

(Copyright, by the Bobbs-Merrill Company.) CHAPTER XI.

She Orders Her Life.

That was the beginning of Prudence's golden summer. She was not given to self-analysis. She hadn't the time. She took things as they came. She could not bear the thought of sharing with the parsonage family even the least ardent and most prosaic of Jerrold's letters. But she never asked his skill and courage. herself the reason. The days when Jerry came were tremulously happy ones for her-she was all aquiver when she heard him swinging briskly up the



Side by Side Talking in Whispers.

ramshackle parsonage walk, and her breath was suffocatingly hot. But she took it as a matter of course. She knew that Jerry's voice was the sweetest voice in the world. She knew that his eyes were the softest and brightest and the most tender. She knew that his hands had a thrilling touch quite different from the touch of ordinary, less dear hands. She knew that his smile lifted her into a delirium of delight. Prudence never thought of that. She just lived in the sweet ecstatic dream of the summer, and was well and richly content.

So the vacation passed and Indian summer came,

It was Saturday evening. The early supper at the parsonage was over, the twins had washed the dishes, and still the daylight lingered. Prudence and Jerry sat side by side, and closely, on the front porch, talking in whispers. Fairy had gone for a stroll with the still faithful Babbie. Connie and the twins had evidently vanished. Ahnot quite that! Carol and Lark came swiftly around the corner of the par-

"Good evening," said Lark politely, and Prudence sat up abruptly. The twins never wasted politeness! They wanted something.

"Do you mind if we take Jerry around by the woodshed for a few minutes, Prue?"

Prudence sniffed suspiciously. "What are you going to do to him?" she demanded.

"We won't hurt him," grinned Carol impishly.

"Maybe he's afraid to come," said Lark, "for there are two of us, and we are mighty men of valor."

"That's all right," Prudence answered defensively. "I'd sooner face a tribe of wild Indians any day than you twins when you are mischief-bent."

"Oh, we just want to use him a few minutes," said Carol impatiently. "Upon our honor, as Christian gentlemen, we promise not to hurt a hair of

his head." "Oh, come along, and cut out the comedy," Jerry broke in, laughing,

Then the twins led him to the woodshed. Close beside the shed grew a tall and luxuriant maple.

"Do you see this board?" began

Lark, exhibiting with some pride a

J. M. Broughton, Jr., has been chosen President of the Raleigh Chamber of Commerce to succeed John A. Park. she deserves."

Miss Jeannette Rankin, the woman Congressman from Montana, is billed to speak in Fayetteville some time in the spring.

gorgeous place up in the old tree where out of bed. we can make a seat. We thought you could nail this on to the limbs-there what dandy big nails we have!"

pose," he suggested, smiling.

"Oh, they are quite rusty. We found then in the scrap heap. We're very good friends with the Averys, very good, indeed," she continued hastily. They allow us to rummage around at will-in the barn."

"And see this rope," cried Carol. 'Isn't it a dandy?"

"Ah! The Avery barn must be inexhaustible in its resources."

"How suspicious you are, Jerry," mourned Lark. "We thought when you had the board nailed on, you might rope it to the limbs above. Do you suppose you can do that, Jerry?"

"Well, let's begin. Now, observe! I loop this end of the rope lightly about my-er-middle. The other end will dangle on the ground to be drawn up at will. I bestow the good but rusty nails in this pocket, and the hammer here. Then with the admirable board beneath my arm, I mount-"

And Jerry smiled as he heard the faithful twins, with much grunting and an occasional groan, following in his wake.

It was a delightful location, as they had said. The board fitted nicely on the two limbs, and Jerry fastened it with the rusty nails. The twins were jubilant and loud in their praises of

"Oh, Jerry!" exclaimed Carol, with deep satisfaction, "it's such a blessing to discover something really nice about you after all these months!" "Now, we'll just-"

"Hush!" hissed Lark. "Here comes Connie. Hold your breath, Jerry, and don't budge."

"Isn't she in on this?" he whispered. He could hear Connie making weird noises as she came around the house from the front. She was learning to whistle, and the effect was ghastly in the extreme. Connie's mouth had not been designed for whistling.

"Sh! She's the band of dark-browed gypsies trying to steal my lovely wife." "I'm the lovely wife," interrupted Carol, complacently.

