine and Will were out in the dark street again, with her small dressing case in Will's hands. The family stood about in the living room in stricken silence.

The silence lasted for some moments, then Mrs. Briceland turned to her husband.

"You should never have let her go off like that," she said reproachfully. "What will she do?"

"I had no intention of letting her go, if you hadn't interfered," he exclaimed. "I was only threatening her with the loss of the family, in order to get her to stay here—to gain a little time."

"She wouldn't have done it," said Lillian. "She's too crazy about him. It probably was her idea that they get married first. She meant it. You couldn't have kept her."

"How much do you suppose he earns, on the Sun?" asked mamma, and Loring answered:

"Probably anywhere from twenty-five to forty dollars a week."

At that papa threw up his hands in a gesture of despair and turned to leave the room, but he looked back at his wife darkly.

"If you had stood by me," he said to her, "if we had all stood together, we could have held her here. You went back on me, both you and Lillian. It gave them courage. Now, you can think of her. God knows where, with that upstart."

He went into the hall, and mamma followed him, her bright persistent voice coming down the stair:

"You shouldn't have let them go. We might have kept them both here, and taken care of them. Lewis, you'll have to make up your mind to give in, and get him a better job—"

The voices trailed off, and an upstairs door closed upon them. Grand-mother went stiffly out of the room, satisfying her need for order by pushing the chairs in place, straightening the pillows and moving the things on the table. Loring stood by the fire, staring into it, his face flushed, one hand opening and closing nervously.

Lillian came and spoke to him in a voice which was already like mamma's.

"I'm sorry you got into this," she said. "It's terrible. How can Ernestine act that way? She's the worst I ever saw. But this is the worst I feel as though she had ruined herself. But you aren't going to be angry with her, are you, Loring?"

"No," he said. "No, I won't be angry with her. Your mother's right. The family must stand by her."

Lillian shuddered a little. "It seems dreadful to me," she said. "Ernestine out somewhere in Chicago, with that man. I don't see how she can be crazy about him in the first place, and how she could have married him in the second."

Loring reached out his hand and ran his fingers down the crepe sleeve of her dress, caught her fingers and held them in his own.

"Would you do that much," he asked wistfully, "if you cared for a man? Would you defy everything for him?"

"I don't know," said Lillian honestly. "I don't know. I want things nice. I want some plan and arrangement to my life."

"But if the man you cared for was not—eligible," he persisted, "would you marry him anyhow?"

"It's not a fair question," protested Lillian, and then added softly: "I don't know what I would do. Because I've cared for only one man, and he has been eligible in every way. So I can't imagine how I would act under other circumstances."

There was a little silence, and then he said, in a stifled voice:

"Is it I, Lillian?" She looked up at him, and his face was full of suffering. Her own was compassionate.

"Did you care for Ernestine, Loring?"

—even our hands. Many people add to the diseases of the mind such other things as gloom, discontent, pessimism, fear.

Bentley, we are always told, is only skin deep. Beauty—real beauty—is soul deep. Once we get the right way of thinking, we shall never look old. London Tit-Bits.

**Curse on Contract Breakers**  
Cases of real-estate purchasers failing to complete the contract under which they bought property were rare in the days of ancient Egypt, Babylon or Assyria, because they dreaded the consequences promised in the contract to the purchaser who would break it. The curse of Ninib, king of heaven and earth; of Shu, the sun god, and of Anubis, the god of the dead, were but few of the afflictions assured the one who waded out of a deal. These things were written into the contract, so that there may be no mistaking the importance of the transaction.

**Grant Word Definer**  
Nath Webster has been called "a born definer of words." Most of the definitions of the 70,000 or more words in the dictionary were created and by Webster.

**Peanut Problem**  
Notwithstanding the enjoyment over her first log of peanuts, Nancy Ford, just past three, was experiencing difficulty in breaking the shells of the monster gopher with her tiny incisors.

"Blaver," she asked, holding up a big peanut, "will you unblaver this thing for me?"

ing?" she asked him, but he shook himself quickly.

"No, no!" he exclaimed. "Not—that way. I'm fond of her. She's been like a little sister to me, always. But it's you I care for. It's you I want for my wife. Is it possible that you care for me, Lillian?"

"I always have," she answered simply, and he stared down at her, and again his voice was queer and strained. "I'm like Ernestine," he said, "what I want is love."

She put up her fair sweet face, and he kissed her placid lips.

"I love you, Loring," she assured him, and he took her roughly into his arms.

"You hurt me," she complained in a moment, and he released her and stood holding her hand gently.

"I want love," he said again with poignancy, and Lillian assured him in her quick bright voice that she loved him.

## CHAPTER III

### Strange Country

It seemed a natural thing to Ernestine, however it seemed to the others, to taken on her marriage morning, in the little back bedroom of the tiny house where the Todds had lived all their married life. She was instantly wide awake and oriented. Perhaps it was the close tangle of Will's arms about her that made everything normal. Perhaps the delicious consciousness of new happiness had never entirely been lost in sleep. It did not matter at all about the family now.

Thinking of everything, Ernestine felt in her heart something new about Will. Added to her romantic love for him was something really more wonderful: a sound thing—respect. He had behaved admirably.

She was filled with a transport of tenderness, a strong conviction of having done well. Now, at last, life had begun for her. The chrysalis of girlhood was broken, and she was emerged into womanhood. She had become real. Always now, Will would be here beside her at the beginning of every day. Gravely she considered this, and sent up a wordless prayer that she might be a good wife.

Some one was moving about in the kitchen, and she heard the rattle of a can in the kitchen grate. How close and small the house was. Each sound came through the thin walls distinctly. Ernestine realized that she would have to close the window, and she essayed to rise. But at the first movement Will's arms tightened about her, though he did not waken. Ernestine extricated herself and got up with a swift strong movement.

"You have to work today, Will," she said in such a wifely tone that he laughed and looked up at her adoringly.

"I suppose now I've got somebody even worse than my mother about making me get up," he said, and then added, "Hey, wait, I'll get you some warm water," for Ernestine was washing her face in the basin that stood on a small washstand near the door.

But the water out of the pitcher, which had stood all night with the cold wind blowing through the open window upon it, was cold and invigorating.

Will shaved in the kitchen, and Ernestine could hear his voice, in an affectionate murmur, talking to some one. Before the small wavy mirror, she applied her make-up, looking at herself sharply. She arranged her sleek soft hair, proud of its thickness and texture. What was there in her face? Was she different this morning? She must not be different. She powdered again, and rubbed some of the scarlet oil of her lips, which were as red as cherries under the lip salve.

She made the bed neatly and set the room in order, packed up her belongings. The smell of coffee and the sound of the percolator made her feel faint. She had eaten nothing the evening before.

In the kitchen, Will's face turned on her, as bright as a triangular mirror with the sun on it. His mother was sitting by the kitchen table, with a warm shawl over her heavy dress. She could be up at times, and this morning she had made the effort. Ernestine went to Will's mother, and kissed her.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

## Defy Passing Years by Right Way of Thinking

But why look old? That, says some one, is all nonsense. But is it? Do you say we are as old as we feel. And that's about the truth of it. Of course, we change as time passes. That must be admitted. Yet the change need not be so rapid a rate.

Even then, we ought to show the change very much less than we do. You know the gentle shock we sometimes get when we run across a person we haven't seen for years. There is a definite, a marked change in him. It depresses us; because our thoughts immediately turn to ourselves.

Many grow old, as we all know, long before their years. The face is a remarkable index to the mind. If there is a lack of faith, or control, sure enough we shall show it in our eyes, our lines, the pulse of our head.

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