Short Stories: 1905 to 1906

By

Lucy Maud Montgomery

A Correspondence and A Climax

At sunset Sidney hurried to her room to take off the soiled and faded cotton dress she had worn while milking. She had milked eight cows and pumped water for the milk-cans afterward in the fag-end of a hot summer day. She did that every night, but tonight she had hurried more than usual because she wanted to get her letter written before the early farm bedtime. She had been thinking it out while she milked the cows in the stuffy little pen behind the barn. This monthly letter was the only pleasure and stimulant in her life. Existence would have been, so Sidney thought, a dreary, unbearable blank without it. She cast aside her milking-dress with a thrill of distaste that tingled to her rosy fingertips. As she slipped into her blue-print afternoon dress her aunt called to her from below. Sidney ran out to the dark little entry and leaned over the stair railing. Below in the kitchen there was a hubbub of laughing, crying, quarrelling children, and a reek of bad tobacco smoke drifted up to the girl's disgusted nostrils.

Aunt Jane was standing at the foot of the stairs with a lamp in one hand and a year-old baby clinging to the other. She was a big shapeless woman with a round good-natured face—cheerful and vulgar as a sunflower was Aunt Jane at all times and occasions.

"I want to run over and see how Mrs. Brixby is this evening, Siddy, and you must take care of the baby till I get back."

Sidney sighed and went downstairs for the baby. It never would have occurred to her to protest or be petulant about it. She had all her aunt's sweetness of disposition, if she resembled her in nothing else. She had not grumbled because she had to rise at four that morning, get breakfast, milk the cows, bake bread, prepare seven children for school, get dinner, preserve twenty quarts of strawberries, get tea, and milk the cows again. All her days were alike as far as hard work and dullness went, but she accepted them cheerfully and uncomplainingly. But she did resent having to look after the baby when she wanted to write her letter.

She carried the baby to her room, spread a quilt on the floor for him to sit on, and gave him a box of empty spools to play with. Fortunately he was a phlegmatic infant, fond of staying in one place, and not given to roaming about in search of adventures; but Sidney knew she would have to keep an eye on him, and it would be distracting to literary effort.

She got out her box of paper and sat down by the little table at the window with a small kerosene lamp at her elbow. The room was small—a mere box above the kitchen which Sidney shared with two small cousins. Her bed and

the cot where the little girls slept filled up almost all the available space. The furniture was poor, but everything was neat—it was the only neat room in the house, indeed, for tidiness was no besetting virtue of Aunt Jane's.

Opposite Sidney was a small muslined and befrilled toilet-table, above which hung an eight-by-six-inch mirror, in which Sidney saw herself reflected as she devoutly hoped other people did not see her. Just at that particular angle one eye appeared to be as large as an orange, while the other was the size of a pea, and the mouth zigzagged from ear to ear. Sidney hated that mirror as virulently as she could hate anything. It seemed to her to typify all that was unlovely in her life. The mirror of existence into which her fresh young soul had looked for twenty years gave back to her wistful gaze just such distortions of fair hopes and ideals.

Half of the little table by which she sat was piled high with books—old books, evidently well read and well-bred books, classics of fiction and verse every one of them, and all bearing on the flyleaf the name of Sidney Richmond, thereby meaning not the girl at the table, but her college-bred young father who had died the day before she was born. Her mother had died the day after, and Sidney thereupon had come into the hands of good Aunt Jane, with those books for her dowry, since nothing else was left after the expenses of the double funeral had been paid.

One of the books had Sidney Richmond's name printed on the title-page instead of written on the flyleaf. It was a thick little volume of poems, published in his college days—musical, unsubstantial, pretty little poems, every one of which the girl Sidney loved and knew by heart.

Sidney dropped her pointed chin in her hands and looked dreamily out into the moonlit night, while she thought her letter out a little more fully before beginning to write. Her big brown eyes were full of wistfulness and romance; for Sidney was romantic, albeit a faithful and understanding acquaintance with her father's books had given to her romance refinement and reason, and the delicacy of her own nature had imparted to it a self-respecting bias.

Presently she began to write, with a flush of real excitement on her face. In the middle of things the baby choked on a small twist spool and Sidney had to catch him up by the heels and hold him head downward until the trouble was ejected. Then she had to soothe him, and finally write the rest of her letter holding him on one arm and protecting the epistle from the grabs of his sticky little fingers. It was certainly letter-writing under difficulties, but Sidney seemed to deal with them mechanically. Her soul and understanding were elsewhere.

Four years before, when Sidney was sixteen, still calling herself a schoolgirl by reason of the fact that she could be spared to attend school four

months in the winter when work was slack, she had been much interested in the "Maple Leaf" department of the Montreal weekly her uncle took. It was a page given over to youthful Canadians and filled with their contributions in the way of letters, verses, and prize essays. Noms de plume were signed to these, badges were sent to those who joined the Maple Leaf Club, and a general delightful sense of mystery pervaded the department.

Often a letter concluded with a request to the club members to correspond with the writer. One such request went from Sidney under the pen-name of "Ellen Douglas." The girl was lonely in Plainfield; she had no companions or associates such as she cared for; the Maple Leaf Club represented all that her life held of outward interest, and she longed for something more.

Only one answer came to "Ellen Douglas," and that was forwarded to her by the long-suffering editor of "The Maple Leaf." It was from John Lincoln of the Bar N Ranch, Alberta. He wrote that, although his age debarred him from membership in the club (he was twenty, and the limit was eighteen), he read the letters of the department with much interest, and often had thought of answering some of the requests for correspondents. He never had done so, but "Ellen Douglas's" letter was so interesting that he had decided to write to her. Would she be kind enough to correspond with him? Life on the Bar N, ten miles from the outposts of civilization, was lonely. He was two years out from the east, and had not yet forgotten to be homesick at times.

Sidney liked the letter and answered it. Since then they had written to each other regularly. There was nothing sentimental, hinted at or implied, in the correspondence. Whatever the faults of Sidney's romantic visions were, they did not tend to precocious flirtation. The Plainfield boys, attracted by her beauty and repelled by her indifference and aloofness, could have told that. She never expected to meet John Lincoln, nor did she wish to do so. In the correspondence itself she found her pleasure.

John Lincoln wrote breezy accounts of ranch life and adventures on the far western plains, so alien and remote from snug, humdrum Plainfield life that Sidney always had the sensation of crossing a gulf when she opened a letter from the Bar N. As for Sidney's own letter, this is the way it read as she wrote it:

"The Evergreens," Plainfield.

Dear Mr. Lincoln:

The very best letter I can write in the half-hour before the carriage will be at the door to take me to Mrs. Braddon's dance shall be yours tonight. I am sitting here in the library arrayed in my smartest, newest, whitest, silkiest gown, with a string of pearls which Uncle James gave me today about my

throat—the dear, glistening, sheeny things! And I am looking forward to the "dances and delight" of the evening with keen anticipation.

You asked me in your last letter if I did not sometimes grow weary of my endless round of dances and dinners and social functions. No, no, never! I enjoy every one of them, every minute of them. I love life and its bloom and brilliancy; I love meeting new people; I love the ripple of music, the hum of laughter and conversation. Every morning when I awaken the new day seems to me to be a good fairy who will bring me some beautiful gift of joy.

The gift she gave me today was my sunset gallop on my grey mare Lady. The thrill of it is in my veins yet. I distanced the others who rode with me and led the homeward canter alone, rocking along a dark, gleaming road, shadowy with tall firs and pines, whose balsam made all the air resinous around me. Before me was a long valley filled with purple dusk, and beyond it meadows of sunset and great lakes of saffron and rose where a soul might lose itself in colour. On my right was the harbour, silvered over with a rising moon. Oh, it was all glorious—the clear air with its salt-sea tang, the aroma of the pines, the laughter of my friends behind me, the spring and rhythm of Lady's grey satin body beneath me! I wanted to ride on so forever, straight into the heart of the sunset.

Then home and to dinner. We have a houseful of guests at present—one of them an old statesman with a massive silver head, and eyes that have looked into people's thoughts so long that you have an uncanny feeling that they can see right through your soul and read motives you dare not avow even to yourself. I was terribly in awe of him at first, but when I got acquainted with him I found him charming. He is not above talking delightful nonsense even to a girl. I sat by him at dinner, and he talked to me—not nonsense, either, this time. He told me of his political contests and diplomatic battles; he was wise and witty and whimsical. I felt as if I were drinking some rare, stimulating mental wine. What a privilege it is to meet such men and take a peep through their wise eyes at the fascinating game of empire-building!

I met another clever man a few evenings ago. A lot of us went for a sail on the harbour. Mrs. Braddon's house party came too. We had three big white boats that skimmed down the moonlit channel like great white sea birds. There was another boat far across the harbour, and the people in it were singing. The music drifted over the water to us, so sad and sweet and beguiling that I could have cried for very pleasure. One of Mrs. Braddon's guests said to me:

"That is the soul of music with all its sense and earthliness refined away."

I hadn't thought about him before—I hadn't even caught his name in the general introduction. He was a tall, slight man, with a worn, sensitive face and iron-grey hair—a quiet man who hadn't laughed or talked. But he began to talk

to me then, and I forgot all about the others. I never had listened to anybody in the least like him. He talked of books and music, of art and travel. He had been all over the world, and had seen everything everybody else had seen and everything they hadn't too, I think. I seemed to be looking into an enchanted mirror where all my own dreams and ideals were reflected back to me, but made, oh, so much more beautiful!

On my way home after the Braddon people had left us somebody asked me how I liked Paul Moore! The man I had been talking with was Paul Moore, the great novelist! I was almost glad I hadn't known it while he was talking to me —I should have been too awed and reverential to have really enjoyed his conversation. As it was, I had contradicted him twice, and he had laughed and liked it. But his books will always have a new meaning to me henceforth, through the insight he himself has given me.

It is such meetings as these that give life its sparkle for me. But much of its abiding sweetness comes from my friendship with Margaret Raleigh. You will be weary of my rhapsodies over her. But she is such a rare and wonderful woman; much older then I am, but so young in heart and soul and freshness of feeling! She is to me mother and sister and wise, clear-sighted friend. To her I go with all my perplexities and hopes and triumphs. She has sympathy and understanding for my every mood. I love life so much for giving me such a friendship!

