

Colonel TODHUNTER of Missouri

By RIPLEY D. SAUNDERS

Copyright, 1911, by the Bobbs-Merrill Company

CHAPTER VIII.

Tom Strickland Faces Colonel Todhunter in a Sentimental Crisis.

"HONESTLY, Mary," protested Tom Strickland, "it isn't safe for you to drive home alone. It's all very well to make believe that you're not afraid of a horse, but I know better. Won't you let me see you home?"

The two had met in the lazy quiet of Nineveh's town square, and Tom was quick to see his opportunity. Mary Todhunter laughed at his apprehensive manner.

"How can you keep a straight face when you say that, Tom?" she asked. "You know as well as I do that I've driven old Solomon a million times, more or less, and that nothing on earth would make him run away."

"You can never tell about these old reliables," said Tom. "Solomon might take it into his head to get frisky any minute. I can see devilment in his eye right now."

He placed an entreating hand on the buggy's side.

"Well, get in, then," conceded Mary, tossing her pretty head. "I reckon I won't have any peace until I let you have your own way."

Tom swung himself into the buggy instantly. "That's a mighty wise conclusion, Mary," he remarked, taking the reins and heading old Solomon toward the shady road that led to Mary's home. "I wish to goodness you'd make up your mind to it as a permanent thing."

Mary flashed mockery at him. "I reckon you do," she exclaimed. "It's just like you. But there's no danger of it's coming to pass, Mr. Tom Strickland."

They were now well out of the drowsy town. Old Solomon trotted contentedly along under the leafy foliage that arched his always welcome homeward way.

"That's one reason I'd like to see your father elected governor," continued Mary. "Those Jefferson City girls will soon teach you your proper place, Tom Strickland, even though you are the governor's son."

"I'm not the governor's son yet, Mary," responded Tom, an intentional meekness in his tone. "And even if the time ever comes that I am, Jefferson City will see mighty little of me."

"What do you mean?" asked Mary. "You'll certainly have to go to the state capital when Colonel and Mrs. Strickland go, won't you?"

Tom's face took on an injured expression. "I declare, Mary," he spoke, "you never seem to realize that I'm no longer a boy. Please remember that I'm a grown man now and that I've studied law and been admitted to practice at the Missouri bar!"

Laughter gleamed in Mary's eyes. "Well, Mr. Thomas Strickland, great lawyer that you are," she mocked, "what then?"

"Why, just this, that I intend to stay right here in Nineveh," announced Tom loftily. "It's all settled too. I'm going to be taken into partnership with my father and old Judge Bolling, and then I can hold my father's practice if he's elected. Anyway, I'm to be a partner. 'Strickland, Bolling & Strickland,' that's how the new sign will read!"

Mary laughed outright. "Goodness me!" she cried. "Won't we be a big man then? Oh, Tom, it'll be such fun to hear you make a speech in court! Ahem—Gentlemen of the jury!"

"Shame on you, Mary Todhunter!" cried Tom, reddening boyishly. "It's just like you, though. You've poked fun at me all your life."

"I haven't either!" denied Mary instantly. "I've only laughed at your high and mighty ways now and then, and you know it."

Tom's angry eyes looked straight to the front. "You had no right to say that about me," continued Mary. "I've been mighty good to you."

"Up to a certain point, yes," agreed Tom. "But just the minute I get serious about anything you begin laughing at me."

"Why, Tom, I don't do anything of the sort!" protested Mary. "I never dreamed of such a thing! You can try me this very minute and see!"

"All right, I will!" spoke Tom quickly. "Mary, I love you. I want you to promise to be my wife. Won't you? I've loved you all my life!"

"Tom Strickland!" cried Mary, blushing hotly. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself! You've got no right to say that just because—just because I—I was trying to be good to you!"

"Mary," said Tom sturdily, "if you don't know I've been in love with you all this time you must be blind. And now I've told you, why—well, you've got to give me an answer—and I love you so that I'm afraid to hear it! If it's no—well, it'll break my heart, that's all!"

There was no answer to his pleading. Mary had given him one startled look



Then her eyes had softened and turned away from him. It seemed to Tom that she was crying.

"Mary," he said humbly, "I didn't mean to say anything to trouble you, but I had to tell you some time or other. I've loved you a long, long time. Is there any chance for me at all?"

Still there was no answer. "I reckon I've been the blind one," said Tom sadly. "I reckon you can't care for me the way I care for you. Yes, Mary, I reckon it's me that's been blind!"

"Yes, Tom," replied Mary Todhunter, "it's you that have been blind."

