



# Honeymoon Mountain

By Frances Shelley Wees

## SYNOPSIS

Bryn (James Brynildson III), a tall bronzed young man of wealth, and his chum, Tubby Forbes, are discussing Bryn's coming marriage. Tubby believes it a scheme to get Bryn's wealth from him. Should the girl, Deborah, whom Bryn had met at the office of his attorney, Ted Holworthy, marry Stuart Graham before her twenty-first birthday, she will inherit a vast fortune from her grandfather. Stuart had greatly displeased Deborah, who refuses to marry him. Bryn, posing as an employed engineer, offers to marry Deborah, as Stuart, for \$50,000, they not to live as man and wife. Twenty-three years previous, Anne Larned had eloped with an adventurer on the day set for her wedding to Courtney Graham. Two days after the birth of her daughter, Anne died. Shortly after, the father died. The Larneds, grandparents, took the child with them to Oregon where, without child companions, Deborah grew up. To safeguard her from some fortune hunter, her grandfather had arranged for her to marry Stuart, son of Courtney Graham, when of age. When Deborah was fifteen, her grandfather died. Securities had been set aside to keep the family, but a market crash left scarcely enough for them to live on. This was unknown to Deborah's grandmother, an invalid, Gary, a servant, managing the finances. At twenty, the thought of marriage greatly frightened Deborah. It had been planned that Deborah meet Stuart in Frisco, where they were to be married. Tubby and Bryn await Deborah in a hotel in Frisco. Over a period of one year the groom is to prove he is no fortune hunter and can make Deborah happy to the satisfaction of her grandmother. Otherwise, the fortune is to go to charity. The will is somewhat ambiguous as to whom Deborah is to marry. The girl arrives with Holworthy. Tubby is surprised to find her charming and sweet.

## CHAPTER II—Continued

Deborah was married and at home again. It was less than a week since she had gone away from the mountain, but it seemed a thousand years. She was so much older, now. She knew so much more than she had known a week ago that her thoughts were like the thoughts of a stranger; she looked at her old life and everything that had been in it with a stranger's eyes, clear, wondering, critical.

They were at luncheon, she and Grandmother and the man, seated at the long table in the middle of the vast shadowy dining room. The ceiling was high and supported by dark heavy oaken beams; at one end was a great fireplace with a carved oak mantelpiece and a stone hearth.

Deborah sat up and moved the silver spoon beside her plate. She looked across at Grandmother. Grandmother was wearing her gray satin dress for the first time since Grandfather's death. Her white hair was pinned more loosely than usual, and fluffed out softly around her face. Her eyes were sparkling, alight, happy. There was pink in her cheeks, and a thread of it in her lips. It was as if she had come to life again, too. An hour ago, when they had come up the weed-grown drive, Grandmother had been standing at the side door, dressed from head to foot in the black she had worn for so long, with one hand pressed to her heart in the old familiar gesture, and a look of fearful questioning in her eyes. The man had stopped the big battered-looking motor-car, and helped Deborah out. Grandmother had not looked at Deborah at all, except for one quick encompassing glance as if to make sure that she was still intact. Her eyes had gone to the man, and he had stood tall and straight and smiling that faint steady smile of his, waiting. The sun had glinted on his brown hair, and had made his brown skin look very clear and wholesome. Grandmother had looked into his eyes for a long time, a tense, silent, searching look; and then she had drawn a deep breath and put out her hand. She had smiled back at him, a fluttering relieved happy smile, and he had taken both her little white hands in his own. Oh, he was living up to his bargain.

He seemed to understand the situation at a glance and decide what it was he must do. It was perfect acting, and Deborah knew that she should have been grateful and appreciative, but instead she was angry. Angry because . . . well, because, watching him with Grandmother, she had realized suddenly that all the way up from San Francisco he had been acting with her, too, amusing her, making her laugh, telling her interesting things, thinking of her comfort, because it was part of the bargain. On the trip she had forgotten the bargain, the fact that he was going to be paid, and paid well, as he had expressed it, for giving their marriage the appearance of a happy one, the appearance of a real marriage be-

tween two young people who had . . . had fallen in love with each other at first sight.