This morning I wakened at dawn and stole away to the shore before anyone else was up. I had a delightful run-away. The long, low-lying meadows between "The Evergreens" and the shore were dewy and fresh in that first light, that was as fine and purely tinted as the heart of one of my white roses. On the beach the water was purring in little blue ripples, and, oh, the sunrise out there beyond the harbour! All the eastern Heaven was abloom with it. And there was a wind that came dancing and whistling up the channel to replace the beautiful silence with a music more beautiful still.

The rest of the folks were just coming downstairs when I got back to breakfast. They were all yawny, and some were grumpy, but I had washed my being in the sunrise and felt as blithesome as the day. Oh, life is so good to live!

Tomorrow Uncle James's new vessel, the White Lady, is to be launched. We are going to make a festive occasion of it, and I am to christen her with a bottle of cobwebby old wine.

But I hear the carriage, and Aunt Jane is calling me. I had a great deal more to say—about your letter, your big "round-up" and your tribulations with your Chinese cook—but I've only time now to say goodbye. You wish me a lovely time at the dance and a full programme, don't you?

Yours sincerely,

Sidney Richmond.

Aunt Jane came home presently and carried away her sleeping baby. Sidney said her prayers, went to bed, and slept soundly and serenely.

She mailed her letter the next day, and a month later an answer came. Sidney read it as soon as she left the post office, and walked the rest of the way home as in a nightmare, staring straight ahead of her with wide-open, unseeing brown eyes.

John Lincoln's letter was short, but the pertinent paragraph of it burned itself into Sidney's brain. He wrote:

I am going east for a visit. It is six years since I was home, and it seems like three times six. I shall go by the C.P.R., which passes through Plainfield, and I mean to stop off for a day. You will let me call and see you, won't you? I shall have to take your permission for granted, as I shall be gone before a letter from you can reach the Bar N. I leave for the east in five days, and shall look forward to our meeting with all possible interest and pleasure.

Sidney did not sleep that night, but tossed restlessly about or cried in her pillow. She was so pallid and hollow-eyed the next morning that Aunt Jane noticed it, and asked her what the matter was.

"Nothing," said Sidney sharply. Sidney had never spoken sharply to her aunt before. The good woman shook her head. She was afraid the child was "taking something."

"Don't do much today, Siddy," she said kindly. "Just lie around and take it easy till you get rested up. I'll fix you a dose of quinine."

Sidney refused to lie around and take it easy. She swallowed the quinine meekly enough, but she worked fiercely all day, hunting out superfluous tasks to do. That night she slept the sleep of exhaustion, but her dreams were unenviable and the awakening was terrible.

Any day, any hour, might bring John Lincoln to Plainfield. What should she do? Hide from him? Refuse to see him? But he would find out the truth just the same; she would lose his friendships and respect just as surely. Sidney trod the way of the transgressor, and found that its thorns pierced to bone and marrow. Everything had come to an end—nothing was left to her! In the untried recklessness of twenty untempered years she wished she could die before John Lincoln came to Plainfield. The eyes of youth could not see how she could possibly live afterward.

Some days later a young man stepped from the C.P.R. train at Plainfield station and found his way to the one small hotel the place boasted. After

getting his supper he asked the proprietor if he could direct him to "The Evergreens."

Caleb Williams looked at his guest in bewilderment. "Never heerd o' such a place," he said.

"It is the name of Mr. Conway's estate—Mr. James Conway," explained John Lincoln.

"Oh, Jim Conway's place!" said Caleb. "Didn't know that was what he called it. Sartin I kin tell you whar' to find it. You see that road out thar'? Well, just follow it straight along for a mile and a half till you come to a blacksmith's forge. Jim Conway's house is just this side of it on the right—back from the road a smart piece and no other handy. You can't mistake it."

John Lincoln did not expect to mistake it, once he found it; he knew by heart what it appeared like from Sidney's description: an old stately mansion of mellowed brick, covered with ivy and set back from the highway amid fine ancestral trees, with a pine-grove behind it, a river to the left, and a harbour beyond.

He strode along the road in the warm, ruddy sunshine of early evening. It was not a bad-looking road at all; the farmsteads sprinkled along it were for the most part snug and wholesome enough; yet somehow it was different from what he had expected it to be. And there was no harbour or glimpse of distant sea visible. Had the hotel-keeper made a mistake? Perhaps he had meant some other James Conway.

Presently he found himself before the blacksmith's forge. Beside it was a rickety, unpainted gate opening into a snake-fenced lane feathered here and there with scrubby little spruces. It ran down a bare hill, crossed a little ravine full of young white-stemmed birches, and up another bare hill to an equally bare crest where a farmhouse was perched—a farmhouse painted a stark, staring yellow and the ugliest thing in farmhouses that John Lincoln had ever seen, even among the log shacks of the west. He knew now that he had been misdirected, but as there seemed to be nobody about the forge he concluded that he had better go to the yellow house and inquire within. He passed down the lane and over the little rustic bridge that spanned the brook. Just beyond was another home-made gate of poles.

Lincoln opened it, or rather he had his hand on the hasp of twisted withes which secured it, when he was suddenly arrested by the apparition of a girl, who flashed around the curve of young birch beyond and stood before him with panting breath and quivering lips.

"I beg your pardon," said John Lincoln courteously, dropping the gate and lifting his hat. "I am looking for the house of Mr. James Conway—'The

Evergreens.' Can you direct me to it?"

"That is Mr. James Conway's house," said the girl, with the tragic air and tone of one driven to desperation and an impatient gesture of her hand toward the yellow nightmare above them.

"I don't think he can be the one I mean," said Lincoln perplexedly. "The man I am thinking of has a niece, Miss Richmond."

"There is no other James Conway in Plainfield," said the girl. "This is his place—nobody calls it 'The Evergreens' but myself. I am Sidney Richmond."

For a moment they looked at each other across the gate, sheer amazement and bewilderment holding John Lincoln mute. Sidney, burning with shame, saw that this stranger was exceedingly good to look upon—tall, clean-limbed, broad-shouldered, with clear-cut bronzed features and a chin and eyes that would have done honour to any man. John Lincoln, among all his confused sensations, was aware that this slim, agitated young creature before him was the loveliest thing he ever had seen, so lithe was her figure, so glossy and dark and silken her bare, wind-ruffled hair, so big and brown and appealing her eyes, so delicately oval her flushed cheeks. He felt that she was frightened and in trouble, and he wanted to comfort and reassure her. But how could she be Sidney Richmond?

"I don't understand," he said perplexedly.

"Oh!" Sidney threw out her hands in a burst of passionate protest. "No, and you never will understand—I can't make you understand."

"I don't understand," said John Lincoln again. "Can you be Sidney Richmond—the Sidney Richmond who has written to me for four years?"

"I am."

"Then, those letters—"

"Were all lies," said Sidney bluntly and desperately. "There was nothing true in them—nothing at all. This is my home. We are poor. Everything I told you about it and my life was just imagination."

"Then why did you write them?" he asked blankly. "Why did you deceive me?"

"Oh, I didn't mean to deceive you! I never thought of such a thing. When you asked me to write to you I wanted to, but I didn't know what to write about to a stranger. I just couldn't write you about my life here, not because it was hard, but it was so ugly and empty. So I wrote instead of the life I wanted to live—the life I did live in imagination. And when once I had begun, I had to keep it up. I found it so fascinating, too! Those letters made that other life

seem real to me. I never expected to meet you. These last four days since your letter came have been dreadful to me. Oh, please go away and forgive me if you can! I know I can never make you understand how it came about."

Sidney turned away and hid her burning face against the cool white bark of the birch tree behind her. It was worse than she had even thought it would be. He was so handsome, so manly, so earnest-eyed! Oh, what a friend to lose!

John Lincoln opened the gate and went up to her. There was a great tenderness in his face, mingled with a little kindly, friendly amusement.

"Please don't distress yourself so, Sidney," he said, unconsciously using her Christian name. "I think I do understand. I'm not such a dull fellow as you take me for. After all, those letters were true—or, rather, there was truth in them. You revealed yourself more faithfully in them than if you had written truly about your narrow outward life."

Sidney turned her flushed face and wet eyes slowly toward him, a little smile struggling out amid the clouds of woe. This young man was certainly good at understanding. "You—you'll forgive me then?" she stammered.

"Yes, if there is anything to forgive. And for my own part, I am glad you are not what I have always thought you were. If I had come here and found you what I expected, living in such a home as I expected, I never could have told you or even thought of telling you what you have come to mean to me in these lonely years during which your letters have been the things most eagerly looked forward to. I should have come this evening and spent an hour or so with you, and then have gone away on the train tomorrow morning, and that would have been all.

"But I find instead just a dreamy romantic little girl, much like my sisters at home, except that she is a great deal cleverer. And as a result I mean to stay a week at Plainfield and come to see you every day, if you will let me. And on my way back to the Bar N I mean to stop off at Plainfield again for another week, and then I shall tell you something more—something it would be a little too bold to say now, perhaps, although I could say it just as well and truly. All this if I may. May I, Sidney?"

He bent forward and looked earnestly into her face. Sidney felt a new, curious, inexplicable thrill at her heart. "Oh, yes.—I suppose so," she said shyly.

"Now, take me up to the house and introduce me to your Aunt Jane," said John Lincoln in satisfied tone.

An Adventure on Island Rock

"Who was the man I saw talking to you in the hayfield?" asked Aunt Kate, as Uncle Richard came to dinner.

"Bob Marks," said Uncle Richard briefly. "I've sold Laddie to him."

Ernest Hughes, the twelve-year-old orphan boy whom Uncle "boarded and kept" for the chores he did, suddenly stopped eating.

"Oh, Mr. Lawson, you're not going to sell Laddie?" he cried chokily.

Uncle Richard stared at him. Never before, in the five years that Ernest had lived with him, had the quiet little fellow spoken without being spoken to, much less ventured to protest against anything Uncle Richard might do.

"Certainly I am," answered the latter curtly. "Bob offered me twenty dollars for the dog, and he's coming after him next week."

"Oh, Mr. Lawson," said Ernest, rising to his feet, his small, freckled face crimson. "Oh, don't sell Laddie! Please, Mr. Lawson, don't sell him!"

"What nonsense is this?" said Uncle Richard sharply. He was a man who brooked no opposition from anybody, and who never changed his mind when it was once made up.

"Don't sell Laddie!" pleaded Ernest miserably. "He is the only friend I've got. I can't live if Laddie goes away. Oh, don't sell him, Mr. Lawson!"