Tom bowed his head. "I ought to have seen that you didn't love me," he said. "I ought to have seen it. Then I wouldn't have given you the pain of having to tell me so."

"I'm not going to tell you," said Mary.

"All right, Mary," replied Tom. "I'll take my answer without hurting you."



"Is there any chance for me at all?" by making you put it into words. I'm no hog, anyway; I know when I've had enough."

To his amazement Mary burst out laughing. "Of all the funny things to say at such a time!" she cried. Her eyes were full of mischief, yet beautifully tender. "Oh, Tom, indeed you are the blindest of the blind!"

A sudden hope stirred in Tom's soul. "Mary!" he exclaimed. "You don't mean?"

"I do, Tom," softly replied Mary. "How could you believe I didn't love you? You ought to be ashamed of yourself."

And Tom Strickland took Mary Todhunter in his arms, leaving old Solomon to go his own way unguided.

"I'll tell Mrs. Todhunter and the colonel this very day," he announced a few moments later. "Lord, they'd see it anyway in my face, I'm so proud and happy. I want to know if you think I'm good enough for you."

Mary tossed her head. "They'd better think so!" she retorted indignantly. "Not good enough, indeed!"

But Tom was near to being pale stricken when they had gained the wide gallery of Mary's home and were confronting her parents.

"Howdy, Tom!" spoke Colonel Todhunter. His glance passed from young Strickland to his daughter with just the faintest twinkle of amusement in his gray blue eyes.

Tom Strickland had taken Mrs. Todhunter's hand. "Howdy, Mrs. Todhunter—Howdy, colonel," he said, his face an open book of confession. "I—I—well, I—Mary was good enough to say I could come home with her!"

"We're glad you did, Tom," replied Mrs. Todhunter. "And you've got to stay to supper."

Colonel Todhunter's lips were twitching. "I don't know about that, honey," he spoke. "Tom don't look to me like he's very hungry."

Mary flashed swift indignation at her father. Mrs. Todhunter looked at the colonel in surprise. Then in sudden understanding, she shot a quick glance at the young people. Tom

Strickland blushed redder than ever. Mary fired at her mother one soft volley of entreaty from dewy eyes and then fled precipitately into the house. Her face filled with comprehending tenderness, Mrs. Todhunter followed Mary, making no excuses.

"Tom," said Colonel Todhunter, "you seem to have been kicking up a mighty funny rumpus this load o' poles, young man!"

Tom stood like a condemned felon in the dock. "I reckon I have, colonel," he made answer. Then, after a dismayed pause, "I—I—I've been asking Mary to marry me, sir."

Colonel Todhunter's face was impassive.

Tom Strickland stood very erect. Pride shone in his eyes. "I don't know, sir, whether you've noticed it or not," he resumed, "but I've been in love with Mary for a long time."

A refulgent twinkle was in Colonel Todhunter's eyes.

"And, sir—and—well, Colonel Todhunter, it's just this," exultantly but blushingly exclaimed Tom. "I know I don't deserve it—I can't hardly believe it—but Mary says she loves me, too—and—well, sir, I want to ask Mrs. Todhunter's and your consent to our marriage, sir."

Colonel Todhunter was contemplating the young man with eyes brimful of kindly amusement.

"Tom," he said, "as long as you live you'll never forget how skeered you are this minute, sub. But you got through with it like a hero, a blamed sight better than I did when I asked for Mrs. Todhunter. That sure was a terrible experience."

But the next moment his face was grave. He laid his hand on young Strickland's shoulder.

"Tom, my boy," he said, "I'd rather give Mary to you than to any other man in the world, and you ought to ha' known it without my tellin' you. I've known you and liked you all the time you've been growin' up, and I love your father like he was my own brother. I am glad you and Mary have got it all settled, and I'm sure Mrs. Todhunter thinks as much of you as I do. God bless you and Mary both, my boy."

There was a sudden break in the colonel's voice. "It's up to you and Mary to arrange all the rest of it, young man," he spoke again after a little pause. Then, with a whimsical smile: "And all of your troubles are ahead of you both. May the good Lord have mercy on your souls."

A splendid gratitude shone in Tom's eyes. "All I've got to say is this, Colonel Todhunter," he said, "God helping me, I'll make Mary the best husband in the world."

