

## A SWEETHEART AT THIRTY

The Story of a Woman's Transformation  
BY MARION RUBINCAM

## MORE COMPLICATIONS.

Enid Haines at 35 looks 50 and is considered a hopeless old maid by the people in Henley Falls. She lives with her brother Jim, and his wife Esther; Laura, the oldest daughter, James, and Violet, youngest and prettiest.

Violet's decision to go to the city to college saves Aunt Enid from sinking entirely into hopeless middle age. For she goes to the city with Vi, and the two, freed from Esther's oppression, suddenly find out what life can hold for them. Vi is in love with Bud, but the affair is not very happy. When they return home for the summer vacation, Enid looks scarcely 30. Mark Upjohn, an old beau, comes around again. Laura marries. Jim quarrels with his son, who, in anger, mentions a woman his father knows in some other town.

Chapter 55.  
The sudden silence that followed James' threat was even more explosive than the conversation before it. It fairly fell upon us. We were stunned by it.

I looked about me, frightened, yet somehow fascinated. Jim shrank back, as though the boy had struck him bodily, and the red blood of anger ran from his face. Instead a sickly pallor came over it—but his eyes were more dangerous than before.

James, having been goaded into this outburst, suddenly grew calm. But he would not, or could not, meet his father's eyes, those little, deep-set eyes that were gleaming now with a wicked anger in them. James, I think, never realized how far he had gone. He had said something that would change the course of all our lives, perhaps—that would, perhaps, break up our family. And he was afraid.

I had plenty of time to watch everything, for all were stunned and our silence lasted a long time. Violet had gone dead white. Her eyes looked unearthly in their blueness against her pale skin. As for Esther—I never saw so many emotions reflected simultaneously on anyone's face.

Esther had worked hard that day, and her face showed it in every sagging line. I felt suddenly sorry for her—sorry for her narrow life, her lack of any interests outside her family, sorry for the old age that was coming so swiftly over her, and for her frank homeliness.

And now, by one sentence, all her placid illusions were shattered, the very heart of her life was taken away from her.

"Oh God, my God!" she said. And sat down suddenly on one of the chairs.

We turned, as she did, to Jim. But the red was coming back to his face again, and he found his voice.

"It ain't so," he said loudly, again, and looked threateningly at his son.

Esther looked at James pathetically, pleading.

"James! James!" she cried. "What are you saying? What are you saying? What are you saying? A woman—where? what do you mean?"

"I've said enough," James answered sullenly.

"You've said more than enough," Jim bellowed, and swore at him again. "But he says it ain't so, James; he says—"

"I've said enough," James answered again. "I won't say anything more—and I won't take back what I said."

And he turned and went out of the room.

"I'll kill you for this," Jim swore. I looked at Violet; then, by some mutual flash of intuition, we turned and went out of the room—leaving Esther, dull-eyed, still not comprehending, facing her husband.

"I'm going to find James. Come on," Violet said.

We went out the front door and through the house—James had slammed the door; then, by some mutual flash of intuition, we turned and went out of the room—leaving Esther, dull-eyed, still not comprehending, facing her husband.

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did not want to see her cry. I could not bear to feel she was unhappy. She had enough troubles without worrying over James.

To tell the truth, I was a little stunned myself. After all, Jim was my brother; we had played together, grown up together; we had always, except for the first few years of his marriage lived in the same house.

I knew he had a bad temper, and it was aggravated by misfortune, and luck had not been with him for a long time. It was his own fault, perhaps. He was narrow; he would not adopt progressive ideas, he would not even adopt common sense ones at times. But he worked desperately hard. And down in him, buried deep, was a streak of something soft and tender.

Esther had killed this—Esther, sitting limply, stupidly in the kitchen, with the wreck of her illusions about her. But analyzing the causes did not make the results more bearable. I was stunned too. Life was simple enough for me—a man was good when he was faithful to his wife; when he wasn't, he was wicked. There were no extenuating circumstances.

And he was my brother! The words—"that woman in Eastlake" rang in my ears.

Violet meanwhile had slipped down the passage between the hay and the hen wall. Evidently the door leading into James' hidden workshop was open, for her voice reached me from a long distance.

"Aunt Enid," she called, and her voice sounded frightened. "Come here!"

Tomorrow—Heartbreak.

## Heart Problems

Dear Mrs. Thompson: I am a young man of eighteen. I have quite a few boy friends. I left the city last summer for a vacation and got acquainted with a real nice young lady.

We went to a couple of dances and she was quite interesting. Her folks invited me over to her birthday party. They thought I was quite a nice young man.

When I told her I was to leave and go back to the city she felt awfully down-hearted and did not have anything to say. I received a few letters

from her and she wanted me to go back to that city again. In every letter she writes of how lonesome it is for her.

Sometimes I feel like going back to her instead of breaking her heart. My folks know nothing about this. Therefore I am puzzled to know what to do.

Do not make any decision now. The girl's heart is not in any immediate danger of breaking. If you care for her, go to the city for your vacation next year. By that time you will know better what you want to do.

Dear Mrs. Thompson: I am a young man of nineteen and have a girl

friend two years younger. We have been going together for about two months and I like her very much. She tells me to come to see her twice a week and she never talks of any other boy. Does she love me or not?

What Christmas present should I get her? The girl must like you. Do not depend upon her love, however, because she is so young her fancy is apt to turn to some one else at any time.

Give her a book, box of candy or flowers.

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With the prospect of lower prices for next spring, we have lowered our prices in advance on our entire stock of High Grade Shoes. Women who are in the habit of wearing Good High Grade Shoes will appreciate a pair from our stock for Christmas. They can be correctly fitted after Christmas.

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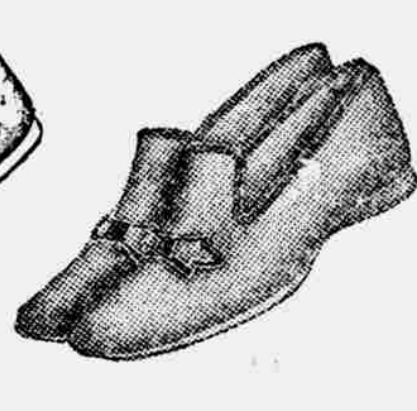
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