"Sit down and hold your tongue," said Uncle Richard sternly. "The dog is mine, and I shall do with him as I think fit. He is sold, and that is all there is about it. Go on with your dinner."

But Ernest for the first time did not obey. He snatched his cap from the back of his chair, dashed it down over his eyes, and ran from the kitchen with a sob choking his breath. Uncle Richard looked angry, but Aunt Kate hastened to soothe him.

"Don't be vexed with the boy, Richard," she said. "You know he is very fond of Laddie. He's had to do with him ever since he was a pup, and no doubt he feels badly at the thought of losing him. I'm rather sorry myself that you have sold the dog."

"Well, he is sold and there's an end of it. I don't say but that the dog is a good dog. But he is of no use to us, and twenty dollars will come in mighty handy just now. He's worth that to Bob, for he is a good watch dog, so we've both made a fair bargain."

Nothing more was said about Ernest or Laddie. I had taken no part in the

discussion, for I felt no great interest in the matter. Laddie was a nice dog; Ernest was a quiet, inoffensive little fellow, five years younger than myself; that was all I thought about either of them.

I was spending my vacation at Uncle Richard's farm on the Nova Scotian Bay of Fundy shore. I was a great favourite with Uncle Richard, partly because he had been much attached to my mother, his only sister, partly because of my strong resemblance to his only son, who had died several years before. Uncle Richard was a stern, undemonstrative man, but I knew that he entertained a deep and real affection for me, and I always enjoyed my vacation sojourns at his place.

"What are you going to do this afternoon, Ned?" he asked, after the disturbance caused by Ernest's outbreak had quieted down.

"I think I'll row out to Island Rock," I replied. "I want to take some views of the shore from it."

Uncle Richard nodded. He was much interested in my new camera.

"If you're on it about four o'clock, you'll get a fine view of the 'Hole in the Wall' when the sun begins to shine on the water through it," he said. "I've often thought it would make a handsome picture."

"After I've finished taking the pictures, I think I'll go down shore to Uncle Adam's and stay all night," I said. "Jim's dark room is more convenient than mine, and he has some pictures he is going to develop tonight, too."

I started for the shore about two o'clock. Ernest was sitting on the woodpile as I passed through the yard, with his arms about Laddie's neck and his face buried in Laddie's curly hair. Laddie was a handsome and intelligent black-and-white Newfoundland, with a magnificent coat. He and Ernest were great chums. I felt sorry for the boy who was to lose his pet.

"Don't take it so hard, Ern," I said, trying to comfort him. "Uncle will likely get another pup."

"I don't want any other pup!" Ernest blurted out. "Oh, Ned, won't you try and coax your uncle not to sell him? Perhaps he'd listen to you."

I shook my head. I knew Uncle Richard too well to hope that.

"Not in this case, Ern," I said. "He would say it did not concern me, and you know nothing moves him when he determines on a thing. You'll have to reconcile yourself to losing Laddie, I'm afraid."

Ernest's tow-coloured head went down on Laddie's neck again, and I, deciding that there was no use in saying anything more, proceeded towards the shore, which was about a mile from Uncle Richard's house. The beach along

his farm and for several farms along shore was a lonely, untenanted one, for the fisher-folk all lived two miles further down, at Rowley's Cove. About three hundred yards from the shore was the peculiar formation known as Island Rock. This was a large rock that stood abruptly up out of the water. Below, about the usual water-line, it was seamed and fissured, but its summit rose up in a narrow, flat-topped peak. At low tide twenty feet of it was above water, but at high tide it was six feet and often more under water.

I pushed Uncle Richard's small flat down the rough path and rowed out to Island Rock. Arriving there, I thrust the painter deep into a narrow cleft. This was the usual way of mooring it, and no doubt of its safety occurred to me.

I scrambled up the rock and around to the eastern end, where there was a broader space for standing and from which some capital views could be obtained. The sea about the rock was calm, but there was quite a swell on and an off-shore breeze was blowing. There were no boats visible. The tide was low, leaving bare the curious caves and headlands along shore, and I secured a number of excellent snapshots. It was now three o'clock. I must wait another hour yet before I could get the best view of the "Hole in the Wall"—a huge, arch-like opening through a jutting headland to the west of me. I went around to look at it, when I saw a sight that made me stop short in dismay. This was nothing less than the flat, drifting outward around the point. The swell and suction of the water around the rock must have pulled her loose—and I was a prisoner! At first my only feeling was one of annoyance. Then a thought flashed into my mind that made me dizzy with fear. The tide would be high that night. If I could not escape from Island Rock I would inevitably be drowned.

I sat down limply on a ledge and tried to look matters fairly in the face. I could not swim; calls for help could not reach anybody; my only hope lay in the chance of somebody passing down the shore or of some boat appearing.

I looked at my watch. It was a quarter past three. The tide would begin to turn about five, but it would be at least ten before the rock would be covered. I had, then, little more than six hours to live unless rescued.

The flat was by this time out of sight around the point. I hoped that the sight of an empty flat drifting down shore might attract someone's attention and lead to investigation. That seemed to be my only hope. No alarm would be felt at Uncle Richard's because of my non-appearance. They would suppose I had gone to Uncle Adam's.

I have heard of time seeming long to a person in my predicament, but to me it seemed fairly to fly, for every moment decreased my chance of rescue. I determined I would not give way to cowardly fear, so, with a murmured prayer for help, I set myself to the task of waiting for death as bravely as possible. At

intervals I shouted as loudly as I could and, when the sun came to the proper angle for the best view of the "Hole in the Wall," I took the picture. It afterwards turned out to be a great success, but I have never been able to look at it without a shudder.

At five the tide began to come in. Very, very slowly the water rose around Island Rock. Up, up, up it came, while I watched it with fascinated eyes, feeling like a rat in a trap. The sun fell lower and lower; at eight o'clock the moon rose large and bright; at nine it was a lovely night, dear, calm, bright as day, and the water was swishing over the highest ledge of the rock. With some difficulty I climbed to the top and sat there to await the end. I had no longer any hope of rescue but, by a great effort, I preserved self-control. If I had to die, I would at least face death staunchly. But when I thought of my mother at home, it tasked all my energies to keep from breaking down utterly.

Suddenly I heard a whistle. Never was sound so sweet. I stood up and peered eagerly shoreward. Coming around the "Hole in the Wall" headland, on top of the cliffs, I saw a boy and a dog. I sent a wild halloo ringing shoreward.

The boy started, stopped and looked out towards Island Rock. The next moment he hailed me. It was Ernest's voice, and it was Laddie who was barking beside him.

"Ernest," I shouted wildly, "run for help—quick! quick! The tide will be over the rock in half an hour! Hurry, or you will be too late!"

Instead of starting off at full speed, as I expected him to do, Ernest stood still for a moment, and then began to pick his steps down a narrow path over the cliff, followed by Laddie.

"Ernest," I shouted frantically, "what are you doing? Why don't you go for help?"

Ernest had by this time reached a narrow ledge of rock just above the water-line. I noticed that he was carrying something over his arm.

"It would take too long," he shouted. "By the time I got to the Cove and a boat could row back here, you'd be drowned. Laddie and I will save you. Is there anything there you can tie a rope to? I've a coil of rope here that I think will be long enough to reach you. I've been down to the Cove and Alec Martin sent it up to your uncle."

I looked about me; a smooth, round hole had been worn clean through a thin part of the apex of the rock.

"I could fasten the rope if I had it!" I called. "But how can you get it to me?"

For answer Ernest tied a bit of driftwood to the rope and put it into

Laddie's mouth. The next minute the dog was swimming out to me. As soon as he came close I caught the rope. It was just long enough to stretch from shore to rock, allowing for a couple of hitches which Ernest gave around a small boulder on the ledge. I tied my camera case on my head by means of some string I found in my pocket, then I slipped into the water and, holding to the rope, went hand over hand to the shore with Laddie swimming beside me. Ernest held on to the shoreward end of the rope like grim death, a task that was no light one for his small arms. When I finally scrambled up beside him, his face was dripping with perspiration and he trembled like a leaf.

"Ern, you are a brick!" I exclaimed. "You've saved my life!"

"No, it was Laddie," said Ernest, refusing to take any credit at all.

We hurried home and arrived at Uncle Richard's about ten, just as they were going to bed. When Uncle Richard heard what had happened, he turned very pale, and murmured, "Thank God!" Aunt Kate got me out of my wet clothes as quickly as possible, put me away to bed in hot blankets and dosed me with ginger tea. I slept like a top and felt none the worse for my experience the next morning.

At the breakfast table Uncle Richard scarcely spoke. But, just as we finished, he said abruptly to Ernest, "I'm not going to sell Laddie. You and the dog saved Ned's life between you, and no dog who helped do that is ever going to be sold by me. Henceforth he belongs to you. I give him to you for your very own."

"Oh, Mr. Lawson!" said Ernest, with shining eyes.

I never saw a boy look so happy. As for Laddie, who was sitting beside him with his shaggy head on Ernest's knee, I really believe the dog understood, too. The look in his eyes was almost human. Uncle Richard leaned over and patted him.

"Good dog!" he said. "Good dog!"

At Five O'Clock in the Morning

Fate, in the guise of Mrs. Emory dropping a milk-can on the platform under his open window, awakened Murray that morning. Had not Mrs. Emory dropped that can, he would have slumbered peacefully until his usual hour for rising—a late one, be it admitted, for of all the boarders at Sweetbriar Cottage Murray was the most irregular in his habits.

"When a young man," Mrs. Emory was wont to remark sagely and a trifle

severely, "prowls about that pond half of the night, a-chasing of things what he calls 'moonlight effecks,' it ain't to be wondered at that he's sleepy in the morning. And it ain't the convenientest thing, nuther and noways, to keep the breakfast table set till the farm folks are thinking of dinner. But them artist men are not like other people, say what you will, and allowance has to be made for them. And I must say that I likes him real well and approves of him every other way."

If Murray had slept late that morning—well, he shudders yet over that "if." But aforesaid Fate saw to it that he woke when the hour of destiny and the milk-can struck, and having awakened he found he could not go to sleep again. It suddenly occurred to him that he had never seen a sunrise on the pond. Doubtless it would be very lovely down there in those dewy meadows at such a primitive hour; he decided to get up and see what the world looked like in the young daylight.