"You'll need the Good Marster's help considerable, too, my boy," responded Colonel Todhunter quizzically. "And don't bank on bein' too blamed successful in that there undertakin', sub. Be in a good husband ain't no sinecure, not by a long shot. It's the biggest contract you ever undertook, and you've got to keep hammerin' away at it ev'ry minute, sub. It's enough to skeer a man to death, Tom, if it want for one thing—bein' a good husband means havin' a happy wife, and that's the finest thing on God's green footstool. You just live up to that great truth, Tom, and it's all I'll ask of you."

"You won't have to ask more than once, Colonel Todhunter," replied Tom fervently. "I'll think of nothing but Mary's happiness all my life, sir. And that'll mean mine, too; we're going to be the happiest couple in all the world, colonel."

"Now that's where you slip up again, Tom," said Colonel Todhunter. "Married life ain't just one long dream of unalloyed bliss, not by a jugful, sub. You got to take it as it comes, the bad with the good, and sometimes it may look like the good ain't as plentiful as it might be, but that's precisely when you got to sit tight and watch and pray for a change o' luck. And a man's wife ain't no chronic angel; young man, no mornen't a woman's husband is. You'll be powerful lucky if Mary makes you as good a wife as her mother's made me, but, all the same, I've seen days when Mrs. Todhunter looked more like a destroyin' cyclone to me than anything else. And she can tell a hundred shortcomin's on me where I can tell you one on her, so there you are, sub. It's give and take, that's what it is, and you just got to do your best, keep on whistlin' for cheerfulness' sake and stand ready to make a quick duck if things get too stormy, sub!"

Tom Strickland could not help but laugh. "Well, colonel," he responded, "if Mary and I are as happy as you and Mrs. Todhunter I'll be more than satisfied. And I'll try to make her a good husband, I promise you that."

"I know you will, Tom," replied Colonel Todhunter. "And I know Mary'll try to fill her part o' the contract the same way too."

The young man's gaze went nervously past the door through which Mary and her mother had vanished.

"I wonder where they are, colonel?" he ventured apprehensively. "I hope there's nothing serious happenin'."

Colonel Todhunter tugged at his grizzled mustache to keep from smiling openly in Tom's face.

"Don't you worry none about Mary and her mother, sub," he spoke. "They're just havin' a heart to heart talk on the all absorbin' subject of marriage, Tom, and they got to have a good cry while it's goin' on. I bet they've already shed enough briny tears to float a battleship, sub. That's a woman's way at such a time as this. All mothers has got to wail over their daughters then like they was goin' to die 'stead o' gettin' married. But they're all right after that, sub. When Mary and Mrs. Todhunter get through and wipe each other's weepin' eyes they'll show up out here as serene as a summer's day. I reckon it's the

Good Marster's will—they got to do it that way, sub."

At this moment Mrs. Todhunter appeared in the doorway. She went straight to Tom and put both hands on his shoulders and kissed him on the forehead.

"God bless you and make both of you happy, Tom," she said, her voice trembling. "Mary loves you very dearly. You've got to be a good man, Tom, for her sake. You will, too, won't you?"

Mary's sweet face was now in Tom's view from where she stood in the shadowy old hall behind her mother. The young man bowed his head at Mrs. Todhunter's tremulous speech.

"God helping me, I will, Mrs. Todhunter," he replied.

Something very like the dimming of tears came into Colonel Todhunter's eyes at the picture thus presented. But he strove manfully to conceal the fact of such emotion.

"Come out here, Mary," he cried indignantly. "You've been leavin' Tom to face the music alone long enough."

But when Mary Todhunter obeyed the summons her father took her into his arms and pressed his suspiciously quivering lips to her brown hair.

"Ain't you ashamed of yourself, honey," he asked, "for bein' so willin' to leave your mother and me just because that snip of a Tom Strickland wants you? We're goin' to be mighty lonesome without you, daughter."

And then because Mary cried, her

face hidden on his breast, Colonel Todhunter scowled ferociously at Tom.

"It's all your fault, you young rascal," he ejaculated, patting Mary soothingly on the shoulder at the same time. "You had no business wantin' her, and you know it."

At which not one of his three hearers could refrain from laughing, and this was precisely what the colonel desired.

(To Be Continued.)

IN PLATTSMOUTH FORTY YEARS AGO

Items of Interest to Old and New Residents of City Which Were New Forty Years Ago.

Frank White has one eye closed up—suspended sight. It shut up the same day the bank closed, but refused to open Monday morning, because the bank merely closed

for lack of soap; but Frank's eye shut up for winter repairs.

Miss Mary Jones was married to J. H. Wilbur, in Omaha, on the 16th inst., and left for New York City. There's another of our beau ideal girls gone and got married. Well, Miss Mary, we heartily wish you long life and happiness and may your later days in Nebraska be richer and grander and better than the first by many measures of happiness.

