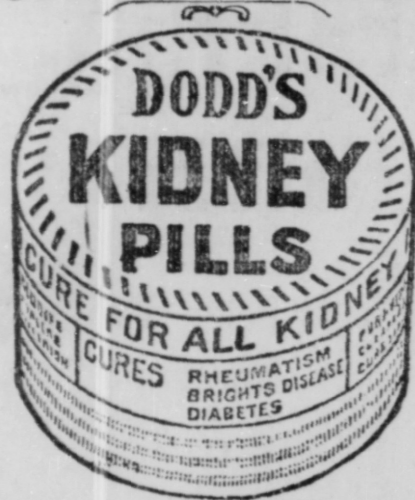


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FIVE YEARS.

BY OPIE READ

CHAPTER III.

Five years do not elapse every day, but they elapse every five years. Along dreary time of anxious and waiting hearts, if they be anxious and waiting, but anxiety has been known to wear away, and what was once painful waiting sometimes becomes a condition of easy endurance. Charles returned. He had seen much of the world and had collected a few dollars.

"So you have a lover at home, eh?" a miner had said to him.

"Yes, a sort of lover," he replied. "A good enough country girl, easily surprised and somewhat verdant. I used to think a great deal of her, but I was a boy, you know."

"Your old lover will soon be home, won't he, Ermance?" a young lady asked of the girl whose head resembled a patch of jute.

"I suppose so, but why do you refer to him as my lover?"

"Why, I thought that you were engaged!"

"Oh we were in a childish sort of way, but I have put that all aside. Father had more sense than both of us."

Charles did not rush over to the colonel's immediately after returning. Ermance, when she heard that he had returned, went away on a visit. The young man felt ashamed of himself. He knew not what excuse to make, but one day grasping all the courage within reach, he went over to the colonel's, wondering as he went how he could have been so foolish years ago.

"Why, my dear sir," exclaimed the colonel, "I am glad to see you. You've got enough beard to disguise an ordinary man, but you are not ordinary. Little above fair to middlin, as the cotton men say."

"I am glad to see you again, colonel. How's your rheumatism?"

"It got well immediately after that garden scene."

"Foolish children," replied Charles.

"Well, I should say so," replied the colonel.

"How is, er—Miss Harlyman?"

"Quite well, I believe. She went over to Ralston's a few days ago. I sent the buggy after her this morning. I hear her now. Yes, my rheumatism is all right. First rate, for—Ermance, here a minute. Do you know this gentleman?"

"I think so," replied the young lady, advancing without embarrassment and extending her hand. "How is your health, Mr. Wexall?"

"Never better, thank you."

"Well," said the colonel, "you must excuse me, as I have business out on the farm. Ermance, our friend must stay to dinner."

An awkward silence followed. Charles knew not what to say nor how to say it; Ermance was embarrassed because she knew not how to express the nothing which she had to say.

"Have you been at home all the time

Happy, healthy childhood! Every childless woman feels a tugging at her heart-strings when she sees another woman's happy, healthy rollicking baby. Motherhood is woman's supreme duty and her supremest happiness. Even in childhood she shows how deeply this sentiment is implanted in her breast when she plays with her dolls. There are thousands of otherwise happy wives in this world who only lack the thrilling touch of a first-born's fingers to complete their happiness.

Every wife may be the mother of happy, robust children who will. Thousands of women who had lived years of cheerless, childless wedded life, or whose babies have been born to them weak and sickly, soon to die, are now happy mothers of healthy children, and bless Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription for the wonders it has accomplished for them. This great medicine acts directly and only on the delicate and important organs that bear the burden of maternity. It makes them strong, healthy, vigorous and elastic. It allays inflammation, heals ulceration, and tones and strengthens the nerves. It banishes the discomforts of the expectant months and makes baby's advent easy and almost painless. It insures a healthy child and an ample supply of nourishment. Honest dealers will not offer worthless substitutes for the sake of a little added profit.

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DR. AYEPS

since I saw you last?" Charles asked, after making several efforts to break the silence.

"Oh, no; I spent three years at a seminary."

"Enjoyed yourself pretty well, I suppose?"

"Very much. I soon became interested in my studies."

Another embarrassing silence. "Ermance—I suppose I may call you by that?"

"Of course. We were children together."

"So we were, and foolish children, too, doubtless."

"Yes," she replied, without hesitation. "Father was wiser than we."

The situation was no longer awkward. "I thought I loved you, Ermance."

"And I thought that I loved you."

"Childish fancy. You don't know what a heavy weight you have lifted from my mind. I don't love you."

"Charles," she replied, her eyes shining with fervent light, "you make me happy. I have long regretted our engagement, and to know that a perfect understanding is painless to you thrills me. Let us be friends. Here's father."

"Ah, hah!" said the old gentleman. "Found that some one else had attended to my business. Are you folks still engaged?"

"No," replied Charles. "We are friends, but not lovers."

"Ah, hah!" said the old man, "suppose I had allowed you to marry? Don't you see that a man sometimes has more sense than a boy? Now you and Ermance are friends. If you had married five years ago, you would now in all probability be enemies. Well, Charles,

you need feel no hesitancy in remaining to dinner. We generally have something lying around, and you may come over and eat when you feel like it. Why, Ermance, I never saw you so happy."

