

# BREEME HOUSE

By Katherine Newlin Burt

"I told him"—Aline dropped her other hand and lifted to him a pair of vividly unhappy, frightened, and remorseful eyes—that I was engaged to marry you!"

And then she snatched the hand from him, covered her face, crumpled up in her chair, and cried.

Sir Geoffrey walked away quickly and came quickly back. His glass had dropped out of his eye, and his hands, behind him, worked into each other. Also his face had lost its frank expression. It looked as though someone behind were pulling at the wires which were fastened about his mouth.

"You did perfectly right," he began at last in a hurried voice. He paused, then went on steadily. "I told you that if the time ever came when you needed the protection of my name, you were to use it, just in that way. Your father made me a kind of guardian to you all, and I saw that Alec was—being inconsiderate. Either he doesn't know his own mind, or he feels he isn't free. It was right of you; splendid of you. But—"

"But what, Sir Geoffrey?"

"But what you told him need not count unless you want it to. Please stop crying, dear. It's quite all right. Do you want it to be so really Aline, or—or was it only—"

"You know all about me," whispered Aline. "You know how I turn to you. Do you think you can make me forget this other feeling? It is all so hopeless and so wrong. Alec will marry Claire Wilton. I don't know how he feels towards me. Not deeply, I am sure. He is often so unkind. He has never considered me. I am sure he has never really thought of marrying me. Why should he? Only a wonderful person like you could—"

"Hush, Aline!"

"I want to love you," she cried, clinging to him. "I want to. In every way I need you. If I weren't such a fool—"

"No, Aline; we won't go over that. It's not foolish. I've thought over this matter a thousand times, as you know. And very often I've come to the conclusion—that you couldn't do better than marry me. I will not press you. I'm not like a hot-headed young fellow, you know. Never mind what you said to Alec this morning. If you can't later, that you've changed your mind—anything you like. Only on my honor, young lady, I believe you'd be doing a sensible thing if you just stick to it. I believe Heaven put the words into your mouth."

"You're so good, she whispered.

"Come, little girl. You mustn't cry any more. Do you want to think it over, or do you want to decide now?"

Aline sent round the quiet room a long, pleading look. Her head was a great prayer for peace and good counsel. She looked up at Sir Geoffrey's face and saw those little wires at painful work around his tight-shut mouth.

For answer she stood up and, reaching her hands up to his head, drew it down and kissed him on the forehead.

Then he stood at the door to let her out, and saw her by him like a crumpled little ghost.

"Here's my new car, Aline," he said. "She'll whisk you home in no time. Isn't she a beauty, eh?"

Aline looked and admired. She was completely dazed. The world looked different; colors brighter, outlines more confused. The old house seemed as new as the shining car; Sir Geoffrey, a stranger; herself, an unknown entity. She had altogether lost her life. She wondered coldly whether it would be possible to find it.

Arrived at Breeme House, Aline went indoors at once. As Sir Geoffrey turned his car to leave the place, he caught sight of Claire Wilton, coming towards him across the lawns. His eyes lighted quickly with pleasure

and as quickly clouded with a sudden unwelcome resolution. He put on speed, and passed on down the drive-way as if he had not seen her. In that moment Sir Geoffrey knew the pang of self-renunciation.

When, in the drawing-room after dinner, Aline saw Alec coming over to her, she hid her work under a cushion and slipped out by the long open windows to avoid him.

She fled through bars of shade and moonlight to a little bower, walled in by eucalyptus, and fragrant with Jane's mignonette. She sat down in the shadow, a little breathless, eyes and ears alert. The night was even stranger to her than the day. She had not yet found herself, she was engaged, it seemed, to marry Sir Geoffrey Brooke. That was her secret. She had decided to keep it for some little time, it was necessary, first to realize the fact before he made it known. Peace might come, and happiness; but lightness of heart was gone. Here for a moment tears stood in her eyes. But those brothers and sisters of hers would be happier now. Sir Geoffrey would father them, every one. He had always wanted her to let him do that; now it would be his right.

"I wonder if I look old," she thought. "I wonder if Sir Geoffrey really loves me."

She looked down at herself—at the hands Sir Geoffrey had held, that Alec had kissed. She remembered the pale, thin face, tear-marred, that had looked vaguely at her from the mirror while she dressed for dinner. "There are girls," she thought, "who look like embodied joy, who gleam, hair, skin and eyes—girls with auras."

Aline stirred restlessly. Why had she thought of Claire again? The familiar laugh had been taken up subconsciously by her ear and translated quickly into conscious thought. She should not have been startled when a clear, ringing voice called to her and a figure appeared swiftly from the shadows of the eucalyptus.

"I've found you for him," cried Claire triumphantly, sitting down beside her.

"Oh, please, don't."

Aline tried to keep the nervousness out of her voice. She was dreadfully oppressed by Claire's presence. Somehow, in this mood and light, the American girl's tingling vitality overwhelmed her. Claire, in her dress of Chinese-dragon green, her golden scarf, the glimmering topaz at her throat, a jewel that gave fire on her finger, seemed to Aline almost wickedly alive.

