



CHAPTER I.

"Jenny!"

"Yes, Sergeant Lynn."

His fine figure drawn to its full height, as rigidly as though the eyes of the ad-
stant were upon him, yet un-
embarrassed and at his ease, Sergeant Lynn
was a man with whom any woman might
be satisfied as a sweetheart. His fea-
tures were good, if not refined, and the
weakness of his mouth was hidden by a
mustache as magnificent as that of any
cavalry colonel in the service.

It was only pretty Jane Knox, the ser-
geant major's daughter, who seemed so
impervious to his attractions and made him appear as witless and uncouth as the
latest trooper who had joined the awk-
ward squad. Hitherto, success had been
so easy to the dashing sergeant. It could
only be said of his over-eagerness to
please that this time he had fair to fail.
She did not even dislike him, he told him-
self with angry surprise; it was merely in-
difference that she felt—indifference ag-
gravating as it was complete.

"Jane, don't be so provoking. You
know I mean—"

"That it would be best for me to marry
a sergeant. Well, I dare say it would"—
thoughtfully—"if—if I could only make
up my mind."

"Try—only try, Jane. Love always
comes after marriage," he argued, eager-
ly.

"Why don't you prove it by your own
example?" she answered, negligently.
"Marry some one you detest, and if—"
"You—you don't detest me!"—blankly.
"Oh, no; but I don't love you, and
there's no middle course in marriage, I
think."

He was silenced for the time, and con-
tent himself with watching her as she
flitted about the room, arranging the bits
of holly, with here and there a twig of
the white berries intermingled.

Mrs. Knox, Miss Jane's mother, had
been the daughter of a veterinary sur-
geon, and being left almost penniless at
her father's death, had become a teacher
in the village school. It had been a quiet,
little-frequented spot, and until the age
of twenty-nine she had not even the sus-
picion of a love affair to brighten the mon-
otony of her existence. Then the cler-
gyman of their village came into a small
fortune, sufficient to allow him to retire
from his labors and put a curate in his
place.

The man chosen was a bachelor, but
that might well have been considered the
only point in his favor. He was plain,
elderly, and half-starved, as indeed he
might well be, considering the miserable
stipend he received. But to Jane's mother
his charm was that he was a gentleman.

His manners had seemed to her the per-
fection of courtly breeding, and had he
asked her she would have gladly become
his wife, in spite of all the petty troubles
which were attendant on genteel poverty.

But, either because his own heart was
not sufficiently interested, or that, from
mistaken unselfishness, he hesitated to let
her share his lot, he never did; and after
three years of alternate hopes and fears
on her side, another lover appeared upon
the scene, and by his brisk wooing suc-
ceeded in winning her for his wife.

"A terrible match for her," people said
—she, the educated woman, to blind her-
self to the rough if dashing hussar, who
could offer her only the barest necessities,
and at whose side she might have to en-
counter endless hardships; but equalized
surely by the fact that she was faded and
worn, and that he was a man in the prime
of life, loving her passionately, oblivious
of her vanished youth and indifference to
him.

"Hold it a little higher, Jenny darling,"
whispered the Sergeant, audaciously,
and coming close behind her, he attempted
to encircle her waist.

But she wrenched herself away, and
confronted him crimson with wrath and
shame.

"How dare you! How dare you!" she
exclaimed, and in her anger she could say
no more.

But the momentary madness over, Ser-
geant Lynn looked as penitent and abash-
ed as she could have wished, or any num-
ber of reproaches could have made him.

Falling back to his old position of "at-
tention," he could only murmur shame-
facedly:

"I'm very sorry, Jenny, upon my soul,
I am."

"You of all people—who you pretend to
like me—to insult me so!"

"It was just because of the liking," an-
swered the Sergeant, with a twinkle in
his eye, which fortunately Jane did not
detect. "Besides," he added, hastily, "I
didn't kiss you."

"I should think not, indeed!" tossing
her dainty head.

"And I'll never do it again—until you
give me leave."

"And that will be never."

The Sergeant, looking ruefully her com-
pressed lips and flashing eyes, decided
that she was sincere in her intention, and
that he had lost rather than gained by
the boldness of his wooing. He looked so
woe-begone that the situation became
ridiculous in Jane's eyes, and she hastened
to bring back the subject to a more matter-
of-fact footing.

"You never told me where you got it
all," she observed, nodding vaguely at
the evergreens that were the innocent
cause of her admirer's first offense.

"But you never asked me," was his
prompt reply, only too eager to snatch
at the proffered olive branch. "It was
quite by chance as it happened. I was
up at the Colonel's with some letters when
a big hamper arrived—from Simla. I
think he said—and I helped to open it as
if I would like a bit—I thought of you
directive—for we gave me as much as I

now Mrs. Knox placed herself only a
little way apart from where the staff and
officers of the regiment were seated. Jane
was crimson with mortification, and
would have given much to find herself
safe back in her own home, away from
those slighting sidelong glances of the
women present, and the bolder, admiring
gaze of men.

She had turned her back on both, and
strode to appear deeply interested in the
polo-pony race that was going on, when
presently a gentle, drawling voice sounded
in her ear.

"How do you do, Miss Knox? Have
you decided which is to be the winner?"

It was Colonel Prinsep, the colonel of
her father's regiment, the—th Hussars.

"I was not thinking about the race,"
she confessed, blushing.