He scowled at a letter lying on his dressing table and thrust it into his pocket that it might be out of sight. He had written it the night before and the writing of it was going to cost him several things—a prospective million among others. So it is hardly to be wondered at if the sight of it did not reconcile him to the joys of early rising.

"Dear life and heart!" exclaimed Mrs. Emory, pausing in the act of scalding a milk-can when Murray emerged from a side door. "What on earth is the matter, Mr. Murray? You ain't sick now, surely? I told you them pond fogs was p'isen after night! If you've gone and got—"

"Nothing is the matter, dear lady," interrupted Murray, "and I haven't gone and got anything except an acute attack of early rising which is not in the least likely to become chronic. But at what hour of the night do you get up, you wonderful woman? Or rather do you ever go to bed at all? Here is the sun only beginning to rise and—positively yes, you have all your cows milked."

Mrs. Emory purred with delight.

"Folks as has fourteen cows to milk has to rise betimes," she answered with proud humility. "Laws, I don't complain—I've lots of help with the milking. How Mrs. Palmer manages, I really cannot comperhend—or rather, how she has managed. I suppose she'll be all right now since her niece came last night. I saw her posting to the pond pasture not ten minutes ago. She'll have to milk all them seven cows herself. But dear life and heart! Here I be palavering away and not a bite of breakfast ready for you!"

"I don't want any breakfast until the regular time for it," assured Murray. "I'm going down to the pond to see the sun rise."

"Now don't you go and get caught in the ma'sh," anxiously called Mrs.

Emory, as she never failed to do when she saw him starting for the pond. Nobody ever had got caught in the marsh, but Mrs. Emory lived in a chronic state of fear lest someone should.

"And if you once got stuck in that black mud you'd be sucked right down and never seen or heard tell of again till the day of judgment, like Adam Palmer's cow," she was wont to warn her boarders.

Murray sought his favourite spot for pond dreaming—a bloomy corner of the pasture that ran down into the blue water, with a dump of leafy maples on the left. He was very glad he had risen early. A miracle was being worked before his very eyes. The world was in a flush and tremor of maiden loveliness, instinct with all the marvellous fleeting charm of girlhood and spring and young morning. Overhead the sky was a vast high-sprung arch of unstained crystal. Down over the sand dunes, where the pond ran out into the sea, was a great arc of primrose smitten through with auroral crimsonings. Beneath it the pond waters shimmered with a hundred fairy hues, but just before him they were clear as a flawless mirror. The fields around him glistened with dews, and a little wandering wind, blowing lightly from some bourne in the hills, strayed down over the slopes, bringing with it an unimaginable odour and freshness, and fluttered over the pond, leaving a little path of dancing silver ripples across the mirror-glory of the water. Birds were singing in the beech woods over on Orchard Knob Farm, answering to each other from shore to shore, until the very air was tremulous with the elfin music of this wonderful midsummer dawn.

"I will get up at sunrise every morning of my life hereafter," exclaimed Murray rapturously, not meaning a syllable of it, but devoutly believing he did.

Just as the fiery disc of the sun peered over the sand dunes Murray heard music that was not of the birds. It was a girl's voice singing beyond the maples to his left—a clear sweet voice, blithely trilling out the old-fashioned song, "Five O'Clock in the Morning."

"Mrs. Palmer's niece!"

Murray sprang to his feet and tiptoed cautiously through the maples. He had heard so much from Mrs. Palmer about her niece that he felt reasonably well acquainted with her. Moreover, Mrs. Palmer had assured him that Mollie was a very pretty girl. Now a pretty girl milking cows at sunrise in the meadows sounded well.

Mrs. Palmer had not over-rated her niece's beauty. Murray said so to himself with a little whistle of amazement as he leaned unseen on the pasture fence and looked at the girl who was milking a placid Jersey less than ten

yards away from him. Murray's artistic instinct responded to the whole scene with a thrill of satisfaction.

He could see only her profile, but that was perfect, and the colouring of the oval cheek and the beautiful curve of the chin were something to adore. Her hair, ruffled into lovable little ringlets by the morning wind, was coiled in glistening chestnut masses high on her bare head, and her arms, bare to the elbow, were as white as marble. Presently she began to sing again, and this time Murray joined in. She half rose from her milking stool and cast a startled glance at the maples. Then she dropped back again and began to milk determinedly, but Murray could have sworn that he saw a demure smile hovering about her lips. That, and the revelation of her full face, decided him. He sprang over the fence and sauntered across the intervening space of lush clover blossoms.

"Good morning," he said coolly. He had forgotten her other name, and it did not matter; at five o'clock in the morning people who met in dewy clover fields might disregard the conventionalities. "Isn't it rather a large contract for you to be milking seven cows all alone? May I help you?"

Mollie looked up at him over her shoulder. She had glorious grey eyes. Her face was serene and undisturbed. "Can you milk?" she asked.

"Unlikely as it may seem, I can," said Murray. "I have never confessed it to Mrs. Emory, because I was afraid she would inveigle me into milking her fourteen cows. But I don't mind helping you. I learned to milk when I was a shaver on my vacations at a grandfatherly farm. May I have that extra pail?"

Murray captured a milking stool and rounded up another Jersey. Before sitting down he seemed struck with an idea.

"My name is Arnold Murray. I board at Sweetbriar Cottage, next farm to Orchard Knob. That makes us near neighbours."

"I suppose it does," said Mollie.

Murray mentally decided that her voice was the sweetest he had ever heard. He was glad he had arranged his cow at such an angle that he could study her profile. It was amazing that Mrs. Palmer's niece should have such a profile. It looked as if centuries of fine breeding were responsible for it.

"What a morning!" he said enthusiastically. "It harks back to the days when earth was young. They must have had just such mornings as this in Eden."

"Do you always get up so early?" asked Mollie practically.

"Always," said Murray without a blush. Then—"But no, that is a fib, and I cannot tell fibs to you. The truth is your tribute. I never get up early. It was fate that roused me and brought me here this morning. The morning is a

miracle—and you, I might suppose you were born of the sunrise, if Mrs. Palmer hadn't told me all about you."

"What did she tell you about me?" asked Mollie, changing cows. Murray discovered that she was tall and that the big blue print apron shrouded a singularly graceful figure.

"She said you were the best-looking girl in Bruce county. I have seen very few of the girls in Bruce county, but I know she is right."

"That compliment is not nearly so pretty as the sunrise one," said Mollie reflectively. "Mrs. Palmer has told me things about you," she added.

"Curiosity knows no gender," hinted Murray.

"She said you were good-looking and lazy and different from other people."

"All compliments," said Murray in a gratified tone.

"Lazy?"

"Certainly. Laziness is a virtue in these strenuous days, I was not born with it, but I have painstakingly acquired it, and I am proud of my success. I have time to enjoy life."

"I think that I like you," said Mollie.

"You have the merit of being able to enter into a situation," he assured her.

When the last Jersey was milked they carried the pails down to the spring where the creamers were sunk and strained the milk into them. Murray washed the pails and Mollie wiped them and set them in a gleaming row on the shelf under a big maple.

"Thank you," she said.

"You are not going yet," said Murray resolutely. "The time I saved you in milking three cows belongs to me. We will spend it in a walk along the pond shore. I will show you a path I have discovered under the beeches. It is just wide enough for two. Come."

He took her hand and drew her through the copse into a green lane, where the ferns grew thickly on either side and the pond waters plashed dreamily below them. He kept her hand in his as they went down the path, and she did not try to withdraw it. About them was the great, pure silence of the morning, faintly threaded with caressing sounds—croon of birds, gurgle of waters, sough of wind. The spirit of youth and love hovered over them and they spoke no word.

When they finally came out on a little green nook swimming in early

sunshine and arched over by maples, with the wide shimmer of the pond before it and the gold dust of blossoms over the grass, the girl drew a long breath of delight.

"It is a morning left over from Eden, isn't it?" said Murray.

"Yes," said Mollie softly.

Murray bent toward her. "You are Eve," he said. "You are the only woman in the world—for me. Adam must have told Eve just what he thought about her the first time he saw her. There were no conventionalities in Eden—and people could not have taken long to make up their minds. We are in Eden just now. One can say what he thinks in Eden without being ridiculous. You are divinely fair, Eve. Your eyes are stars of the morning—your cheek has the flush it stole from the sunrise-your lips are redder than the roses of paradise. And I love you, Eve."

Mollie lowered her eyes and the long fringe of her lashes lay in a burnished semi-circle on her cheek.

"I think," she said slowly, "that it must have been very delightful in Eden. But we are not really there, you know—we are only playing that we are. And it is time for me to go back. I must get the breakfast—that sounds too prosaic for paradise."

Murray bent still closer.

"Before we remember that we are only playing at paradise, will you kiss me, dear Eve?"

"You are very audacious," said Mollie coldly.

"We are in Eden yet," he urged. "That makes all the difference."

"Well," said Mollie. And Murray kissed her.

They had passed back over the fern path and were in the pasture before either spoke again. Then Murray said, "We have left Eden behind—but we can always return there when we will. And although we were only playing at paradise, I was not playing at love. I meant all I said, Mollie."

"Have you meant it often?" asked Mollie significantly.

"I never meant it—or even played at it—before," he answered. "I did—at one time—contemplate the possibility of playing at it. But that was long ago—as long ago as last night. I am glad to the core of my soul that I decided against it before I met you, dear Eve. I have the letter of decision in my coat pocket this moment. I mean to mail it this afternoon."

"'Curiosity knows no gender,'" quoted Mollie.

"Then, to satisfy your curiosity, I must bore you with some personal history. My parents died when I was a little chap, and my uncle brought me up. He has been immensely good to me, but he is a bit of a tyrant. Recently he picked out a wife for me—the daughter of an old sweetheart of his. I have never even seen her. But she has arrived in town on a visit to some relatives there. Uncle Dick wrote to me to return home at once and pay my court to the lady; I protested. He wrote again—a letter, short and the reverse of sweet. If I refused to do my best to win Miss Mannering he would disown me—never speak to me again—cut me off with a quarter. Uncle always means what he says—that is one of our family traits, you understand. I spent some miserable, undecided days. It was not the threat of disinheritance that worried me, although when you have been brought up to regard yourself as a prospective millionaire it is rather difficult to adjust your vision to a pauper focus. But it was the thought of alienating Uncle Dick. I love the dear, determined old chap like a father. But last night my guardian angel was with me and I decided to remain my own man. So I wrote to Uncle Dick, respectfully but firmly declining to become a candidate for Miss Mannering's hand."