"But Connie does not know about it. She is so religious she won't be any of the villain parts."

the parsonage, out the back walk be ise, Jerry, that you will never tell him her sister's solemn back. neath the maple. Then she gave a gleeful scream. Right before her lay a beautiful heavy rope. Connie had been yearning for a good rope to make a swing. Here it lay, at her very feet, never know. Oh, Jerry! I can't bear morning. Why, what is the matter?" saw before her, and started violently back around the house with it, yelling: 'Prudence! Look at my rope!"

there was a terrific tug and heave of heart? We can settle this later on." the limb beside them, and then-a crashing of branches and leaves. Jerry was gone!

It did look horrible, from above as well as below. But Jerry, when he felt the first light twinge as Connie lifted and was ready for it. As he went down, he grabbed a firm hold on the branch I know it. I am crazy today." on which he had stood, then he dropped to the next, and held again. On the lowest limb he really clung for fifteen seconds, and took in his bearings. Connie had dropped the rope when the twins screamed, so he had nothing more to fear from her. He saw Prudence, white, with wild eyes, both arms stretched out toward him.

"O. K., Prue," he called, and then he dropped. He landed on his feet, a little jolted, but none the worse for his fall.

He ran at once to Prudence. "I'm all right," he cried, really alarmed by the white horror in her face. "Prudence! Prudence!" Then her arms dropped, and with a brave but feeble smile, she swayed a little. Jerry took her in his arms. "Sweetheart!" he whispered. "Little sweetheart! Dodo you love me so much, dearest?"

Prudence raised her hands to his and to marry me. I told him about it face, and looked intensely into his myself, long ago. And he was perfecteyes, all the sweet loving soul of her ly willing. He didn't say a word shining in her own. And Jerry kissed against it."

maple, speechless and cold with terror, what would the girls say if I should are you talking about? and saw Prudence and Jerry! Then go back on them? They have trusted they saw Connie, staring at them with me, always. If I fail them, will they interest and amusement.

three of us," declared Lark sturdily. But her arm tightened about his neck. And they set off heroically around the "I'll wait here until you get your and there's no time to waste in a par- chose this gift for you long before I house. But at the corner Carol things, and we can-say goodby. And

"Take my advice and go into the erys are looking out of their windows." on ordering me away from the bouse it!" Prudence did not hear, but he drew like this, I can only go. Buther swiftly to the darkest corner of the side porch-and history repeated R-

self once more!

At twelve, Jerry went upstairs to bed, his lips tingling with the fervent with his suitcase, his face was white tenderness of her parting kiss. He and strained. stood at his window, looking soberly out into the moonlit parsonage yard. "Jerry," she whispered. "I want to tell ghastly. And she can't talk about it "She is an angel, a pure, sweet, unself- you that I love you so much that-I yet, so be careful what you say, will dence kissed it passionately, many ish little angel," he whispered, and his could go away with you, and never see you?" voice was broken, and his eyes were any of them any more, or papa, or the wet, "and she is going to be my wife! parsonage, and still feel rich, if I just Oh, God, teach me how to be good to had you! You-everything in me seems

At two o'clock, thinking again the against his. soft shy words she had whispered to him, he dropped lightly asleep and folly. But I can't make you see it. It dreamed of her. With the first pale is wrong, it is wickedly wrong, but-" streaks of daylight stealing into his But I am all they have, Jerry, androom he awoke. It was after four I promised."

solid board about two feet in length. o'clock. A little later-just a few min-Well, we found this over by the Av- utes later -- he heard a light tap on his ery barn. We've found a perfectly door. It came again, and he bounded

"Prudence! Is anything wrong?"

"Hush, Jerry, not so loud!" And are two right near each other, evident- what a strange and weary voice, "Come ly put there on purpose for us. See downstairs, will you? I want to tell you something. I'll wait at the foot "From the Avery's woodshed, I sup- of the stairs. Be quiet-do not wake father and the girls. Will you be down soon?"

"In two minutes!"

And in two minutes he was down, agonizingly anxious, knowing that something was wrong. Prudence was waiting for him, and as he reached the bottom step she clutched his hands desperately.

"Jerry," she whispered. "I-forgive me-I honestly- Oh, I didn't think what I was saying last night. You were so dear, and I was so happy, and for a while I really believed we could belong to each other. But I can't, you know. I've promised papa and the girls a dozen times that I would never marry. Don't you see how it is? I must take it back."

Jerry smiled a little, it must be admitted. This was so like his conscientious little Prudence!

"Dearest," he said gently. "You love me. Your father would never allow you to sacrifice yourself like that. The girls would not hear of it. They want you to be happy. And you can't be happy without me, can you?"