Well, no matter; even if it was a little disconcerting to keep remembering what the true situation was. No harm had been done. She had been reserved through it all, and had not, she assured herself, allowed herself to be anything but impersonal with him.

Grandmother was gazing at him again as if she could scarcely take her eyes away. It was unfortunate that he meant so much to her if Grandmother approved of him too highly. It might make it difficult, at the end of the year, to explain why Deborah would be happier without him. And Grandmother in the meantime might think . . . she might expect . . . Deborah moved uneasily.

"My dear boy," Grandmother was saying, "I cannot see that there is the slightest resemblance between you and your father. You are so much taller than he was, so much more . . . perhaps I mean athletic looking. But perhaps I shouldn't have expected you to look like the Grahams. My husband told me years ago, after he had been East to see you, that you looked very much like your mother's people. Your mother was a very fine woman, my dear Stuart."

"Of course you did. Although you would scarcely remember her, I think?"

"He doesn't remember her at all," Deborah said quickly. "She died when he was only three, Grandmother. He couldn't possibly remember her."

The man looked across the table. His eyes were twinkling, amused. Deborah looked back at him, coolly.

It wasn't going to be exactly easy to carry off this situation. But no matter how difficult it might be it was better than marrying Stuart Graham. There had been very little dissembling on Stuart Graham's part, even in Mr. Holworthy's presence. Apparently it hadn't seemed necessary to him to pretend gentleness and courtesy even for the few necessary hours. It had been perfectly obvious that he hadn't dreamed for a moment that she could or would refuse to marry him. He had refused to go through with the horrible bargain. When she did summon up her courage, after two hours of listening to his talk with Mr. Holworthy, when the words sprang to her lips and she heard herself saying in a queer cold little voice that she could never marry him no matter what happened, he had been terrible. He had called her prudish, ignorant, insane.

Grandmother wouldn't have believed it, couldn't have believed it, if she had been told. It would have killed her to bring Stuart Graham here and let her see him as he was. She and Grandfather had told themselves for years that in a miserably unhappy world one star would always shine as bright as the sun; no matter what happened, the Grahams were gentlemen.

Gary had guessed what might happen. He hadn't been so sure of the Grahams after all. Deborah remembered his words as he had helped her into the rickety wagon down at their neighbor's farm. He had tucked the dust-cover around her and, his old face worn and troubled, had said, "If you don't like him, Miss Deborah, don't you have anything to do with him. We'll get along some way. We'll just look around for another way."

This was the other way. The tall young man at the head of the table, willing to sell his gentlemanly appearance, his good manners, his smiles, for a year—for fifty thousand dollars.

Of course, since one must be fair and just, he had not been considering his own opportunities there in Mr. Holworthy's office, not just at first. After Deborah had stood up and told Stuart in that strange voice that she couldn't possibly marry him, after she had repeated it again and again and made him see that she meant it, he had been in a wild rage. It was then that he had said such horrible things to her. After a moment Deborah had run away, into an outer office, anywhere to escape from Stuart Graham. But Stuart had followed her. Stuart was a bully. He was still talking to her, pushing himself directly between her and the door, between her and freedom, when this quiet young man with the steady gray eyes had risen from a chair and faced him. Bryn hadn't moved, except that his arm came straight up, and his fist hit Stuart under the chin with a terrific crash, and Stuart had crumpled to the floor.

"Deborah, my darling, what is the

matter?" Grandmother said suddenly. "You are quite pale!"

"Nothing, Grandmother," Deborah answered, and managed to smile.

"It's rather a long trip up from San Francisco when you're not accustomed to motoring," the man said.

"I am sure it must have been trying," Grandmother said, still looking at her tenderly. There was something new and solicitous in her expression. "Now that our greatest problem is solved, surely we can make a real change in our way of living."

"What do you mean?" Deborah asked quickly.