"But you have never seen her," said Mollie. "She may be—almost—charming."

"'If she be not fair to me, what care I how fair she be?'" quoted Murray. "As you say, she may be—almost charming; but she is not Eve. She is merely one of a million other women, as far as I am concerned. Don't let's talk of her. Let us talk only of ourselves—there is nothing else that is half so interesting."

"And will your uncle really cast you off?" asked Mollie.

"Not a doubt of it."

"What will you do?"

"Work, dear Eve. My carefully acquired laziness must be thrown to the winds and I shall work. That is the rule outside of Eden. Don't worry. I've painted pictures that have actually been sold. I'll make a living for us somehow."

"Us?"

"Of course. You are engaged to me."

"I am not," said Mollie indignantly.

"Mollie! Mollie! After that kiss! Fie, fie!"

"You are very absurd," said Mollie, "But your absurdity has been amusing. I have—yes, positively—I have enjoyed your Eden comedy. But now you must not come any further with me. My aunt might not approve. Here is my path to Orchard Knob farmhouse. There, I presume, is yours to Sweetbriar

Cottage. Good morning."

"I am coming over to see you this afternoon," said Murray coolly. "But you needn't be afraid. I will not tell tales out of Eden. I will be a hypocrite and pretend to Mrs. Palmer that we have never met before. But you and I will know and remember. Now, you may go. I reserve to myself the privilege of standing here and watching you out of sight."

That afternoon Murray strolled over to Orchard Knob, going into the kitchen without knocking as was the habit in that free and easy world. Mrs. Palmer was lying on the lounge with a pungent handkerchief bound about her head, but keeping a vigilant eye on a very pretty, very plump brown-eyed girl who was stirring a kettleful of cherry preserve on the range.

"Good afternoon, Mrs. Palmer," said Murray, wondering where Mollie was. "I'm sorry to see that you look something like an invalid."

"I've a raging, ramping headache," said Mrs. Palmer solemnly. "I had it all night and I'm good for nothing. Mollie, you'd better take them cherries off. Mr. Murray, this is my niece, Mollie Booth."

"What?" said Murray explosively.

"Miss Mollie Booth," repeated Mrs. Palmer in a louder tone.

Murray regained outward self-control and bowed to the blushing Mollie.

"And what about Eve?" he thought helplessly. "Who—what was she? Did I dream her? Was she a phantom of delight? No, no, phantoms don't milk cows. She was flesh and blood. No chilly nymph exhaling from the mists of the marsh could have given a kiss like that."

"Mollie has come to stay the rest of the summer with me," said Mrs. Palmer. "I hope to goodness my tribulations with hired girls is over at last. They have made a wreck of me."

Murray rapidly reflected. This development, he decided, released him from his promise to tell no tales. "I met a young lady down in the pond pasture this morning," he said deliberately. "I talked with her for a few minutes. I supposed her to be your niece. Who was she?"

"Oh, that was Miss Mannering," said Mrs. Palmer.

"What?" said Murray again.

"Mannering—Dora Mannering," said Mrs. Palmer loudly, wondering if Mr. Murray were losing his hearing. "She came here last night just to see me. I haven't seen her since she was a child of twelve. I used to be her nurse before I was married. I was that proud to think she thought it worth her while to look me up. And, mind you, this morning, when she found me crippled with

headache and not able to do a hand's turn, that girl, Mr. Murray, went and milked seven cows"—"only four," murmured Murray, but Mrs. Palmer did not hear him—"for me. Couldn't prevent her. She said she had learned to milk for fun one summer when she was in the country, and she did it. And then she got breakfast for the men—Mollie didn't come till the ten o'clock train. Miss Mannering is as capable as if she had been riz on a farm."

"Where is she now?" demanded Murray.

"Oh, she's gone."

"What?"

"Gone," shouted Mrs. Palmer, "gone. She left on the train Mollie come on. Gracious me, has the man gone crazy? He hasn't seemed like himself at all this afternoon."

Murray had bolted madly out of the house and was striding down the lane.

Blind fool—unspeakable idiot that he had been! To take her for Mrs. Palmer's niece—that peerless creature with the calm acceptance of any situation, which marked the woman of the world, with the fine appreciation and quickness of repartee that spoke of generations of culture—to imagine that she could be Mollie Booth! He had been blind, besottedly blind. And now he had lost her! She would never forgive him; she had gone without a word or sign.

As he reached the last curve of the lane where it looped about the apple trees, a plump figure came flying down the orchard slope.

"Mr. Murray, Mr. Murray," Mollie Booth called breathlessly. "Will you please come here just a minute?"

Murray crossed over to the paling rather grumpily. He did not want to talk with Mollie Booth just then. Confound it, what did the girl want? Why was she looking so mysterious?

Mollie produced a little square grey envelope from some feminine hiding place and handed it over the paling.

"She give me this at the station—Miss Mannering did," she gasped, "and asked me to give it to you without letting Aunt Emily Jane see. I couldn't get a chanst when you was in, but as soon as you went I slipped out by the porch door and followed you. You went so fast I near died trying to head you off."

"You dear little soul," said Murray, suddenly radiant. "It is too bad you have had to put yourself so out of breath on my account. But I am immensely obliged to you. The next time your young man wants a trusty private messenger just refer him to me."

"Git away with you," giggled Mollie. "I must hurry back 'fore Aunt Emily Jane gits wind I'm gone. I hope there's good news in your girl's letter. My, but didn't you look flat when Aunt said she'd went!"

Murray beamed at her idiotically. When she had vanished among the trees he opened his letter.

"Dear Mr. Murray," it ran, "your unblushing audacity of the morning deserves some punishment. I hereby punish you by prompt departure from Orchard Knob. Yet I do not dislike audacity, at some times, in some places, in some people. It is only from a sense of duty that I punish it in this case. And it was really pleasant in Eden. If you do not mail that letter, and if you still persist in your very absurd interpretation of the meaning of Eve's kiss, we may meet again in town. Until then I remain,

"Very sincerely yours,

"Dora Lynne Mannering."

Murray kissed the grey letter and put it tenderly away in his pocket. Then he took his letter to his uncle and tore it into tiny fragments. Finally he looked at his watch.

"If I hurry, I can catch the afternoon train to town," he said.

Aunt Susanna's Birthday Celebration

Good afternoon, Nora May. I'm real glad to see you. I've been watching you coming down the hill and I hoping you'd turn in at our gate. Going to visit with me this afternoon? That's good. I'm feeling so happy and delighted and I've been hankering for someone to tell it all to.

Tell you about it? Well, I guess I might as well. It ain't any breach of confidence.

You didn't know Anne Douglas? She taught school here three years ago, afore your folks moved over from Talcott. She belonged up Montrose way and she was only eighteen when she came here to teach. She boarded with us and her and me were the greatest chums. She was just a sweet girl.

She was the prettiest teacher we ever had, and that's saying a good deal, for Springdale has always been noted for getting good-looking schoolmarms, just as Miller's Road is noted for its humly ones.

Anne had yards of brown wavy hair and big, dark blue eyes. Her face was kind o' pale, but when she smiled you would have to smile too, if you'd been

chief mourner at your own funeral. She was a well-spring of joy in the house, and we all loved her.

Gilbert Martin began to drive her the very first week she was here. Gilbert is my sister Julia's son, and a fine young fellow he is. It ain't good manners to brag of your own relations, but I'm always forgetting and doing it. Gil was a great pet of mine. He was so bright and nice-mannered everybody liked him. Him and Anne were a fine-looking couple, Nora May. Not but what they had their shortcomings. Anne's nose was a mite too long and Gil had a crooked mouth. Besides, they was both pretty proud and sperrited and high-strung.

But they thought an awful lot of each other. It made me feel young again to see 'em. Anne wasn't a mossel vain, but nights she expected Gil she'd prink for hours afore her glass, fixing her hair this way and that, and trying on all her good clothes to see which become her most. I used to love her for it. And I used to love to see the way Gil's face would light up when she came into a room or place where he was. Amanda Perkins, she says to me once, "Anne Douglas and Gil Martin are most terrible struck on each other." And she said it in a tone that indicated that it was a dreadful disgraceful and unbecoming state of affairs. Amanda had a disappointment once and it soured her. I immediately responded, "Yes, they are most terrible struck on each other," and I said it in a tone that indicated I thought it a most beautiful and lovely thing that they should be so.

And so it was. You're rather too young to be thinking of such things, Nora May, but you'll remember my words when the time comes.

Another nephew of mine, James Ebenezer Lawson—he calls himself James E. back there in town, and I don't blame him, for I never could stand Ebenezer for a name myself; but that's neither here nor there. Well, he said their love was idyllic, I ain't very sure what that means. I looked it up in the dictionary after James Ebenezer left—I wouldn't display my ignorance afore him—but I can't say that I was much the wiser for it. Anyway, it meant something real nice; I was sure of that by the way James Ebenezer spoke and the wistful look in his eyes. James Ebenezer isn't married; he was to have been, and she died a month afore the wedding day. He was never the same man again.

Well, to get back to Gilbert and Anne. When Anne's school year ended in June she resigned and went home to get ready to be married. The wedding was to be in September, and I promised Anne faithful I'd go over to Montrose in August for two weeks and help her to get her quilts ready. Anne thought that nobody could quilt like me. I was as tickled as a girl at the thought of visiting with Anne for two weeks, but I never went; things happened before August.

I don't know rightly how the trouble began. Other folks—jealous folks—

made mischief. Anne was thirty miles away and Gilbert couldn't see her every day to keep matters clear and fair. Besides, as I've said, they were both proud and high-sperrited. The upshot of it was they had a terrible quarrel and the engagement was broken.

When two people don't care overly much for each other, Nora May, a quarrel never amounts to much between them, and it's soon made up. But when they love each other better than life it cuts so deep and hurts so much that nine times out of ten they won't ever forgive each other. The more you love anybody, Nora May, the more he can hurt you. To be sure, you're too young to be thinking of such things.

It all came like a thunderclap on Gil's friends here at Greendale, because we hadn't ever suspected things were going wrong. The first thing we knew was that Anne had gone up west to teach school again at St. Mary's, eighty miles away, and Gilbert, he went out to Manitoba on a harvest excursion and stayed there. It just about broke his parents' hearts. He was their only child and they just worshipped him.