Suddenly she crushed close to him. "Oh, Jerry," she sobbed, "I will never be happy again, I know. But-it is right for me to stay here and be the mother in the parsonage. It is wicked of me to want you more than all of them. Don't you see it is? They "Whenever You Send, I Will Come." haven't any mother. They haven't anyone but me. Of course, they would such horrible wrong. "Good-by, sweetnot allow it, but they will not know heart. Remember, I will be waiting. anything about it. I must do it my- Whenever you send, I will come." self. And father especially must He stepped outside, and closed the never know. I want you to go away door. Prudence stood motionless, her this morning before breakfast and hands clenched, until she could no -never come again."

but her voice did not falter. "And you face downward, until she heard Fairy must not write to me any more. For, moving in her room upstairs. Then she oh, Jerry, if I see you again I can went into the kitchen and built the fire never let you go, I know it. Will you for breakfast. do this for me?"

"You are nervous and excited," he said tenderly. "Let's wait until after breakfast. Then we'll talk it all over with your father, and it shall be as he says. Won't that be better?"

one word."

will let you tell him."

thought of it."

"Sit here in my lap." Put your head Prudence rushed around the parson- your face a little. You're feverish. You get out of this, and I will-" ige. The twins shrieked wildly, as are sick. Go to bed, won't you, sweet-

not let you go at all!"

"Do you mean you want me to get my things and go right now?"

"Yes." She buried her face in his His door is open." shoulder. "If-if you stay in your the rope, foresaw what was coming room until breakfast time I will lock back was presented to view once more, moment's notice.

> "Don't you think you owe me some thing, as well as your father and sisters? Didn't God bring us together. and make us love each other? Don't mittal, "When is he coming back?" you think he intended us for each oth-

er? Do you wish you had never met me?" "Jerry!" "Then, sweetheart, be reasonable Your father loved your mother, and married her. That is God's plan for all of us. You have been a wonderfully

to take your place now." "Fairy's going to be a professor, and have a little tact." -the girls do not mind her very well, And she isn't as much comfort to father as I am. It's just because I am most like mother, you see. But any-

how, I promised. I can't leave them." "Your father expects you to marry You mind me, or I will tell papa."

"Of course he wouldn't. That's just no more. They are crazy." The twins scrambled down from the like father. But still, I promised. And ever trust anybody else? If you love "I think we'd better go to bed, all me, Jerry, please go, and stay away."

> den't forget your promise." "Oh, very well, Prudence," he au-

"Let's not talk any more about it, Jerry. Please. I'll wait until you come

When he came down a little later,

She put her arms around his neck.

her, and help me make her as happy as to be all yours. I-love you." Her tremulous lips were pressed

"Oh, sweetheart, this is folly, all

ways be just the same. God intended you for me, I know, and-I'll be wait-

"Jerry ! Jerry ! Jerry !" she whispered dows. passionately, sobbing, quivering in his arms. It was he who drew away.

"Good-by, sweetheart," he said quietly, great pity in his heart for the girl ly do not want to talk about it. Oh, who in her desire to do right was doing



longer hear his footsteps. Then she She clung to him as she said this, dropped on the floor, and lay there,

CHAPTER XII.

She Comes to Grief.

Fairy was one of those buoyant, warm-blooded girls to whom sleep is "Oh, no. For father will say what- indeed the great restorer. Now she ever he thinks will make me happy. He stood in the kitchen door, tall, cheeks Connie came around the corner of must not know a thing about it. Prom- glowing, eyes sparkling, and smiled at

"You are the little mousey, Prue," "I promise, of course, Prudence. 1 she said, in her full rich voice. "I didn't hear you come to bed last night, Why are you staying away?" But she shook her head. "He will and I didn't hear you getting out this plainly a gift of the gods. She did not to think of never seeing you again, For Prudence had turned her face towait to see where the other end of the and never getting letters from you, and ward her sister, and it was so white rope was. She just grabbed what she it seems to kill me inside, just the and so unnatural that Fairy was shocked.

"Prudence! You are sick! Go to on my shoulder, like that. Let me rut bed and let me get breakfast. Here,

"There's nothing the matter with me. I had a headache, and did not sleep, make her see it. And she made me "You must go right away, or I can but I am all right now. Are the girls promise not to tell." up yet?"

> Fairy eyed her suspiciously. "Jerry is out unusually early, too, isn't he?

you in, so you cannot leave me again. and Prudence was stirring the oatmeal with vicious energy. "He left early were puzzled and exasperated. They this morning-I suppose he is half-way went to the parsonage, determined to to Des Moines by now."