"Oh, so many things, dear," Grandmother leaned forward. "We must furnish ourselves up, for one thing. We are becoming quite careless as to our ways of living. I've been feeling guilty about it for a long time, but I've been so worried about Deborah that nothing else seemed of any particular importance. But now I feel," she finished briskly, "that we must have two or three extra servants at once, have the grounds put in order, have the electric plant repaired . . ."

"But—" Deborah said faintly, and stopped.

"But what, my darling? Would you not like to see the house filled with young company, with music, with life? To have a host of pretty new clothes?"

"We don't know anyone to fill the house with," Deborah protested miserably.

"Stuart does," Grandmother said with confidence. "He told me only a few moments ago that he had a great many friends in San Francisco."

"Grandmother . . ."

She smiled. "Now, Deborah, of course we should not ask anyone for some time, my dear. You and Stuart must have a month or two of your own, first. But during that time the house and grounds can be taken care of; they have been neglected so long it will be quite an undertaking. Since your grandfather wished that we should spend a year here after your marriage, I think we must try and make it a happy year, and in it prepare you as best we can to mingle in society when we emerge at last from our retreat."

"I never want to go away from here," Deborah cried, "never, never!"

"Why, Deborah!" Grandmother said in surprise. "Stuart, the dear child is quite overwrought. Of course you will go away from here, my dear, you and Stuart. The world is before you. Am I not right, Stuart? You would not be satisfied to spend all your life here?"

He hesitated, but only for a fraction of a second. Then, "I'm not at all sure that I shouldn't be, if Deborah were to be here," he said.

Deborah jumped from her chair. Her eyes flashed. "Was that necessary?" she asked him bitterly.

Grandmother stood up, too, a slight small figure in her gray. "What do you mean?" she asked in a still cold voice.

"Oh!" Deborah began, and stopped. "Nothing," she said slowly. "I am . . . overwrought, Grandmother. I think I will go and rest for a little."

"Of course, dear," she answered, relieved. "Of course, I understand. Go along, then . . . and your things are in the silver rooms in the south wing."

"The silver rooms?" Deborah repeated. Involuntarily her startled eyes fell to the man's and gray and violet clung together. Deborah's cheeks began to burn. She looked away.

"No objections, my dear. The silver rooms were always intended for you, but you preferred to be near me rather than in the south wing alone. Go along, my darling, and perhaps after a little I will follow your example. The excitement and the happiness have quite tired me out."

Deborah went across the room and through the door. She wanted to stamp and kick and scream. This must be how a rabbit felt when it was caught in a snare. She went on, up the long curving staircase, down the corridor into the south wing, through the second door on the right. Inside was a sitting room, with walls panelled in silver, with rugs and chairs and curtains done in deep violet. There was a huge four-poster bed against the inner wall, with a beautiful violet and tarnished-silver spread upon it, and a long silver bowl of violets on a little table at one side. And, at the foot of the bed, was a man's heavy pigskin bag, as yet unopened.

She went across to it and lifted it with a vicious jerk. It was heavy. She went through the bedroom and the sitting room to the corridor. She put the bag down with a thump on the floor outside the door, pulled the sitting room door shut with a bang and shot the bolt.

## CHAPTER III

THERE were high spiked iron gates at the end of the weed-grown drive. Bryn leaned his shoulders against them, took his silver case out thoughtfully and lit a cigarette.

There is a moment in every day among the mountains when afternoon is definitely over and evening has come. Her dusky silent presence is as real as the moon and stars will be when night falls later on. It is made known to the watcher by a change in the quality of the

sunlight, as if a silvery veil had fallen suddenly across the sky.

He turned and walked slowly up the dark path toward the house.

The birds outside Bryn's window wakened him very early; the morning air was still night-cold and fresh when he yawned, stretched, drew back his quilts and sprang out of bed.

A few minutes later, in his white shirt and gray knickerbockers he closed his door noiselessly and tiptoed down the hall past the door which must be Deborah's, since it was the only closed one along the corridor. Gary, who was obviously in Deborah's confidence, had been most reluctant even to give Bryn a room in this wing, but it couldn't be helped, since Mrs. Larned herself was in the north wing.