Gil and Anne both wrote to me off and on, but never a word, not so much as a name, did they say of each other. I'd 'a' writ and asked 'em the rights of the fuss if I could, in hopes of patching it up, but I can't write now—my hand is too shaky—and mebbe it was just as well, for meddling is terribly risky work in a love trouble, Nora May. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred the last state of a meddler and them she meddles with is worse than the first.

So I just set tight and said nothing, while everybody else in the clan was talking Anne and Gil sixty words to the minute.

Well, last birthday morning I was feeling terrible disperrited. I had made up my mind that my birthday was always to be a good thing for other people, and there didn't seem one blessed thing I could do to make anybody glad. Emma Matilda and George and the children were all well and happy and wanted for nothing that I could give them. I begun to be afraid I'd lived long enough, Nora May. When a woman gets to the point where she can't give a gift of joy to anyone, there ain't much use in her living. I felt real old and worn out and useless.

I was sitting here under these very trees—they was just budding out in leaf then, as young and cheerful as if they wasn't a hundred years old. And I sighed right out loud and said, "Oh, Grandpa Holland, it's time I was put away up on the hill there with you." And with that the gate banged and there was Nancy Jane Whitmore's boy, Sam, with two letters for me.

One was from Anne up at St. Mary's and the other was from Gil out in Manitoba.

I read Anne's first. She just struck right into things in the first paragraph. She said her year at St. Mary's was nearly up, and when it was she meant to quit teaching and go away to New York and learn to be a trained nurse. She said she was just broken-hearted about Gilbert, and would always love him to the day of her death. But she knew he didn't care anything more about her after the way he had acted, and there was nothing left for her in life but to do something for other people, and so on and so on, for twelve mortal pages. Anne is a fine writer, and I just cried like a babe over that letter, it was so touching, although I was enjoying myself hugely all the time, I was so delighted to find out that Anne loved Gilbert still. I was getting skeered she didn't, her letters all winter had been so kind of jokey and frivolous, all about the good times she was having, and the parties she went to, and the new dresses she got. New dresses! When I read that letter of Anne's, I knew that all the purple and fine linen in the world was just like so much sackcloth and ashes to her as long as Gilbert was sulking out on a prairie farm.

Well, I wiped my eyes and polished up my specs, but I might have spared myself the trouble, for in five minutes, Nora May, there was I sobbing again; over Gilbert's letter. By the most curious coincidence he had opened his heart to me too. Being a man, he wasn't so discursive as Anne; he said his say in four pages, but I could read the heartache between the lines. He wrote that he was going to Klondike and would start in a month's time. He was sick of living now that he'd lost Anne. He said he loved her better than his life and always would, and could never forget her, but he knew she didn't care anything about him now after the way she'd acted, and he wanted to get as far away from her and the torturing thought of her as he could. So he was going to Klondike—going to Klondike, Nora May, when his mother was writing to him to come home every week and Anne was breaking her heart for him at St. Mary's.

Well, I folded up them letters and, says I, "Grandpa Holland, I guess my birthday celebration is here ready to hand." I thought real hard. I couldn't write myself to explain to those two people that they each thought the world of each other still—my hands are too stiff; and I couldn't get anyone else to write because I couldn't let out what they'd told me in confidence. So I did a mean, dishonourable thing, Nora May. I sent Anne's letter to Gilbert and Gilbert's to Anne. I asked Emma Matilda to address them, and Emma Matilda did it and asked no questions. I brought her up that way.

Then I settled down to wait. In less than a month Gilbert's mother had a letter from him saying that he was coming home to settle down and marry Anne. He arrived home yesterday and last night Anne came to Springdale on her way home from St. Mary's. They came to see me this morning and said things to me I ain't going to repeat because they would sound fearful vain.

They were so happy that they made me feel as if it was a good thing to have lived eighty years in a world where folks could be so happy. They said their new joy was my birthday gift to them. The wedding is to be in September and I'm going to Montrose in August to help Anne with her quilts. I don't think anything will happen to prevent this time—no quarrelling, anyhow. Those two young creatures have learned their lesson. You'd better take it to heart too, Nora May. It's less trouble to learn it at second hand. Don't you ever quarrel with your real beau—it don't matter about the sham ones, of course. Don't take offence at trifles or listen to what other people tell you about him—outsiders, that is, that want to make mischief. What you think about him is of more importance than what they do. To be sure, you're too young yet to be thinking of such things at all. But just mind what old Aunt Susanna told you when your time comes.

Bertie's New Year

He stood on the sagging doorstep and looked out on the snowy world. His hands were clasped behind him, and his thin face wore a thoughtful, puzzled look. The door behind him opened jerkingly, and a scowling woman came out with a pan of dishwater in her hand.

"Ain't you gone yet, Bert?" she said sharply. "What in the world are you hanging round for?"

"It's early yet," said Bertie cheerfully. "I thought maybe George Fraser'd be along and I'd get a lift as far as the store."

"Well, I never saw such laziness! No wonder old Sampson won't keep you longer than the holidays if you're no smarter than that. Goodness, if I don't settle that boy!"—as the sound of fretful crying came from the kitchen behind her.

"What is wrong with William John?" asked Bertie.

"Why, he wants to go out coasting with those Robinson boys, but he can't. He hasn't got any mittens and he would catch his death of cold again."

Her voice seemed to imply that William John had died of cold several times already.

Bertie looked soberly down at his old, well-darned mittens. It was very cold, and he would have a great many errands to run. He shivered, and looked up at his aunt's hard face as she stood wiping her dish-pan with a grim frown which boded no good to the discontented William John. Then he suddenly

pulled off his mittens and held them out.

"Here—he can have mine. I'll get on without them well enough."

"Nonsense!" said Mrs. Ross, but less unkindly. "The fingers would freeze off you. Don't be a goose."

"It's all right," persisted Bertie. "I don't need them—much. And William John doesn't hardly ever get out."

He thrust them into her hand and ran quickly down the street, as though he feared that the keen air might make him change his mind in spite of himself. He had to stop a great many times that day to breathe on his purple hands. Still, he did not regret having lent his mittens to William John—poor, pale, sickly little William John, who had so few pleasures.

It was sunset when Bertie laid an armful of parcels down on the steps of Doctor Forbes's handsome house. His back was turned towards the big bay window at one side, and he was busy trying to warm his hands, so he did not see the two small faces looking at him through the frosty panes.

"Just look at that poor little boy, Amy," said the taller of the two. "He is almost frozen, I believe. Why doesn't Caroline hurry and open the door?"

"There she goes now," said Amy. "Edie, couldn't we coax her to let him come in and get warm? He looks so cold." And she drew her sister out into the hall, where the housekeeper was taking Bertie's parcels.

"Caroline," whispered Edith timidly, "please tell that poor little fellow to come in and get warm—he looks very cold."

"He's used to the cold, I warrant you," said the housekeeper rather impatiently. "It won't hurt him."

"But it is Christmas week," said Edith gravely, "and you know, Caroline, when Mamma was here she used to say that we ought to be particularly thoughtful of others who were not so happy or well-off as we were at this time."

Perhaps Edith's reference to her mother softened Caroline, for she turned to Bertie and said cordially enough, "Come in, and warm yourself before you go. It's a cold day."

Bertie shyly followed her to the kitchen.

"Sit up to the fire," said Caroline, placing a chair for him, while Edith and Amy came round to the other side of the stove and watched him with friendly interest.

"What's your name?" asked Caroline.

"Robert Ross, ma'am."

"Oh, you're Mrs. Ross's nephew then," said Caroline, breaking eggs into her cake-bowl, and whisking them deftly round. "And you're Sampson's errand boy just now? My goodness," as the boy spread his blue hands over the fire, "where are your mittens, child? You're never out without mittens a day like this!"

"I lent them to William John—he hadn't any," faltered Bertie. He did not know but that the lady might consider it a grave crime to be mittenless.

"No mittens!" exclaimed Amy in dismay. "Why, I have three pairs. And who is William John?"

"He is my cousin," said Bertie. "And he's awful sickly. He wanted to go out to play, and he hadn't any mittens, so I lent him mine. I didn't miss them—much."

"What kind of a Christmas did you have?"

"We didn't have any."

"No Christmas!" said Amy, quite overcome. "Oh, well, I suppose you are going to have a good time on New Year's instead."

Bertie shook his head.

"No'm, I guess not. We never have it different from other times."

Amy was silent from sheer amazement. Edith understood better, and she changed the subject.

"Have you any brothers or sisters, Bertie?"

"No'm," returned Bertie cheerfully. "I guess there's enough of us without that. I must be going now. I'm very much obliged to you."

Edith slipped from the room as he spoke, and met him again at the door. She held out a pair of warm-looking mittens.

"These are for William John," she said simply, "so that you can have your own. They are a pair of mine which are too big for me. I know Papa will say it is all right. Goodbye, Bertie."

"Goodbye—and thank you," stammered Bertie, as the door closed. Then he hastened home to William John.

That evening Doctor Forbes noticed a peculiarly thoughtful look on Edith's face as she sat gazing into the glowing coal fire after dinner. He laid his hand on her dark curls inquiringly.

"What are you musing over?"

"There was a little boy here today," began Edith.

"Oh, such a dear little boy," broke in Amy eagerly from the corner, where she was playing with her kitten. "His name was Bertie Ross. He brought up the parcels, and we asked him in to get warm. He had no mittens, and his hands were almost frozen. And, oh, Papa, just think!—he said he never had any Christmas or New Year at all."

"Poor little fellow!" said the doctor. "I've heard of him; a pretty hard time he has of it, I think."

"He was so pretty, Papa. And Edie gave him her blue mittens for William John."

"The plot deepens. Who is William John?"

"Oh, a cousin or something, didn't he say Edie? Anyway, he is sick, and he wanted to go coasting, and Bertie gave him his mittens. And I suppose he never had any Christmas either."

"There are plenty who haven't," said the doctor, taking up his paper with a sigh. "Well, girlies, you seem interested in this little fellow so, if you like, you may invite him and his cousin to take dinner with you on New Year's night."

"Oh, Papa!" said Edith, her eyes shining like stars.

The doctor laughed. "Write him a nice little note of invitation—you are the lady of the house, you know—and I'll see that he gets it tomorrow."

And this was how it came to pass that Bertie received the next day his first invitation to dine out. He read the little note through three times in order fully to take in its contents, and then went around the rest of the day in deep abstraction as though he was trying to decide some very important question. It was with the same expression that he opened the door at home in the evening. His aunt was stirring some oatmeal mush on the stove.

