

BREEME HOUSE

By Katherine Newlin Burt

"We're going to put a likeness to the test," she called back. "Mr. Tremont you know, swears that I am the reincarnation of Lady Jane. We're going to make Robins referee."

She smiled and went out, all her subdued and silvery charm visibly brightened.

"Is this Jane?" Alec asked himself, with his eyebrows lifted.

Robins held the light high, hovering, his head on one side, his small eyes snuffing Tremont and Lady Jane as they stood before the Van Dyke picture. Jane, having shut out with a finger-frame the disguising costume and old-time dressing of the hair, turned with a startled look to her companion.

"I've seen myself look just exactly so," she said.

Mr. Tremont triumphed. "That's how you looked under the tree down yonder. Don't laugh at me now, will you, for believing in ghosts?"

"What would you have done if Lady Jane had begun systematically to haunt you?"

"It's a curious fact," confessed Tremont, "I've always had a grudging, hurt spot in me somewhere because of this place. It's mine, you know. At least, it might have been mine. I've loved places; land, sage-brush, mountains, forests; but I've never loved any house but this."

"Isn't this the first time you've seen it?" she asked, not having heard the previous conversation in which he had spoken of a former visit.

Again he hesitated before the admission. "No, I was here before—when I was a boy."

"It was you. That boy was you! You've come back to keep your word, to take our Lady Jane."

He stood slack, composed, quietly returning her look. "You've guessed it."

"But," she laughed, it's quite impossible.

"There are some things of which that can be truly said—a very few."

Jane's long neck looked longer than usual. She had an almost deer-like air of startled pride.

"Really, Mr. Tremont, you had better give up the idea. You don't know how my father—how we all—No. It's so perfectly impossible. I'm sorry you spoke of it."

"I'm not," said he, with undisturbed composure; "I'm glad you know. I felt rather like a traitor hitherto. You won't turn me out for coveting the treasure, will you—quiet?"

"No. How absurd! But"—with a sidelong glance—"but please let me forget it; and don't tell papa. It would be such a shock to him, that anyone should even think of it."

"I'm not anyone; there's the difference. Please listen to me. Can you spare me fifteen minutes more? I'd like to tell you about it all. Please. You ought to listen; it is—in an odd way—your story too. At least—" He paused, staring down at the rug, thinking deeply, then looked at her with something stormy and withheld in his deep, far-seeing eyes.

"But you ought to listen," he finished rather lamely.

She was frowning slightly, and her cheeks were flushed. "I'd rather not. Not now. I'm not rude; it's only—I don't like your coming here with the intention of taking something from us. I wish you'd give it up at once. I liked it better when you were simply our guest."

His face was obstinate and sombre. "Will you promise, please, not to mention this to papa? It would disappoint him. He has taken a fancy to you. I think it would insult him."

Here he colored, but with no change of expression. And he ran a glance as keen as a rapier towards Alec, where he sat at ease in a big chair, laughing at Claire's vivid word-pictures. Jane saw Rufus Tremont's look. The pink in her cheeks deepened suddenly to scarlet. She controlled an accession of angry panic and walked rapidly back to the others.

Mr. Tremont followed more

certainly at Tremont. There was something curious in his reception of the story—a look of inner enjoyment, as though he had found a particular flavor in the anecdote. He left Jane's side and strolled up and down the long room. His slow, beautiful movements fascinated Jane; also his incomprehensible air of excitement. His eyes, when they met hers, were full of eagerness. They were extraordinary eyes, and held a clear, far-seeing look that gave a sense of sky and space. And they held, too, all the youth that elsewhere had been taken from his face by hardship. Under them Jane somehow felt that she was seen for the first time. The inner Jane—unknown, mysterious, timid even under the observation of her everyday self-stirred and stretched out her hands.

Jane moved to one of the moon-flooded windows. She felt strangely at her ease and curiously comfortable, with all the comfort of her solitude, only less cold.

Tremont stopped presently beside her.

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slowly. His jaw was the jaw of a fighter whose blood is up. "Isn't that the limit?" he asked himself. "They would have the future Earl of Breeme sell himself and his title rather than right themselves by the sale of a picture."

CHAPTER X THE DOLLAR PRINCESS

Lord Tremont usually brought his father's mail to him in the morning and spent an hour or so reading aloud and chatting to him—or, rather, being chatted to by him.