He did not press the subject but stood
beside her, making a remark now and
then, and listening courteously to the timidly
hazarded replies. But when Mrs. Knox
joined nervously in the conversation,
he found his interest flag, and after a few
desultory remarks moved away toward
a group of three people, among
whom was a young lady, who were standing
several yards away.

Her eyes were fixed upon the ponies
that were being walked up and down pre-
paratory to a race, but she saw as little
of what she looked at as Jane Knox had
seen some twenty minutes before. Per-
haps it was because all her thoughts
were with the "what might have been"
that she could not see what actually was.

The most casual observer might have
guessed she was a woman with a story—
a story in which both her companions had
played a part.

Nora Dene was not yet twenty-two, but
looked older on account of the gravity of
her expression, which seldom relaxed into
a smile. Her mouth had a little pathetic
droop which seemed to compel pity in
spite of the pride which would not stoop
to ask it. Her eyes were sad with the
sadness of those which seldom or never
weep, and are the "saddest eyes of all."

Her face lightened when Colonel Prinsep
joined them, and she made a move-
ment toward him, which he forestalled by
quicken his pace. They were as good
friends as it was possible for man and
woman to be without protestations and
with no thought of anything beyond.

"You are looking tired," he began.
"Won't you come over to the seats?"

"Thank you; I think we have a better
view from here, and I am interested in
this race," she answered, only now begin-
ning to see the ponies as they can-
tered up and down.

As she spoke one of the men—her hus-
band—came and placed a chair beside her
which he had brought over from the
crates.

"Why did you not say you were tired,
Nora?" he reproached her gently.

"Because I did not feel so—at least,
not with standing. There is always a
certain amount of fatigue in watching
things like this. Don't you think so?"
turning to the Colonel.

"I dare say—at least—of course there
is. Regimental sports are always an infi-
ction. They are one of the sacrifices
we feel obliged to make for the men, and
for which we get no thanks." Then, as
her husband fell back and resumed con-
versation with his companion, he added,
in a lower voice, "Mrs. Dene, I want to
interest you in some one if I can."

"Am I so difficult to interest in any-
thing, that you take such an humble
tone?" she asked, looking up at him in
some amusement from the low seat of
which, in spite of her denial of fatigue,
she had availed herself impulsively.

But Mrs. Knox rose hastily from her
seat, and answered for her daughter.

"Of course she will forget. She is enter-
ing into a new life, and will make new
friends. You see yourself how impossible
it is that there could be anything between
you now!"

"Why not?" asked Jane, sharply.
"Neither of us has altered; it is only the
circumstances that have changed."

"You mean—" began the young fel-
low eagerly.

"I mean that I should be ashamed to let
this make any difference; and—and I
will marry you if you like, Sergeant Lynn."

But when the Sergeant, radiant with
delight, came forward quickly to take
her in his arms, the mother threw herself
between the two lovers.

"She is mad; she does not know what
she is saying. If you have a spark of
manly feeling, Jacob, you will go away at
once. Jane, I forbid you to say another
word."

Talking still for fear of either of them
disobeying, she pushed him from the
room, so that he could only turn his head
and gaze regretfully at his sweetheart,
whom he had so unexpectedly won. She
was standing with both hands clasped
tightly on her breast, her face white and
frightened, as she realized to what she had
pledged herself. But her eyes met his
bravely, and spoke eloquently of her
intended fidelity and truth.

"It is only the 'first step' that will 'cost'
them anything. Women adapt themselves
so readily to altered circumstances; and
Mrs. Knox is I considerately above her pres-
ent position, I have heard."

She shrugged her shoulders, but did
not attempt a verbal contradiction.

"You are not thinking of going home
just yet, are you, Gerald?" she asked,
turning to her husband.

"Not unless you wish it. I am at your
service."

(To be continued.)

Fine Toboggan Side.

The Malays have the finest toboggan
slide in the world. In Perak there is a
huge granite slope in the course of a
mountain river, down which the water
trickles about two inches deep, the
main stream having carved out a bed
by the side of the boulder. This rock,
the face of which has been rendered as
smooth as glass by the constant flow
of water during the hundreds of years,
the Malays—men, women and children—
have turned into a slide. Climbing
to the top of the rock, they sit in the
shallow water with their feet straight
out, and a hand on each side for steering,
and then slide straight down the
sixty feet into a pool of water. This
is a favorite sport on sunny mornings,
as many as two hundred folk being en-
gaged in it at a time, and sliding down
so quickly one after another, or forming
rows of two, four and even eight per-
sons, that they tumble into a pool a
confused mass of scrambling creatures.
It seems to be a highly amusing game,
and there is little danger in it.

The first step must be made, and Al-
pore society had had time enough to de-
cide whether they were to be admitted
within its sacred precincts or not. She
would at least show that she considered
herself worthy of the honor. But, boldly
as she had looked the question in the face,
her courage failed her when they had
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think he said—and I helped to open it as
if I would like a bit—I thought of you
directive—for we gave me as much as I

could carry, and told me to give it to my
sweetheart—and—so I brought it to you."

"Indeed," remarked Jane, frigidly.

"I brought it in a basket for fear any
one should ask me for a bit, and I wanted
it all for you. I don't suppose there's
another in Alpore, besides the Colonel
and yourself, that has a piece of real mis-
tice to offer."

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