"Is that you, Bert?" She spoke sharply. She always spoke sharply, even when not intending it; it had grown to be a habit.

"Yes'm," said Bertie meekly, as he hung up his cap.

"I s'pose you've only got one day more at the store," said Mrs. Ross. "Sampson didn't say anything about keeping you longer, did he?"

"No. He said he couldn't—I asked him."

"Well, I didn't expect he would. You'll have a holiday on New Year's anyhow; whether you'll have anything to eat or not is a different question."

"I've an invitation to dinner," said Bertie timidly, "me and William John. It's from Doctor Forbes's little girls—the ones that gave me the mittens."

He handed her the little note, and Mrs. Ross stooped down and read it by the fitful gleam of light which came from the cracked stove.

"Well, you can please yourself," she said as she handed it back, "but William John couldn't go if he had ten invitations. He caught cold coasting yesterday. I told him he would, but he was bound to go, and now he's laid up for a week. Listen to him barking in the bedroom there."

"Well, then, I won't go either," said Bertie with a sigh, it might be of relief, or it might be of disappointment. "I wouldn't go there all alone."

"You're a goose!" said his aunt. "They wouldn't eat you. But as I said, please yourself. Anyhow, hold your tongue about it to William John, or you'll have him crying and bawling to go too."

The caution came too late. William John had already heard it, and when his mother went in to rub his chest with liniment, she found him with the ragged quilt over his head crying.

"Come, William John, I want to rub you."

"I don't want to be rubbed—g'way," sobbed William John. "I heard you out there—you needn't think I didn't. Bertie's going to Doctor Forbes's to dinner and I can't go."

"Well, you've only yourself to thank for it," returned his mother. "If you hadn't persisted in going out coasting yesterday when I wanted you to stay in, you'd have been able to go to Doctor Forbes's. Little boys who won't do as they're told always get into trouble. Stop crying, now. I dare say if Bertie goes they'll send you some candy, or something."

But William John refused to be comforted. He cried himself to sleep that night, and when Bertie went in to see him next morning, he found him sitting up in bed with his eyes red and swollen and the faded quilt drawn up around his pinched face.

"Well, William John, how are you?"

"I ain't any better," replied William John mournfully. "I s'pose you'll have a great time tomorrow night, Bertie?"

"Oh, I'm not going since you can't," said Bertie cheerily. He thought this would comfort William John, but it had exactly the opposite effect. William John had cried until he could cry no more, but he turned around and sobbed.

"There now!" he said in tearless despair. "That's just what I expected. I did s'pose if I couldn't go you would, and tell me about it. You're mean as mean can be."

"Come now, William John, don't be so cross. I thought you'd rather have

me home, but I'll go, if you want me to."

"Honest, now?"

"Yes, honest. I'll go anywhere to please you. I must be off to the store now. Goodbye."

Thus committed, Bertie took his courage in both hands and went. The next evening at dusk found him standing at Doctor Forbes's door with a very violently beating heart. He was carefully dressed in his well-worn best suit and a neat white collar. The frosty air had crimsoned his cheeks and his hair was curling round his face.

Caroline opened the door and showed him into the parlour, where Edith and Amy were eagerly awaiting him.

"Happy New Year, Bertie," cried Amy. "And—but, why, where is William John?"

"He couldn't come," answered Bertie anxiously—he was afraid he might not be welcome without William John. "He's real sick. He caught cold and has to stay in bed; but he wanted to come awful bad."

"Oh, dear me! Poor William John!" said Amy in a disappointed tone. But all further remarks were cut short by the entrance of Doctor Forbes.

"How do you do?" he said, giving Bertie's hand a hearty shake. "But where is the other little fellow my girls were expecting?"

Bertie patiently reaccounted for William John's non-appearance.

"It's a bad time for colds," said the doctor, sitting down and attacking the fire. "I dare say, though, you have to run so fast these days that a cold couldn't catch you. I suppose you'll soon be leaving Sampson's. He told me he didn't need you after the holiday season was over. What are you going at next? Have you anything in view?"

Bertie shook his head sorrowfully.

"No, sir; but," he added more cheerfully, "I guess I'll find something if I hunt around lively. I almost always do."

He forgot his shyness; his face flushed hopefully, and he looked straight at the doctor with his bright, earnest eyes. The doctor poked the fire energetically and looked very wise. But just then the girls came up and carried Bertie off to display their holiday gifts. And there was a fur cap and a pair of mittens for him! He wondered whether he was dreaming.

"And here's a picture-book for William John," said Amy, "and there is a sled out in the kitchen for him. Oh, there's the dinner-bell. I'm awfully hungry.

Papa says that is my 'normal condition,' but I don't know what that means."

As for that dinner—Bertie might sometimes have seen such a repast in delightful dreams, but certainly never out of them. It was a feast to be dated from.

When the plum pudding came on, the doctor, who had been notably silent, leaned back in his chair, placed his finger-tips together, and looked critically at Bertie.

"So Mr. Sampson can't keep you?"

Bertie's face sobered at once. He had almost forgotten his responsibilities.

"No, sir. He says I'm too small for the heavy work."

"Well, you are rather small—but no doubt you will grow. Boys have a queer habit of doing that. I think you know how to make yourself useful. I need a boy here to run errands and look after my horse. If you like, I'll try you. You can live here, and go to school. I sometimes hear of places for boys in my rounds, and the first good one that will suit you, I'll bespeak for you. How will that do?"

"Oh, sir, you are too good," said Bertie with a choke in his voice.

"Well, that is settled," said the doctor genially. "Come on Monday then. And perhaps we can do something for that other little chap, William, or John, or whatever his name is. Will you have some more pudding, Bertie?"

"No, thank you," said Bertie. Pudding, indeed! He could not have eaten another mouthful after such wonderful and unexpected good fortune.

After dinner they played games, and cracked nuts, and roasted apples, until the clock struck nine; then Bertie got up to go.

"Off, are you?" said the doctor, looking up from his paper. "Well, I'll expect you on Monday, remember."

"Yes, sir," said Bertie happily. He was not likely to forget.

As he went out Amy came through the hall with a red sled.

"Here is William John's present. I've tied all the other things on so that they can't fall off."

Edith was at the door-with a parcel. "Here are some nuts and candies for William John," she said. "And tell him we all wish him a 'Happy New Year.'"

"Thank you," said Bertie. "I've had a splendid time. I'll tell William John. Goodnight."

He stepped out. It was frostier than ever. The snow crackled and snapped,

the stars were keen and bright, but to Bertie, running down the street with William John's sled thumping merrily behind him, the world was aglow with rosy hope and promise. He was quite sure he could never forget this wonderful New Year.

Between the Hill and the Valley

It was one of the moist, pleasantly odorous nights of early spring. There was a chill in the evening air, but the grass was growing green in sheltered spots, and Jeffrey Miller had found purple-petalled violets and pink arbutus on the hill that day. Across a valley filled with beech and fir, there was a sunset afterglow, creamy yellow and pale red, with a new moon swung above it. It was a night for a man to walk alone and dream of his love, which was perhaps why Jeffrey Miller came so loiteringly across the springy hill pasture, with his hands full of the mayflowers.

He was a tall, broad-shouldered man of forty, and looking no younger, with dark grey eyes and a tanned, clean-cut face, clean-shaven save for a drooping moustache. Jeffrey Miller was considered a handsome man, and Bayside people had periodical fits of wondering why he had never married. They pitied him for the lonely life he must lead alone there at the Valley Farm, with only a deaf old housekeeper as a companion, for it did not occur to the Bayside people in general that a couple of shaggy dogs could be called companions, and they did not know that books make very excellent comrades for people who know how to treat them.

One of Jeffrey's dogs was with him now—the oldest one, with white breast and paws and a tawny coat. He was so old that he was half-blind and rather deaf, but, with one exception, he was the dearest of living creatures to Jeffrey Miller, for Sara Stuart had given him the sprawly, chubby little pup years ago.

They came down the hill together. A group of men were standing on the bridge in the hollow, discussing Colonel Stuart's funeral of the day before. Jeffrey caught Sara's name and paused on the outskirts of the group to listen. Sometimes he thought that if he were lying dead under six feet of turf and Sara Stuart's name were pronounced above him, his heart would give a bound of life.

"Yes, the old kunnel's gone at last," Christopher Jackson was saying. "He took his time dyin', that's sartain. Must be a kind of relief for Sara—she's had to wait on him, hand and foot, for years. But no doubt she'll feel pretty lonesome. Wonder what she'll do?"

"Is there any particular reason for her to do anything?" asked Alec Churchill.

"Well, she'll have to leave Pinehurst. The estate's entailed and goes to her cousin, Charles Stuart."

There were exclamations of surprise from the other men on hearing this. Jeffrey drew nearer, absently patting his dog's head. He had not known it either.

"Oh, yes," said Christopher, enjoying all the importance of exclusive information. "I thought everybody knew that. Pinehurst goes to the oldest male heir. The old kunnel felt it keen that he hadn't a son. Of course, there's plenty of money and Sara'll get that. But I guess she'll feel pretty bad at leaving her old home. Sara ain't as young as she used to be, neither. Let me see—she must be thirty-eight. Well, she's left pretty lonesome."

"Maybe she'll stay on at Pinehurst," said Job Crowe. "It'd only be right for her cousin to give her a home there."

Christopher shook his head.

"No, I understand they're not on very good terms. Sara don't like Charles Stuart or his wife—and I don't blame her. She won't stay there, not likely. Probably she'll go and live in town. Strange she never married. She was reckoned handsome, and had plenty of beaus at one time."

Jeffrey swung out of the group and started homeward with his dog. To stand by and hear Sara Stuart discussed after this fashion was more than he could endure. The men idly watched his tall, erect figure as he went along the valley.

"Queer chap, Jeff," said Alec Churchill reflectively.

"Jeff's all right," said Christopher in a patronizing way. "There ain't a better man or neighbour alive. I've lived next farm to him for thirty years, so I ought to know. But he's queer sartainly—not like other people—kind of unsociable. He don't care for a thing 'cept dogs and reading and mooning round woods and fields. That ain't natural, you know. But I must say he's a good farmer. He's got the best farm in Bayside, and that's a real nice house he put up on it. Ain't it an odd thing he never married? Never seemed to have no notion of it. I can't recollect of Jeff Miller's ever courting anybody. That's another unnatural thing about him."