"Oh!" Fairy's voice was noncom-"He isn't coming back. Please

oatmeal is ready." Fairy went soberly up the stairs,,

ostensibly to call her sisters. the door of their room behind her. "Jerry has gone, and isn't coming back before Connie pulled him down, but brave and sweet daughter and sister, any more. And for goodness' sake, we've fixed it ourselves, and it is simdon't keep asking questions about it. ply grand. You can go up and swing I know. But surely Fairy is old enough

"A lovers' quarrel," suggested Lark, her eyes glittered greedily.

"Nothing of the sort. And don't keep staring at Prue, either. And do not keep talking about Jerry all the time.

"That's funny," said Carol thoughtfully. "We saw them kissing each other long as you live, twins! Mind what like mad in the back yard last night- I say!" and this morning he has gone to return

Carol explained, and Fairy looked still more thoughtful and perturbed. to them in a loud and breezy voice: with it, and she read that first. "Hurry, girls, for breakfast is ready, sonage on Sunday morning." Then she had the right to do it. I was keeping added in a whisper, "And don't you it until the proper moment. But the mention Jerry, and don't ask Prudence moment came, and went again. Still woodshed," she called, "for all the Av- swered, half irritably, "if you insist what makes her so pale, or you'll catch I want y u to have the gift. Please

> "Breakfast is ready, p pa," she called be, even though I myself am banished, clearly. She turned the knob softly, I love you, Prudence. Whenever you and peeped in. "May I come in a min- send for me, I am ready to come. Enute?" Standing close beside him, she tirely and always yours, Jerry," told him all she knew of what had happened.

"Prudence is ghastly, father, just And it was due to Fairy's kindly ad-

monitions that the parsonage family downstairs to where the rest of the

bitter winter, when the brightest sunshine was cheerless and dreary, and when even the laughter of her sisters you think it is all right for me to wear smote harshly upon her ears. She tried it, father?" to be as always, but in her eyes the wounded look lingered, and her face through the little group. grew so pale and thin that her father "Yes, indeed," declared her father,

"Whenever you want me, Prudence, and Fairy, anxiously watching, were just send. I'll never change. I'll al- filled with grave concern. She remained almost constantly in the parsonage, reading very little, sitting most of her leisure time staring out the win-

Fairy had tried to win her confidence, and had failed.

"You are a 'arling, Fairy, but I realno, indeed, it is all my own fault. I told him to go, and not come again. No, you are wrong, Fairy, I do not regret it. I do not want him to come any more."

Mr. Starr, too, had tried. "Prudence," he said gently, "you know very often men do things that to women seem wrong and wicked. And maybe they are! But men and women are different by nature, my dear, and we must remember that. I have satisfied myself that Jerry is good, and clean, and manly. I do not think you should let any foolishness of his in the past come between you now."

"You are mistaken, father. Jerry is all right, and always was, I am sure. It is nothing like that. I told him to go, and not to come again. That is

"But if he should come back now-" "It would be just the same. Don't worry about it, father. It's all right." "Prudence," he said, more tenderly, "we have been the closest of friends and companions, you and I, from the very beginning. Always you have come to me with your troubles and worries. Have I ever failed you? Why, then, do you go back on me now, when you really need me?"

Prudence patted his shoulder affectionately, but her eyes did not meet his. "I do not really need you now, father. It is all settled, and I am quite satisfied. Things are all right with me just as they are."

Then he took a serious step, without her knowledge. He went to Des Moines, and had a visit with Jerry. He found him thinner, his face sterner, his eyes darker. When the office boy announced "Mr. Starr," Jerry ran quickly out to greet him.

"Is she all right?" he cried eagerly, almost before he was within hailing

Mr. Starr did not mince matters. "Jerry," he said abruptly, "did you and Prudence have a quarrel? She declines to tell me anything about it, and after the conversations you and I have had, I think I have a right to know what has happened."

"Does she miss me? Does she seem sorry that I am away? Does-" His voice was so boyish and so eager there was no mistaking his attitude toward Prudence.

"Look here, Jerry, I want to know.

"Won't Prudence tell you?"

