

**ALL IN A MONTH
AND
OTHER STORIES**

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All in a Month and Other Stories by Allen Raine

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By

ALLEN RAINE

Author of "Neither Storehouse nor Barn"
"A Welsh Singer," "Torn Sails," etc.



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All in a Month

CHAPTER I

"Don't think of it, dear," said mother, pausing in her knitting, "I don't know how Dr. Orme could have proposed such a thing."

"Ridiculous!" said my father, rising as if to end the discussion. On reaching the door, however, he turned round, saying, "I shall write to Orme to-morrow, and tell him it is not to be thought of, although of course fifty pounds a year is not to be sneezed at," and he closed the door carefully and slowly.

"You can pack your box, Gwladys," said Gwen, my youngest sister; "he means to give his consent, otherwise he would have said, 'No more nonsense. I won't hear of it, and that's enough.'"

I thought so too, and now I had only to

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win mother's consent, and the way would be plain.

The tea had been cleared away, and the cosiest and pleasantest hours of the day had commenced. We were sitting in the dining-room of the old Vicarage at Llanwialen. A bright fire burned in the grate, although the spring was well advanced, and through the open window came all the familiar sounds of a Welsh country vicarage—Ann, the cook's, shrill voice in the kitchen, the clattering of Mari's wooden shoes in the back yard, and the whirring beat of the cloth-mill in the valley.

I scarcely heard them, for already my mind was fully occupied with the prospect of the coming change in my hitherto uneventful life. Mother still murmured something about "asylums" and "nonsensical ideas," but, as usual, soon came round to my way of thinking, and when, half an hour later, my father came in with an open letter in his hand, she was quite prepared to throw all the weight of her gentle influence on my side of the question.

"Fifty pounds a year, father, is very handsome pay for a girl, and if she is not happy there, you know, she can return at any time."

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"Well, as you please," said my father. "I am writing to Dr. Orme, and I must either decline or accept his offer, and if you mean to carry out this mad project, Gwladys, you must be prepared to go on the day specified by him—that is, next Monday."

And so the matter was settled. I did pack my box, and Matty ironed all my laces and collars and cuffs, while Gwen pressed upon me the loan of her new silk blouse.

"Fifty pounds! Well, indeed, that's a lot!" she said, as she packed the blouse carefully into my box; "but, depend upon it, your duties will be correspondingly onerous, Gwladys dear."

"How can they be?" I answered confidently. "Dr. Orme says plainly, in his letter to father, 'merely to act as companion to a young lady, who is generally as sane as you or I, but is subject to hallucinations, which, however, are perfectly harmless. In fact, if she "takes" to your daughter, the latter will like her very much, if not—and this is very possible—she will merely have to leave her to herself, simply keeping a strict watch upon her and reporting to me.' That does not seem very hard work; at all events, I mean to try it."