Alec, coming in at the wonted hour, passed his stepmother on her way out, and found the invalid sitting by the window, gowned and comfortable in his wheeled chair, with an extraordinarily animated and happy face.

"Ah! Alec boy, good-morning. What a good morning it is, eh? I saw you out with Claire on the lawn. She's a sunrise-lady, if ever there was one. 'Pon my word, I felt ready to get into your boots—eh? Well, well, business first, if you say so." Alec's grave, unresponsive face had spoken for him. "I understand you've settled things in Canada and with that troublesome money lender, Unterberg, in London, so that chapter's closed." (Alec breathed a prayer of heartfelt thanks to Lady Breeme's solicitous anticipation of his own intended report.) "We'll get through the mail, eh?"

Lord Breeme began carelessly tearing open the envelopes, while Alec sorted out the letters, keeping the business ones for his own attention, and reading aloud the others.

"I hear," wrote Breeme's sister, "that you have a charming American heiress within your gates. Now, that's exciting. Give Alec my love and best wishes."

Here Lord Breeme put his hand on his son's arm. Alec was standing by him—and pulled him about, looking up with glowing pride and affection into his face.

"Your mother has been tattling," said he, "and," he added hastily, for Alec's mouth had stiffened, "nothing has made me happier than what she's hinted. Happy! I'm exultant. Confound this chair!"

Alec walked away to the window and back again. He tingled with resentment and alarm. Lady Breeme had evidently taken a good deal for granted; or did she mean, by this move, to put a net over his head?

"What—" he stammered out, "what did mother tell you?"

Lord Breeme patted the arms of his chair. He seemed much more of a happy boy than his narrow-eyed, long-jawed son.

"Oh, that a certain young man in whom I feel a certain interest, and about whom—let me tell you—I've felt rather more than a certain anxiety, has as much latent intelligence as I always gave him credit for. It's coming to the surface—what?"

"I don't," said Alec in a low tone of constraint, "quite know what you mean."

"Claire," said the earl. "I can't tell you how I feel towards Claire. She's the very fire we need on our old hearth. I'm not a worldling—not enough of one, I fear—and I wouldn't—not to save the Van Dyke" (this was a household word), "see you married to a million if the million didn't go with one of the sweetest girls—one of the finest women—alive."

"Good Lord, father!" burst out Alec in a tone of little less than repressed fury. "What did mother tell you—that I was going to marry Miss Wilton?"

Lord Breeme actually shrunk in his chair; the light faded from his blue, kind eyes; the corners of his mouth fell into the sad depressions of old age.

"Then you're not," said he flatly; "she was mistaken."

Alec twisted an envelope. He had just glanced at his father's face.

"Just what did she say?"

"Oh, botheration!" Peevishly Lord Breeme snatched up a newspaper. "If there's nothing in it I shan't go over it with you. I might have known."

"Why might you have known?" cut in Alec with a hurt quickness.

"You've disappointed me before."

This from his gentle and indulgent father! The earl's face was behind the paper. Suddenly

Alec's hand was stretched out towards the pile of letters lying still unopened on the desk. His troubled eyes had caught sight of one, directed to his father, which sent his heart into his mouth. It was from Unterberg—a dunn, doubtless; what if the earl had read it, and Alec's situation had been exposed? Tremont slipped the letter out of the heap and into his pocket, unnoticed by his father. He stood there, white and miserable, feeling his own heartbeats, seeing Aline's eyes with their coldness. The earl made another quick movement, crushing the newspaper down on his knee.

"I'm an optimistic old idiot," said he, trying to apologize for his reproach; "the least spark and I'm a bonfire. What your mother said, my dear boy, was, after all, only just this: 'I think that Alec is going to please you very much.' And then she looked out of the window and pointed to you and Claire on the lawn. That's all. If she's mistaken—she held out his hand—"why, it's not your fault."

"She's not," said Alec putting awkwardly a cold hand into his father's warm one, altogether mistaken, you know." Then, as the kind fingers gripped, "I'm thinking of it pretty hard," he added gruffly.

The earl, wistful, eager, and afraid to press the matter, returned to his mail. Alec read to him, conscious all the while of tender and excited eyes upon him.

"What makes you think," he asked suddenly, with one of his cynical grins, "that she would have me, anyway?"

The earl was delighted at his reversion to the topic.

"Ah, Alec, her attentions to me, for one thing, and the look in her eyes as they fly over the house—your home."

"You think she'd marry me for my father and my furniture?" Alec leaned his head on his hand. "I dare say."