Bryn stepped out over the puff of dew-laden grass at the foot of the steps, to the wide red uneven stones of the path. He thrust his hands in his pockets and sauntered along the side of the south wing and around the end. He was facing the mountain now; there was still a little broken wreath of mist around the top. Between him and the forest, at the back of the stretch of park land, he could see the serrated rows of the orchard trees, and a clear flat space beside it which appeared to be a garden. He followed the narrow beaten path, hedged with drooping wet grass, across to the corner of the orchard. He came to a stop beneath a cherry tree whose topmost boughs were still laden down with heavy fruit. Bryn regarded it. He put a foot on a low branch and swung himself up into the tree as if the heavier branches would take him.

The cherry tree, being on the side of the hill, was a vantage point. Below him the house, smothered in its ivy, lay without a sign of habitation. Beyond it the brook was marked out by the double line of weeping willows.

Directly ahead lay a gentle slope of meadow; and as Bryn's eyes fell upon it he caught quite distinctly a flash of blue across the green.

It had most certainly been a gown. He climbed down hastily from the tree and started off across the garden.

He came at last into the natural clearing which had once been the bottom of the stream. His eyes caught again that blue flash . . . ah, there she was.

Deborah was kneeling on the side of a little knoll, with a round bowl beside her. She was picking wild strawberries. She was dressed in a short-sleeved blue dress, perhaps a little faded, but still extremely becoming.

She looked up, startled, her eyes wide and dark.

"Good morning," Bryn offered cheerfully. "Did something happen to your clock, or do you usually get up at half-past five?"

"I usually get up," she replied.

Bryn dropped down comfortably on the grass a yard away.

She gathered her skirts together around her knees, rose, and moved farther away. "I don't think there are any berries left where you are," she remarked. "But you ought to look before you get down on the ground."

"I did look," Bryn replied. "You may not have seen me, Deborah, but I looked. My eye is very quick. I pride myself on it. To see one of nature's jewels shining among the dank and ugly grasses is one of the things I'm best at."

Across the knoll she regarded him steadily. "It sounds very poetic," she said at last.

"Deborah," Bryn began. The color flashed back into her cheeks. "Must you call me that?" she demanded. "I didn't ask you to call me that. You haven't any right."

"I was about to discuss that very question myself," Bryn replied. "I was about to ask you if we couldn't come to some sort of compromise."

"Compromise?"

"We got on very well on the trip up here. You didn't seem to misunderstand me. But after we got here—yesterday at lunch, and last night at dinner, and in the drawing room later—you must admit it was difficult."

She lifted her chin. "You were so—familiar," she said proudly.

"Familiar?" he repeated.

"I don't think it was necessary. You . . . you talked as if . . . you looked at me . . . you . . . and you put your arm around Grandmother when you said good-night. I saw you."

"I couldn't help it," Bryn said mournfully. "She's a very nice grandmother, after all, isn't she? And I never saw one like her before. If you can imagine it, Deborah, I never had a grandmother of my own."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

## Charing Cross

Up to the time of Charles II. Charing Cross stood among the fields in London. The name is derived from the Saxon word *charnyrd*, meaning a turning. In 1291 Edward I erected at Charing the last of thirteen crosses which marked the route of the funeral procession of his wife Eleanor, from Grantham, Lincolnshire, to Westminster. The cross was taken down in 1647. A modern memorial cross is inside the Charing Cross station yard. Eleanor journeyed with Edward I to the Holy Land and sucked the poison from a wound dealt her husband by a Moor.

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## SMILES

### Affluence

They had suddenly grown rich and bought a farm complete with hens, cows and pigs. Said a visitor: "Do your hens lay eggs?"

"They can," was the reply, "but in our position they don't have to."

### Ting a Ling

Though life is most uncertain I'm sure of this one thing That when I'm in the bathtub The telephone will ring.

### A Smart Man

Teacher—Who was the world's smartest man?

Boy—Thomas Edison. He invented the phonograph and radio so that people would stay up all night and use his electric light bulbs.



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STEADIES THE NERVES

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