

WHAT ALINE FOUND OUT.

The Great Change It Made in Her Mode of Life.

By BELLE MANIATES. Copyright, 1909, by Associated Literary Press.

Aline looked up from her book as her husband rose from his chair. "I am going to work again tonight," he remarked casually.

A faint flush stole to her cheeks. For the first time in her three months of married life her thoughts were centered on her husband, Stephen Alden.

She accepted Stephen, and three months after her father's death they were married. The home Stephen was able to provide was a very simple one.

Aline was in the listless state that succeeds violent grief and apathetically allowed the house to be run at the will of a succession of slatternly servants.

Three nights before a break in their monotonous life had resulted from Stephen's leaving the house at 7 o'clock and not returning until late.

His excuse of having to work would have passed unnoticed tonight except for the fact that she had been unable to get him by telephone at the office the night before even after repeated calls.

At 10 o'clock she had gone to bed. An hour later she heard him come in and go down the hall to his room. His behavior engrossed her thoughts entirely throughout the following day.

The fact of his spending his evenings out did not disturb her, but she was at a loss to fathom his motive in deserting her. It assailed her conscience and opened her eyes to the truth that she, his wife, did not know him well enough to resent the deception nor to speak to him about the matter.

A newly awakened sense of duty and a feeling that she ought at least to assume the duty of taking some interest in his movements impelled her to attempt to discover where he was spending his evenings.

Therefore, as he was again leaving after dinner, she slipped out a side entrance and followed him at discreet distance. After a walk of nearly two miles she saw him pause in front of a theater.

"Poor Stephen!" she thought. "His evenings must have been dull! No wonder he seeks recreation."

But he turned and went down the side street, entering the theater by the way of the stage door. As a solution of his conduct occurred to her she felt a great heart wrench—the only thing she had felt sure of was taken from her.

Without knowing that she valued his confidence and perfect confidence in his love for her. Instantly she felt a wild—almost an insane—desire to know what manner of woman had attracted him.

It was a vaudeville theater, and she bought a ticket, choosing a seat in an obscure part of the house.

At the end of an hour she learned what she had come to find out and quietly stepped from the theater and returned home. She spent an hour at Stephen's desk and then went to bed.

biggest surprise of all will be that this is all a dream!" "Stephen! But eat your dinner. Then you shall hear them all. You will not go out tonight, Stephen?"

He flushed guiltily. "No, but I will have to telephone." "What for?" "I am going to work again tonight," he remarked casually.

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At the end of an hour she learned what she had come to find out and quietly stepped from the theater and returned home. She spent an hour at Stephen's desk and then went to bed.

She did not get to sleep, but laid out a course of action which she began to follow at breakfast.

"Stephen," she said quietly, "I am not—very well. You know I am not used to staying in the city in the summer."

He looked up quickly, a flush on his face. "I know you are not," he replied.

"Cousin Lois has been anxious for me to pay her a visit ever since father died. I think I will go to her today."

THE COLONEL'S FRIENDS THEIR SUCCESSFUL DESCENT UPON THE TOWN OF FLINTVILLE.

W. R. ROSE, in Cleveland Plain Dealer.

[Nearly half of this story was omitted by mistake in last week's issue, and for that reason we republish it this week in its entirety.]

The girl took the letter from the postmistress. A faint smile fluttered across the latter's wrinkled face.

"It's the right postmark," she said. "I've been to think that maybe he'd quit writin'! But I guess he's one of th' faithful kind."

Elinor turned away. She had no desire to make any comment on this favorable estimate of her correspondent.

She placed the letter carefully in her shopping bag and went up the main street until she came to the road that branched off and ran beside the creek and out among the green fields.

When she was in the shadow of the willows she took out the letter and read it as she slowly paced along.

"My dearest girl," it began, "I have delayed writing for a very good reason. Business has kept me on the jump for the last two weeks. Not the business to which I have been looking forward for five years. I am settling up things here and coming home—coming home to you. Don't think, dearest, that there is anything of great moment that holds me back.

But every little detail must be looked after, and I can't afford to throw away anything that would add to our happiness. I've made a little money out here—not much, you understand—but enough to keep the wolf at a distance. I perhaps have a little over to invest in something safe and reasonably remunerative. Perhaps you may know of an opening in Flintville. Get an option on it if you can. But mind, I'm not going into partnership with Bill Grimes, or Eb Stillman. And I don't want to take an interest in the Higgins House. But there, I must get away from the main point. I'm coming home—for where you are is home—and I've begun to count the hours that intervene. It will seem a long time, but it's not to be the last one. But there must be no delay when I get to Flintville. I've waited too long as it is. Be ready, dearest. I mean to be with you just ten days from the date of this letter. A caller has come into my office. I can see him in the outer room. He comes by appointment. When I am through with him, the last bit that holds me here will be cast. Goodbye for the short time that seems so long.