CHAPTER IV. Neighborly visits were kept up between the Harleys and Wexalls. Charles and Ermance rarely referred to their childish freak of affection, and when they did so it was merely to congratulate themselves. "How many marriages result in disaster," said Charles, one evening as he and Ermance walked in the garden. "Five years ago I thought that your father was the cruellest of men; now I think he is one of the wisest."

"Yes, he is undoubtedly a man of fine sense."

"Did he ever say anything, during my absence, to dissuade you from our purpose?"

"No; he always spoke in a way directly opposite. Often, at night, when I went into the library to attend upon his wants—an office which none but I could discharge, he would stroke my hair while I sat on the footstool and tell me of the duties of a wife—how I should always love you and how noble you were. He never made fun of me, and at first, when I used to sit alone, and—and—weep, he would come to me and tell me how I was loved, and how happy I should be for having won a heart so—so—unchangeable."

"Ermance, this is the spot where we stood five years ago."

"Yes. How chill the air is."

"I think there will be frost tonight," he replied. "By the way, my dear friend, I am going back to the mines. I long to meet those strong and simple fellows. I have become strangely attached to them."

"When are you going?"

"Tomorrow."

"Then I know there will be frost tonight. He caught her in his arms. The yellow hair fell over his shoulder. "Angel, I cannot help loving you. I have struggled, but in vain. Let us go to your father."

CHAPTER V. "Come in," said the old gentleman, looking up from a mass of paper. "I tell you, Charles, to make anything out of this cotton business requires close figuring. I ought to have made \$12,000 last year, but I didn't—young man, let me tell you that I didn't."

"How much did you make?"

"Only \$11,800, Charles. Bad crop year. Sit down, both of you. You remind me of pictures hung in front of a museum."

"Colonel, I have decided to go back to the mines."

"Yes, well, of course. When a man once forms a liking for that kind of life, it is almost impossible to break him of it. Yes, of course."

"Come in," said the old gentleman. "But if he were to remain away five

years the assessment would be broken, wouldn't it, father?" asked Ermance, looking slyly at Charles.

"Well, dog my cats, I don't know," replied the old gentleman, shoving back his chair. "It would seem so, though, eh? Well, blow me up! What put the five years proposition into your head, girl?"

"Nothing, only I thought that—that!"

"Look here, is that the way for friends to do? Put their arms around each other? Well, dog my cats, if she hasn't got her jute patch all over his face! Let me get out of here before I have rheumatism so bad I can't hobble."

"Wait, colonel. We are engaged again. It was impossible for us not to love!"

"We couldn't help it, father."

"And," continued Charles, "we have decided to marry at once."

"Of course," said the old gentleman, wiping his eyes. "Of course. Bad cotton year, Charles—of course—well, dog my cats!"

C. P. R. ENGINEER'S STATEMENT

Ben Rafferty of Winnipeg Division Says Dodd's Kidney Pills are O. K.

WINNIPEG, Man., July 31.—Probably the most enthusiastic man in Manitoba in regard to Dodd's Kidney Pills is Ben Rafferty of the C. P. R. He is one of the drivers on the big trans-continental road and the jarring of the engine and long hours combined to bring on Kidney disease from which Mr. Rafferty suffered for twenty years. He was cured by Dodd's Kidney Pills. His case is so well known throughout Canada that a Toronto man wrote to Mr. Rafferty recently asking him if he could recommend Dodd's Kidney Pills. Mr. Rafferty wrote in reply:

Winnipeg, May 30th, '99 Dear Sir,—I received your note of yesterday. I will recommend Dodd's Kidney Pills at any time to any person with pleasure. They are O. K. Yours truly,

B. RAFFERTY.

VIOLENT HEADACHES

Accompanied by Indigestion and Constipation cured by Dr. Chase's Kidney-Liver Pills

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"I have been troubled for over forty years with indigestion and constipation, would go for two weeks at a time. At intervals I would be taken with violent headaches. I spent dollars and dollars in vain, and was finally advised to use Dr. Chase's Kidney-Liver Pills, and must say that they are the only remedy that gave me permanent relief. I would not be without them for anything."

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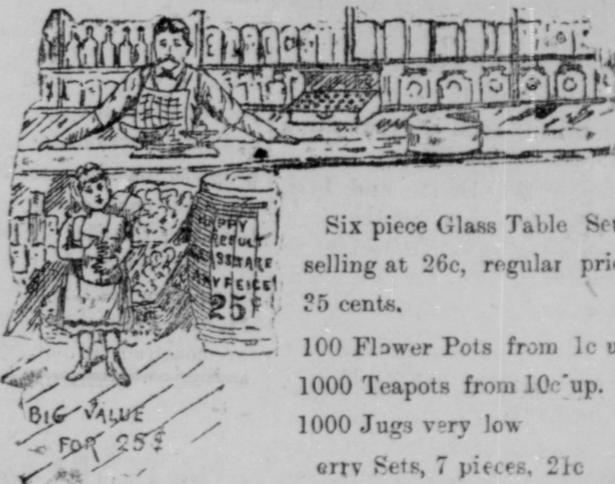
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