

IN A RYE FIELD.

By B. W. E.

(Continued from last Sunday)

"I should say he must preserve his honor even if he sacrifices happiness to do it, and—"

"Why, Pauline, you do not love me; I did not think I was mistaken. O, my dear one, do not force me to leave you, but tell me that you care for me."

"Howard, you know I love you, but I cannot have you stay. I do not listen to the dictates of my heart when I say you must go, but I think of the future, your future, and I prove my affection for you when I say I give you up. The noblest, most God-like love is unselfish and 'seeketh not its own.' If you return to the girl whose right place is by your side, I do not doubt that in a few years, with the aid of influential friends, you will attain eminence in your profession and some day you may be happy; no, do not interrupt me; but should you marry me, poor and unknown, your future would be blasted and we both would be dissatisfied and unhappy. No, Howard, it is best for you to go."

"My Pauline, this is hard, but I vowed to abide by your decision, knowing that it could not be other than faultless; but promise me that if you ever need the services of a faithful friend, you will let me know. Will you promise me this?"

"Yes, Howard, and I will exact a promise of you in return. Will you always keep the secret of your love for me locked close within your bosom and make your wife a kind good husband?"

"Pauline, that is a hard thing to ask of me. Remember, dearest, I am only a poor, weak man."

"Yes, Howard, I know that we can do nothing of ourselves, but with God's assistance all things are possible; promise me."

"I will try, my noble Pauline."

There was a smile on her lips now, as she put her hand on his arm and said:

"Thank you, Howard. And now, before we part, I wish to tell you that you have made me very, very happy. Before you came, I was, dissatisfied with my quiet, monotonous life, though I tried to conceal it from grandfather, as it would have made him unhappy; but now, I would be satisfied any where, loving you as I do and knowing that you love me."

He pressed his little hand to his lips, as he exclaimed:

"O, my beloved, why are the decrees of Fate so inexorable?"

They were standing near the spot where first they met.

How the current of their lives had been turned from its course in these few weeks. It is getting dusk and Pauline exclaims:

"I must go, dear Howard, for grandfather will be lonely. Tell me good-bye now."

She gave him her hand, then turned to go, but he put his arm around the slender form, pressed one kiss upon her brow and said:

"Dearest, as you return to the house sing for me the song you were singing when first I saw you."

The sob rose in her throat, but she must grant this, his last request so she tries to sing:

"If a body meet a body
Coming thro' the rye;
If a body kiss a body
Need a body cry."

The voice dies away in the distance and the man, as he watches the little figure, feels that life's cup contains only bitterness for him. The next morning he was on his way before Pauline awoke.

Ten years have passed since Howard Rochester sacrificed love and happiness to honor and he has been ever faithful to the promise made Pauline. His wife repaid his kindness with her love, for she was not so heartless as he had once thought. But now she has been dead a year and he comes back to Pauline, full of bright anticipations for he has done his duty and he will receive his reward. They will be so happy together. He approaches the house where he spent some happy weeks years ago and he wonders if Pauline, now his Pauline, will be very much surprised to see him. But as he enters the gate he sees an old man sitting in the yard. It is not Mr. Rivers; it is some one whom he has never seen before. The old man looks up and Rochester inquires:

"Can you tell me if Mr. Rivers is at home?"

"Mr. Rivers! Why, you must be a stranger in these parts, but even if you are, perhaps you would like to hear his story, so I'll tell you. I used to live three miles from here and sometimes of an evening I'd come over to see old man Rivers and have a talk about the crops. He want' none of our kind and we all knowed it, but a better, kinder man never lived. When any of us was in trouble or sick, old Mr. Riv-