"You have all the air of a hunted dryad," laughed Claire: "'the god pursuing, the maiden hid.' I wish—here she stretched her arms above her head—"I wish someone would terrify me. I'd love to run and run and run through the moonlight with my heart in my throat. Do you know—now this isn't a boast, it's something I'm ashamed of—I've never been afraid in all my life."

"That argues," said Aline, "a very sheltered existence, a lack of imagination, or an amazingly steady nerve. But why do you think I am afraid?"

Claire, for an instant, imitated Jane's sidelong look.

"You should have seen your face when I came along the walk: But why, why, why be afraid of Lord Tremont? If it had been Rufus Tremont, now!"

Aline felt annoyed and restive. She decided to go in again, and rose. Claire, however, remained sitting there and looking up in a fashion that somehow arrested Aline. "I like," said Claire, "all kinds of courage. And I hate all kinds of cowardice. There are plenty of things renounced with a fine air, of sacrifice which a little courage might have held. I'm not terribly squeamish myself; I don't brook much interference when I've once made up my mind about wanting a thing."

"I don't know, Alec," she stammered. "Don't torment me, please. I'm very tired to-night."

He drew his eyebrows together.

"Last thing I want to do, to torment you. But—just—I say—for a moment, if you can, think of me. We've known each other so long. We ought to be able to be frank, to talk things over. A while ago you hurt me horribly—your suggestion. I've seen the sense of it. But is sense everything?"

She couldn't speak. He had picked up Claire's thread of thought. One half of her would

should she be threatened and warned? Why should she be told to step out of the way? Aline, after all, was hers by right of long comradery years.

"Have you never found yourself, by that method, winning the shell of a thing, when its soul has escaped you?" she suggested dryly.

Claire pondered, the moonlight on her up-lifted clear-cut face. She looked at Aline steadily, searchingly. Of a sudden she smiled.

"Don't side-track," she said. "Exactly what do you mean by that?"

"I mean"—Aline came nearer by a step—"that I'm not in sympathy with your methods. I don't like crushing victims under my chariot wheels. I want a thing—oh, yes! as vehemently as you—but I want it as a free gift. I want it with a clear conscience."

Claire meditated again.

"Squeamish people," said she, "are apt to imagine victims under their chariot wheels! To stop being figurative, I know a girl who gave up marrying the man she loved, and who loved her, because she thought his happiness would be better cared for by a richer woman. The little idiot!"

"Oh, why do you say that?" Aline flinched involuntarily. "She tore her heart out to do him service."

"A pretty sort of service! She took from him the great chance of a lifetime. Why couldn't she have had courage for him and for herself? She was afraid that he might suffer discomfort, lack of ease, anxiety. It was sheer cowardice. Perhaps, after all, he was well out of it. A woman must be the braver creature of the two. She mustn't ever see danger for him except by way of helping him to face it. I'd hate to shelter the man I loved. And as for that, I'd hate another man to shelter me."

Aline stood and listened to this speech. It puzzled her; left her doubtful of Claire's motives.

"Is she challenging me?" she thought, "I've not the sporting instinct for that sort of thing. I'd almost like to feel as she does. It's rather primitive; or is it the next step forward? I may be at a sort of middle stage. I wonder if I am a coward!"

Here Alec appeared at the entrance of their bower and stood straight and pale and narrow-eyed to look at them.

Claire rose like a green flame from the seat.

"I'll never play at hide-and-seek with you again," she cried. "How many brown-eyed Alices do you want, Ben Bolt? Isn't one enough, to tremble with fear at your frown?"

"But where's the one?" asked Lord Tremont.

Claire laughed, and on her laughter slipped away past him into the green-black yew passage that led from their retreat.

Her laughter left a deep silence, and in it stood Aline and Lord Tremont, their hearts beating hard. At last, very gently, more gently than she had ever hard him, he spoke.

"Are you afraid of me, Aline?" he asked her.

She smiled her old smile.

"No you goose." It was the tone of nursery banter.

"Then why have you been running away from me?"

"For a great many reasons."

"One of them?"

She moved restlessly before him, her smile flickering out.

He watched her anxiously and keenly. She was not warmly dressed. Her thin, grey frock—so old, and plain, and worn—was no protection against the growing chilliness of night, and he could see that she was shivering a little. She was very pale, and there were shadows under her eyes. For the first time in his life Alec was moved by a protective tenderness.

"Was it because you thought I would repeat my question of this morning? In the face of what you told me? Was it, Aline?"

"I don't know, Alec," she stammered. "Don't torment me, please. I'm very tired to-night."

He drew his eyebrows together.

"Last thing I want to do, to torment you. But—just—I say—for a moment, if you can, think of me. We've known each other so long. We ought to be able to be frank, to talk things over. A while ago you hurt me horribly—your suggestion. I've seen the sense of it. But is sense everything?"

She couldn't speak. He had picked up Claire's thread of thought. One half of her would

die to stop him, the other to hear him out. It was a deadlock, and her mind stood still.