Frank Carruth has returned from Indiana with ten pounds of new Hoosier fat on him.

The Great Northwestern Surveying party of Dorrington & Co., have returned, and brought their "har" all back by the skin of their teeth.

Eddie Humphrey, son of Mrs. Geo. Humphrey, formerly of this place, was badly hurt by a train of cars running over his foot, on the Iowa side of the river. He is a telegraph operator there, and was trying to get on the train to deliver a message, when his foot slipped from off the step and he was thrown under the train. Dr. Livingston was sent for, and the boy now lies at Gen. Cunningham's.

We had the pleasure of an introduction to Mr. Geo. O. Manchester, of the B. & M. R. R. in Nebraska, the other day. He says he has been supposed by some to be a mythical personage, because his whereabouts are so various and his belongings hang up in so many different quarters. We beg leave to assure our readers that Mr. Manchester is no myth, but a real pleasant, jolly little fellow, and a live man. If you don't believe this talk business to him ten minutes or so and you will find out. James Wood, esq., also of the B. & M., gave us the above "introduce," and it may be here remarked that although the name may suggest ideas of the sturdy oak, the curly maple, or the fleecy cottonwood, our friend, James, is none of these kind of woods, but paradoxical as it may seem, this Wood is perfect brick—about R. R. biz, anyway.

Pleasant Ridge Sunday school held a picnic on Saturday last in Nick Holmes' grove. Speeches

were made by the Rev. Messrs. Bartle and Arnold. The brass band of Four Mile Creek discoursed some good music, and a bountiful lunch helped to make things pass pleasantly and sociably. After dinner Mr. Mutz and Mr. Gilmory addressed the children a few moments. Over 150 people were there and all enjoyed themselves honestly and heartily. Reports of the Sunday school were then read and everybody went home delighted and pleased with the picnic.

Born—To the house of Johnson—O. F.—(that is all fair) one day last week, a son and heir. This time there is no mistake, and we congratulate Mr. and Mrs. J. with all our heart and mind.

Mr. F. J. Metteer took the first premium at the county fair on the Marsh harvester. This well known machine still continues to be a great favorite with the farmers and Mr. Metteer, by his winning ways managed to sell a great many of them.

The band of death has been heavy in our town for the past week. The little child of Mr. and Mrs. Latham died on Sunday morning, and the body was sent east by the early train.

Mrs. Rickabaugh died on Friday evening and was buried on Sunday last.

We are also pained to notice the death of the infant child of Mr. and Mrs. J. Newton Hayes of Fremont. The child was buried in Plattsmouth on Monday.

Truly has it been a harvest week for the reaper—Death.

County Deputy Joseph McClure organized Three Grove Grange P. of H., with 26 members, at Buck's school house in Mt. Pleasant precinct on Monday evening, April 28, 1873, the officers for the current year are: F. Z. Linnville, master; Richard Pell, overseer; G. F. Shryder, lecturer; William Eikenbary, steward; G. S. Upton, assistant steward; J. S. Upton, treasurer; Henry Wolfe, secretary; David Brinsen, chaplain; Robert Clark, gate keeper; Miss F. E. Brinsen, lady assistant steward; Mrs. Jane Wolfe, ceres; Mrs. C. Hunt, Fomona; Mrs. F. Buck, flora. Regular meetings first and third Saturdays in each month, at 3 o'clock p. m.

One-Fourth Off Buy Oxfords at a Big Discount

IT'S CLEARANCE SALE time and our stock must be cleaned out very promptly. It's time for you to save money by spending it. The more you spend the more you save. Buy oxfords now---buy them for this season, or buy them for next season; you'll make big interest on your money. Men's, women's, boys' misses' and children's Oxfords all come under the discount.

Sale Begins Monday, July 14th

These Prices Tell the Story:

Men's



Men's \$5.00 Oxfords now . . . \$3.75
Men's \$4.00 Oxfords, now . . . \$3.00
Men's \$3.50 Oxfords, now . . . \$2.55

Women's



Women's \$3.50 Oxfords . . . \$2.65
Women's \$3.00 Oxfords . . . \$2.25
Women's \$2.50 Oxfords . . . \$1.90

\$1.00 per pair buys your choice of 213 pairs of Women's Low Shoes that sold up to \$3.60 \$1.00

No goods charged except at regular prices.

FETZERS SHOE STORE

Now buy Oxfords at a big discount