ers was the first one to help us out. Well, he was struck down with fever, and that grand-darter of his—but I forgot, I ain't got words to describe her neither. If there ever was an angel on this airth, Miss Pauline Rivers was that one; she was too good for this world what there's so much trouble. Well, as I was a-sayin', the old man was took sick one night and Miss Pauline jumped on her horse and come over for me. Now, that wasn't a man in all this country that wouldn't a died to serve her, so I saddled my old mare in a jiffy and I rode home with her. When we got that the old man was unconscious, and I did every thing I could for him, but it didn't do no good. He lay in a stupor for three days, and my old woman come over to help nuss him, out I guess it was his time to go. The fourth day he opened his eyes and called Miss Pauline. She come and kneeled down by the bed and asked her grandpa if he wanted anything. 'Nuthin' but you,' he said, as he looked at her, his eyes a-shinin' with love. 'Darlin', I'm going home, and I'm glad to go, but for fearin' you. I aint a-goin' to worry 'bout that though, for the Lord ain't never let us suffer yet, and I know he'll take care of my lamb.' Miss Pauline looked like 'twould kill her when he talked this way, and she throwed her arms around his neck. Her grandpa looked at her and smiled, then his lids dropped and we knowed he was dead. Well, to cut my story short, Miss Pauline took on dreadful. She wouldn't eat nuthin' hardly and didn't notice nuthin' for a long time, but arter a while she got better and would take care of things round the house. We wanted her to stay with us, but she would live in her grandpa's house, and that's the worst thing she could a-done, for she was so lonesome, she jist pined away and died."

The narrator ceased to wipe away the tears that were chasing each other down his cheeks, and Rochester started as if he had received his death blow. Indeed, such it seemed to him, for had he not looked forward to meeting her for weeks, and now—

"Yes, sir, she died a year from the day her grandpa left her," the old man continued, "and the last thing she said was, 'Mr. Forrest, (that's my name, sir,) you've been kind to us and I leave you the old place, and I want you to do one thing for me arter I'm gone. Here's a note (treasurin' under her pillow and takin' out a letter) that I want you to send to Mr. Rochester."

The old man was looking away towards the fields of waving grain and did not perceive the eager expression upon the face of his auditor, of whose existence he seemed oblivious. Impatient of delay, Rochester said:

"Well, what did you do with the note?"

The old man turned quickly. "Scuse me, sir," he said, "my thoughts was wanderin'. The note? O, yes, Well, Miss Pauline give it to my wife and told her to send it. She died about four years ago and I never thought no more about it till the other day I was a-lookin' in her old trunk and found it and I 'low to put it in the office the first time I ride over thar, and—"

"No, give it to me; give it to me," Rochester said, excitedly. The old man looked up in surprise and inquired:

"Why, are you Mr. Rochester?"

"Yes, yes, give me the note!"

The old man entered the house and soon re-appeared with an envelope which he put in Rochester's hand, saying:

"Poor man, I'm sorry you haint had it afore."

Rochester dropped some money in the man's hand and turned away, a sob rising in his throat. He hastily tore open the note and read:

"My dear Howard:
The hand that pens these lines will soon be stiff and cold, and the soul will be freed from its prison-house. I can not die without telling you that I love you still and am glad I can be where I can watch over you, and perhaps the dear Father will let me be your guardian angel. It would have been sweet if we could have been together here, but we will be happier through eternity for the sacrifice. I believe our souls will be united beyond the skies, for God says, 'There will be no marriage nor giving in marriage there.' My and grows weaker, so I will say good-bye till you come. I will be the first to greet you at the beautiful gates. Do not grieve for me, because I will be happy there, waiting and watching for you, and we will be united at Jesus' feet, never to part."

"PAULINE."
He was walking in the rye field where first he saw her. Just yonder he was standing when she came tripping up. He can almost see the dainty, graceful figure, clad in the flowing white robes, and the wind seems to waft the sound of the sweet voice to him as she sings:

"If a body meet a body
Coming thro' the rye,
If a body kiss a body
Need a body cry."

He reviews memory's tablet a second time and sees the same figure at his side. The blue eyes are looking earnestly into his, as he tells her the story of his life and asks her decision as to what he shall do. She says they must part, and he asks for the song before he goes.

"If a body meet a body
Coming thro' the rye,
If a body kiss a body
Need a body cry."

He can almost see her. And now the third time he is here, but alone. The rye seems to murmur as the winds bend it to and fro:

"If a body meet a body
Coming thro' the rye,
If a body kiss a body
Need a body cry."

Then the evening breezes bear the echoes away and leave the man alone with his sorrow.

[THE END.]
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