"I'm in debt. I'm poor. I can't—I mustn't be rash or selfish. And yet, surely, there are other ways out of my fix. Rufus Tremont has half-hinted that he could help me out. This engagement of yours—"

Suddenly she turned upon him, her old ironic style veiling a passion of resentful pain.

"We are both cowards, Alec. I know that. But let's never talk about these things again. It's all—any way you look at it—a mess. You ask me to think of you. Haven't I thought? But what do we either of us get from thinking? What would we get from frankness, as you call it? I could ask you one question that would silence you utterly. You know very well what that question would be. I'd rather die than ask it, or hear your answer to it."

"Here's one question that I will ask," cried Alec, "and I will hear your answer. No; you shan't run away. I don't want to torment you. I'm trying to think of you, Aline. Do you love Sir Geoffrey?"

Quickly and evenly she answered.

"I do love him."

"Better than—than you—love me?"

"Ah! I didn't think you'd dare!"

Her anger made a brightness about her, and Alec fell back. In that second he had lost her. She was away, light and swift as a little grey moth in the night.

#### CHAPTER XII

#### A WAGER FOR A WALTZ

Claire, coming downstairs from the gallery, the next bright morning, was approached very gravely and anxiously by Robins with a paper in his hand. Back of Robins, near the door, kept back, Claire felt, by the cautioning other hand of the old servant, stood a sleek, meek, long-haired man in loose clothes, with a tin box and folded easel under his arm. He stood, his head rather deprecatingly bent, his black eyes flying furtively about the room. Claire thought him a picturesquely unpleasant figure.

"Oh, miss," said Robins, in his discreet, respectful whisper, "this gentleman says he's a painter, miss, and he wishes to make a copy of the Van Dyke. I don't ust what to think about it, miss. The man is a foreigner, I fancy, and I don't like the looks of him; but between you and me, miss he has a note here from Lord Tremont."

"Oh, then it must be quite right," she said. "Is that the paper?"

(TO BE CONTINUED)

When Sentiment Governs.

From West's Docket.

At the trial of a prosecution involving "public morals" the court charged that "the common sense of the community and the sense of decency, propriety, and morality which most people entertain in the community in which the acts were alleged to have been committed was the test to apply."

The brief of the Assistant Attorney General on appeal from the conviction contained a somewhat similar statement to the effect that what might outrage public decency in one community might not affect another community; that public morals and ideals might be different in different sections; that the purpose of the law under consideration was to protect the various communities from acts grossly disturbing the public peace or morals or outrage the public decency of the community disturbed; and that the statute might apply, and was intended to apply, differently in different communities.

The Criminal Court of Appeals of Oklahoma, in *Roberts v. State*, 225 Pacific Reporter, 553, speaking through Mr. Justice Bessey, stated its view on the subject as follows:

"With this plastic, uncertain application of the statute, by which it might be made to apply differently in different communities, we cannot agree."

"Laws against crime are intended to operate uniformly in every place within the territorial limits over which they extend. To hold that a penal law may or may not operate as such in a particular community, dependent upon public sentiment in that community, would, in its last analysis, amount to the anarchy of law, and result in a kind of anarchy which every community might establish and was intended to apply, differently in different communities."

This is why intestinal specialists state that constipation is the primary cause of three-quarters of all illness, including the gravest diseases of life.

**Physicians Advise Lubrication for Internal Cleanliness**

Medical science has found at last in *lubrication* a means of overcoming constipation.

The gentle lubricant, Nujol, penetrates and softens the hard food waste, and thus hastens its passage through and out of the body. Thus, Nujol brings internal cleanliness.

Nujol is not a medicine or laxative and cannot gripe. Like pure water, it is harmless.

Take Nujol regularly and adopt this habit of internal cleanliness. For sale by all druggists.



#### Feel Achy After Every Cold?

ARE you lame and stiff; tired and nervous—constantly troubled with backache and twinges of pain? Have you given any attention to your kidneys?

Grip, colds and chills, you know, are apt to be mighty hard on the kidneys. And if the overtaxed kidneys fail to properly filter the blood, impurities accumulate and throw the whole system out of tune. Then may follow daily backache, rheumatic pains, headaches, dizziness and annoying kidney irregularities.

In such conditions a good stimulant diuretic should help the kidneys flush the poisons out of your system. Use Doan's Pills. Doan's have helped thousands. Are recommended by folks you know. Ask your neighbor!

#### A South Dakota Case

Carl L. Lundgren, carpenter, Webster, S. D., says: "My kidneys were disordered and I had attacks of backache. At times, when I stooped, I had sharp catches take me in my back and I could hardly straighten. Mornings the muscles of my back were sore and stiff. My kidneys acted irregularly. Doan's Pills soon rid me of the aches and pains and put my kidneys in good order."

#### Doan's Pills

*Stimulant Diuretic to the Kidneys*

At all dealers, 60c a box. Foster-Milburn Co., Mfg. Chemists, Buffalo, N. Y.

#### Not Troubled

"Yes, he's ruined; but still, poverty is no disgrace, is it?" "He doesn't owe you anything either, then?"