"No, sir; for yourself. But," Lord Breem twinkled, "She'll be glad that you're the owner of that Van Dyke, eh? Well, well, we won't joke about it. She's a dear girl. She will—she would do us credit, Alec. That's something one must think of, isn't it?"

"Oh, I suppose so." Alec sat staring absently at his boots.

"What's the trouble, my boy? Can't make you out. She hasn't already refused you?"

Alec shook his head.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Further Annals of the Elite

A friend of mine from Tennessee used to speak in highest Southern scorn of regular "hill-billy," synonymous with but much more derogatory than "rube." The milieu of Mrs. Wharton's latest novel, A MOTHER'S RECOMPENSE—French maids, breakfast trays bedecked daily with bunches of English violets, Fifth avenue mansions—all these make the humble reader feel like a genuine hill-billy. Not that Mrs. Wharton writes in any sycophantic spirit. One feels that to her Fifth avenue mansions and street cars to the rest of us. Even the sophisticated morals of her characters place them in a world apart—though this book does not depict bland immorality quite so matter-of-factly as did her earlier novel GLIMPSES OF THE MOON. It is a damning admission of provincialism, but after all the only measuring stick that one has to measure artistic fidelity is in the terms of one's own experience, and the people that I know, pull pretty straight in the matrimonial harness. I wonder, therefore, if a story dealing with so limited a problem as the matrimonial tangles of the "four hundred" can ever be very significant.

But with all exceptions admitted—how Mrs. Wharton can write! She has the old-fashioned habit of constructing a genuine plot, and that plot absorbing. While reading the story, the mother's problem is made as fateful as a Greek tragedy. Chris Fenno, the man about town, and the world weary Lilla are made very living flesh and blood. The fluent ease of her writing is a joy. She is a craftsman in complete control of her tools. With not a concession to "happy ending" but a sense of rightness that purges the pitiful mother of all cheapness, the close is the best part of the book.

After all, surely it is Mrs. Wharton's privilege to decide WHAT she will write about and if she chooses to confine her attention to a selected group, our only question should be whether she does that successfully. She does it superlatively well, so please, all readers, consider paragraph one cancelled.

Eating 16 apples a day has kept W. D. Macown, of Toronto, Canada, off the sick list for 28 years, he says. Macown, who is employed by the Dominion as a tester of apples grown in experimental orchards, says that he ate an average of 16 apples daily in his duties as tester, and that they certainly did keep the doctor away.

An Up-to-Date Proposal. From the Florida Times-Union. "Darling, will you make me the happiest of men in three letters meaning eternal bliss?" "My answer is two letters meaning eternal freedom."

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Kewanee, Illinois.—"When I was married about a year and a half I took Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound because of ill health. I did not have any children. I now have two healthy little girls and I am sure I would not have had them had it not been for your medicine. Last spring and summer I got all run down, irregular, and I had awful headaches, and my back and side hurt me so that I could stay up only a short time. My limbs would get so tired and ache till I could cry. I started to take the Vegetable Compound again and used the Sensitive

Wash, and it was not long till I was relieved. Now I do all my own work and help others. I sure praise Lydia E. Pinkham's medicines to any one I meet that is suffering from similar troubles. I think if mothers with girls would give it to them when they come to womanhood it would make them stronger. People who have known me all my life are astonished to see me now as I was always sickly when in my teens until I started taking the Vegetable Compound."—Mrs. MARY R. BENEDICT, 313 Paysan Street, Kewanee, Ill.

Has a Beautiful Baby Girl Now

Bridport, Vermont.—"In the first place I wanted a baby, but none seemed to come to me. I just love children and my husband is away all day, so I was not happy at all. A doctor told me I could not have a baby until I went to a hospital. But my sisters said, 'Take Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound and you will be O.K.' I was nervous, had organic weakness, with backache, sideache, headache and no strength. I had been in bed nearly a week when I began taking the Vegetable Compound. It was all that ever helped me and I just wish you could see my beautiful baby girl. I am fine now, and so is she. I am still taking the medicine as it keeps me well. You may be sure I am recommending the Vegetable Compound and always will."—Mrs. A. W. Howe, Bridport, Vermont.

World's Hot Springs Pa (working cross-word puzzle)—The United States and Iceland are the only countries where hot springs exist in any numbers. Parlor Edition What is a rat-trap in six letters? Ma—Try T-o-m-c-a-t.

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