"Elmer." There were tears in the girl's eyes as she looked around. Then she pressed the letter to her lips. She glanced at the postmark on the envelope. The letter had been on its journey six days. In four days more Elmer Morse would come.

She quickened her steps. There was so much to do in those four short days. No, she would not keep him waiting. A glow of triumph filled her heart. She had not waited in vain. How many times she had been told that she was wasting her years by her constancy. Even her aunt, with whom she lived, had expressed doubts of Elmer's faithfulness. At last she had told Elmer that she would do well to think twice before she let any good chance to marry slip away from her. And there had been chances more than thirty.

John Torrington. It was this middle-aged wooer, sturdy and respected, whom her aunt especially favored. "Don't forget that you are twenty-seven," Elmer's aunt Martha, by way of warning, had said. "But Elmer's heart was not to be shaken in its constancy to her first lover, the lover who declared himself when she was still a schoolgirl and who had gone into the far western wilderness to seek fortune that was to bring them together. He had been offered him by a distant relative. He had eagerly accepted it. He hoped to return in a year at the latest. But fortune was elusive and five years had passed.

"And is Elmer going to stay here?" her aunt asked after she had heard the momentous tidings. "Why, yes," Elmer replied. "Here in Flintville."

"It isn't much of a settling down place for a man who has seen the world," her aunt suggested in her exasperatingly slow way. Elmer flushed.

"That is all understood," she said. "Elmer knows that I would give my consent to leave my old home and my friends and go away among those wild strangers."

"Such things have been done," said her aunt sentimentally as she turned away. Elmer laughed a little scornfully but her heart was troubled.

So the days wore away, and the tenth day from the mailing of the momentous letter came. A telegram from Chicago had reached Elmer the morning of the ninth day. Elmer was on his way according to schedule.

And now she was dressed in her diamond-encrusted gown and waiting on the porch. She had considered the idea of meeting him at the railway station, but the thought of greeting him in the presence of the village idlers was not a pleasant one. He would understand.

It was a little early for the train, but every detail in the simple program of welcome had been arranged. The pretty cottage was swept and garnished; the appetizing luncheon was prepared; and now the gentle Elmer, her heart beating with anticipation, sat on the shaded porch with her expectant gaze on the road along the willows.

And then she saw a group of men—there were five of them—standing by the roadside as if not quite sure of their bearings. Presently they came forward and disappeared behind the high hedge.

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But, no, they were smiling as they halted and drew up in line. And then every hat came off as if at a concerted signal.

It was the youngest man who spoke. "Are you Miss Elinor Barnes?" he asked with a little blush. "Yes," the girl replied from the top step.

The stout man at the left of the line looked around at his companions and nodded. "Good!" he said in a deep voice and with much satisfaction.

The man next to the stout man nudged him sharply. "Harvard's handlin' this, Scotty," he cautioned him.

The youngest man smiled bravely. "What Scotty says is all true, Miss Barnes," he told the girl. "I can never hope to have a better friend than the colonel. And because circumstances brought us close together he has honored me with his confidence. He has told me about you, Miss Barnes. I know how very dear your wishes are to him. I know how willingly he yields to your desire to stay in the East. I know how sacred he holds a promise."

He paused a moment. The girl was intently regarding him. "Go on," she murmured. He glanced about at his companions. "Having given you his promise," the youngest man resumed, "the colonel wasn't the man to tell you what he was sacrificing. That wouldn't be like him. He wouldn't tell you what a foothold he had gained out there and what a power for good he had become and how we all need him. He wouldn't tell you that nature had fitted him for a man of action, a pioneer, a builder, a leader of men. He never hinted that the confines of this little town would be to him like prison bars. And, of course, he didn't tell you that he wanted him for our governor, that our State needs him, and that he's the only man the friends of reform can elect."

He paused and drew a quick breath. The girl was softly crying. Somehow the words of this earnest young stranger had hit her, and yet they filled her with pride.

The stout man looked at her and then he quickly turned to the youngest man. "Every word you say is true, Harvard," he muttered, "but you don't need to be so dramatic about it."

And after that he did not look at the girl, but turned his gaze across the sunny fields. "It was because Elmer Morse would not tell you these things," the youngest man went on, "that we are here. We want you to know the truth. We love the colonel and we need him. We have come here to ask you to give him back to us. And we want you, too."

He paused again. The girl had turned away and was looking toward the roadway. "And then without a word she flattered down the steps and the pathway and disappeared behind the hedge at the roadside."

"The colonel has come," said Scotty. "You should have talked faster, Harvard," said the second man. "You said it beautiful," added the first man, but I dunno as 'twas right to make the girl cry."

"If you'd said another blamed word," put in the fourth man, "you'd had me sniffin', too."

Scotty looked at the younger man anxiously. "What do you think, Harvard?" The youngest man refused to venture any opinion. "You can tell as well as I can," he said.

"It looks pretty dubious to me," Scotty muttered. "Here they come," said the second man in a hoarse whisper. "Brace up!" Up the pathway came the tall colonel and the girl.



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