"No." "Then I cannot. She made me promise not to tell you a word. But it is not my fault, Mr. Starr. I can tell you that. It is nothing I have done or said. She sent me away because she thinks it was right for her to do so, and-you know Prudence! It is wrong, I know. I knew it all the time. But I couldn't

In the end Mr. Starr went back to the parsonage no wiser than he left, save that he now knew that Jerry was really not to blame, and that he held "Jerry has gone, Fairy." Prudence's himself ready to return to her on a

The Ladies of the Methodist church "find out what's what." But when they sat with Prudence, and looked at the frail, pathetic little figure, with the mournful eyes-they could only sigh hurry, Fairy, and call the others. The with her and go their ways.

The twins continued to play in the great maple, even when the leaves were fallen. "It's a dandy place, I "Girls," she began, carefully closing tell you, Prudence," cried Carol. "Jerry didn't have time to put up the rope Just eat your breakfast as usual, and any time you like-unless your joints are too stiff! It's a very serious matter getting up there-for stiff joints, of course, I mean. Lark and I get up easy enough."

For a moment Prudence sat silent with quivering lips. Then she burst out with unusual passion, "Don't you ever dare climb that tree again as

Lark looked thoughtfully out of the window, and Carol swallowed hard. "Kissing! In the back yard! What It was she who said gently, "Why, of course, Prue-just as you say."

On the day before Christmas an insured package was delivered at the She opened the door, and called out parsonage for Prudence. A letter was

"My dearest little sweetheart: I wear it, for my sake, for I shall be Then she went to her father's door. happy knowing it is where it ought to

> With trembling fingers she opened the little package. It contained a ring, with a brilliant diamond flashing myriad colors before her eyes. And Prutimes.

Two hours later, she went quietly took the departure of Jerry so calmly. family were decorating a Christmas That was the beginning of Prudence's tree. She showed the ring to them gravely.

"Jerry sent it to me," she said, "Do

A thrill of hopeful expectancy ran

"How beautiful it is! Is Jerry coming

to spend Christmas with us?" "Why, no, father-he is not coming at all any more. I thought you under-

stood that." An awkward silence, and Carol came brightly to the rescue. "It certainly is a beauty! I thought it was very kind of Professor Duckie to send Lark and me a five-pound box of chocolates, but of course this is ever so much nicer. Jerry's a bird, I say."

"A bird!" mocked Fairy. "Such language."

Lark came to her twin's defense, "Yes, a bird-that's just what he is." Carol smiled. "We saw him use his wings when Connie yanked him out of the big maple, didn't we, Lark?" Then, "Did you send him anything, Prue?"

Prudence hesitated, and answered without the slightest accession of color, "Yes, Carol. I had my picture taken when I was in Burlington, and sent it to him."

"Your picture! Oh, Prudence! Where are they? Aren't you going to give us one?"

"No, Carol. I had only one madefor Jerry. There aren't any more." "Well," sighed Lark resignedly. "It's

a pretty idea for my book, anyhow."

From that day on Prudence always wore the sparkling ring-and the women of the Methodist church nearly had mental paralysis marveling over a man who gave a diamond ring and never came a-wooing! And a girl who accepted and wore his offering, with nothing to say for the man! And it was the consensus of opinion in Mount Mark that modern lovers were mostly crazy, anyhow!

And springtime came again.

Now the twins were always original in their amusements. They never followed blindly after the dictates of custom. And when other girls played "catch" with dainty rubber balls, the twins took unto themselves a big and



And Springtime Came Again.

heavy croquet ball-found in the Avery woodshed. To be sure, it stung and bruised their hands. What matter? At any rate, they continued endangering their lives and beauties by reckless pitching of the ungainly plaything.

One Friday evening after school they were amusing themselves on the parsonage lawn with this huge ball. When their father turned in, they ran

up to him with a sporting proposition. "Bet you a nickel, papa," cried Carol, "that you can't throw this ball as far as the schoolhouse woodshed!-By the way, will you lend me a nickel, papa?

He took the ball and weighed it lightly in his hand. "I'm an anti-betting society," he declared, laughing, "but I very strongly believe it will carry to the schoolhouse woodshed. If it does not, I'll give you five cents' worth of candy tomorrow. And if it does, you shall put an extra nickel in the collection next Sunday."

Then he drew back his arm and carefully sighted across the lawn. "I'll send it right between the corner of the house and that little cedar," he said. and then, bending low, it whizzed from his hand.

Lark screamed, and Carol sank fainting to the ground. For an instant Mr. Starr himself stood swaying. Then he rushed across the lawn. For Prudence had opened the front door and stepped quickly out on the walk by the corner of the house. The heavy ball struck her on the forehead and she fell heavily, without a moan.

(Continued next Tuesday.)

MOTHER SUPERIOR

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