"I've always thought that Jeff thought himself a cut or two above the rest of us," said Tom Scovel with a sneer. "Maybe he thinks the Bayside girls ain't good enough for him."

"There ain't no such dirty pride about Jeff," pronounced Christopher

conclusively. "And the Millers are the best family hereabouts, leaving the kunnel's out. And Jeff's well off—nobody knows how well, I reckon, but I can guess, being his land neighbour. Jeff ain't no fool nor loafer, if he is a bit queer."

Meanwhile, the object of these remarks was striding homeward and thinking, not of the men behind him, but of Sara Stuart. He must go to her at once. He had not intruded on her since her father's death, thinking her sorrow too great for him to meddle with. But this was different. Perhaps she needed the advice or assistance only he could give. To whom else in Bayside could she turn for it but to him, her old friend? Was it possible that she must leave Pinehurst? The thought struck cold dismay to his soul. How could he bear his life if she went away?

He had loved Sara Stuart from childhood. He remembered vividly the day he had first seen her—a spring day, much like this one had been; he, a boy of eight, had gone with his father to the big, sunshiny hill field and he had searched for birds' nests in the little fir copses along the crest while his father plowed. He had so come upon her, sitting on the fence under the pines at the back of Pinehurst—a child of six in a dress of purple cloth. Her long, light brown curls fell over her shoulders and rippled sleekly back from her calm little brow; her eyes were large and greyish blue, straight-gazing and steadfast. To the end of his life the boy was to carry in his heart the picture she made there under the pines.

"Little boy," she had said, with a friendly smile, "will you show me where the mayflowers grow?"

Shyly enough he had assented, and they set out together for the barrens beyond the field, where the arbutus trailed its stars of sweetness under the dusty dead grasses and withered leaves of the old year. The boy was thrilled with delight. She was a fairy queen who thus graciously smiled on him and chattered blithely as they searched for mayflowers in the fresh spring sunshine. He thought it a wonderful thing that it had so chanced. It overjoyed him to give the choicest dusters he found into her slim, waxen little fingers, and watch her eyes grow round with pleasure in them. When the sun began to lower over the beeches she had gone home with her arms full of arbutus, but she had turned at the edge of the pineland and waved her hand at him.

That night, when he told his mother of the little girl he had met on the hill, she had hoped anxiously that he had been "very polite," for the little girl was a daughter of Colonel Stuart, newly come to Pinehurst. Jeffrey, reflecting, had not been certain that he had been polite; "But I am sure she liked me," he said gravely.

A few days later a message came from Mrs. Stuart on the hill to Mrs.

Miller in the valley. Would she let her little boy go up now and then to play with Sara? Sara was very lonely because she had no playmates. So Jeff, overjoyed, had gone to his divinity's very home, where the two children played together many a day. All through their childhood they had been fast friends. Sara's parents placed no bar to their intimacy. They had soon concluded that little Jeff Miller was a very good playmate for Sara. He was gentle, well-behaved, and manly.

Sara never went to the district school which Jeff attended; she had her governess at home. With no other boy or girl in Bayside did she form any friendship, but her loyalty to Jeff never wavered. As for Jeff, he worshipped her and would have done anything she commanded. He belonged to her from the day they had hunted arbutus on the hill.

When Sara was fifteen she had gone away to school. Jeff had missed her sorely. For four years he saw her only in the summers, and each year she had seemed taller, statelier, further from him. When she graduated her father took her abroad for two years; then she came home, a lovely, high-bred girl, dimpling on the threshold of womanhood; and Jeffrey Miller was face to face with two bitter facts. One was that he loved her—not with the boy-and-girl love of long ago, but with the love of a man for the one woman in the world; and the other was that she was as far beyond his reach as one of those sunset stars of which she had always reminded him in her pure, clear-shining loveliness.

He looked these facts unflinchingly in the face until he had grown used to them, and then he laid down his course for himself. He loved Sara—and he did not wish to conquer his love, even if it had been possible. It were better to love her, whom he could never win, than to love and be loved by any other woman. His great office in life was to be her friend, humble and unexpectant; to be at hand if she should need him for ever so trifling a service; never to presume, always to be faithful.

Sara had not forgotten her old friend. But their former comradeship was now impossible; they could be friends, but never again companions. Sara's life was full and gay; she had interests in which he had no share; her social world was utterly apart from his; she was of the hill and its traditions, he was of the valley and its people. The democracy of childhood past, there was no common ground on which they might meet. Only one thing Jeffrey had found it impossible to contemplate calmly. Some day Sara would marry—a man who was her equal, who sat at her father's table as a guest. In spite of himself, Jeffrey's heart filled with hot rebellion at the thought; it was like a desecration and a robbery.

But, as the years went by, this thing he dreaded did not happen. Sara did

not marry, although gossip assigned her many suitors not unworthy of her. She and Jeffrey were always friends, although they met but seldom. Sometimes she sent him a book; it was his custom to search for the earliest mayflowers and take them to her; once in a long while they met and talked of many things. Jeffrey's calendar from year to year was red-lettered by these small happenings, of which nobody knew, or, knowing, would have cared.

So he and Sara drifted out of youth, together yet apart. Her mother had died, and Sara was the gracious, stately mistress of Pinehurst, which grew quieter as the time went on; the lovers ceased to come, and holiday friends grew few; with the old colonel's failing health the gaieties and lavish entertaining ceased. Jeffrey thought that Sara must often be lonely, but she never said so; she remained sweet, serene, calm-eyed, like the child he had met on the hill. Only, now and then, Jeffrey fancied he saw a shadow on her face—a shadow so faint and fleeting that only the eye of an unselfish, abiding love, made clear-sighted by patient years, could have seen it. It hurt him, that shadow; he would have given anything in his power to have banished it.

And now this long friendship was to be broken. Sara was going away. At first he had thought only of her pain, but now his own filled his heart. How could he live without her? How could he dwell in the valley knowing that she had gone from the hill? Never to see her light shine down on him through the northern gap in the pines at night! Never to feel that perhaps her eyes rested on him now and then as he went about his work in the valley fields! Never to stoop with a glad thrill over the first spring flowers because it was his privilege to take them to her! Jeffrey groaned aloud. No, he could not go up to see her that night; he must wait—he must strengthen himself.

Then his heart rebuked him. This was selfishness; this was putting his own feelings before hers—a thing he had sworn never to do. Perhaps she needed him—perhaps she had wondered why he had not come to offer her such poor service as might be in his power. He turned and went down through the orchard lane, taking the old field-path across the valley and up the hill, which he had traversed so often and so joyfully in boyhood. It was dark now, and a few stars were shining in the silvery sky. The wind sighed among the pines as he walked under them. Sometimes he felt that he must turn back—that his pain was going to master him; then he forced himself to go on.

The old grey house where Sara lived seemed bleak and stricken in the dull light, with its leafless vines clinging to it. There were no lights in it. It looked like a home left soulless.

Jeffrey went around to the garden door and knocked. He had expected the maid to open it, put Sara herself came.

"Why, Jeff," she said, with pleasure in her tones. "I am so glad to see you. I

have been wondering why you had not come before."

"I did not think you would want to see me yet," he said hurriedly. "I have thought about you every hour—but I feared to intrude."

"You couldn't intrude," she said gently. "Yes, I have wanted to see you, Jeff. Come into the library."

He followed her into the room where they had always sat in his rare calls. Sara lighted the lamp on the table. As the light shot up she stood clearly revealed in it—a tall, slender woman in a trailing gown of grey. Even a stranger, not knowing her age, would have guessed it to be what it was, yet it would have been hard to say what gave the impression of maturity. Her face was quite unlined—a little pale, perhaps, with more finely cut outlines than those of youth. Her eyes were clear and bright; her abundant brown hair waved back from her face in the same curves that Jeffrey had noted in the purple-gowned child of six, under the pines. Perhaps it was the fine patience and serenity in her face that told her tale of years. Youth can never acquire it.

Her eyes brightened when she saw the mayflowers he carried. She came and took them from him, and her hands touched his, sending a little thrill of joy through him.

"How lovely they are! And the first I have seen this spring. You always bring me the first, don't you, Jeff? Do you remember the first day we spent picking mayflowers together?"

Jeff smiled. Could he forget? But something held him back from speech.

Sara put the flowers in a vase on the table, but slipped one starry pink cluster into the lace on her breast. She came and sat down beside Jeffrey; he saw that her beautiful eyes had been weeping, and that there were lines of pain around her lips. Some impulse that would not be denied made him lean over and take her hand. She left it unresistingly in his clasp.

"I am very lonely now, Jeff," she said sadly. "Father has gone. I have no friends left."

"You have me," said Jeffrey quietly.

"Yes. I shouldn't have said that. You are my friend, I know, Jeff. But, but—I must leave Pinehurst, you know."

"I learned that tonight for the first time," he answered.

"Did you ever come to a place where everything seemed ended—where it seemed that there was nothing—simply nothing—left, Jeff?" she said wistfully. "But, no, it couldn't seem so to a man. Only a woman could fully understand what I mean. That is how I feel now. While I had Father to live for

it wasn't so hard. But now there is nothing. And I must go away."

"Is there anything I can do?" muttered Jeffrey miserably. He knew now that he had made a mistake in coming tonight; he could not help her. His own pain had unmanned him. Presently he would say something foolish or selfish in spite of himself.

Sara turned her eyes on him.

"There is nothing anybody can do, Jeff," she said piteously. Her eyes, those clear child-eyes, filled with tears. "I shall be braver—stronger—after a while. But just now I have no strength left. I feel like a lost, helpless child. Oh, Jeff!"

She put her slender hands over her face and sobbed. Every sob cut Jeffrey to the heart.

"Don't—don't, Sara," he said huskily. "I can't bear to see you suffer so. I'd die for you if it would do you any good. I love you—I love you! I never meant to tell you so, but it is the truth. I oughtn't to tell you now. Don't think that I'm trying to take any advantage of your loneliness and sorrow. I know—I have always known—that you are far above me. But that couldn't prevent my loving you—just humbly loving you, asking nothing else. You may be angry with my presumption, but I can't help telling you that I love you. That's all. I just want you to know it."

Sara had turned away her head. Jeffrey was overcome with contrition. Ah, he had no business to speak so—he had spoiled the devotion of years. Who was he that he should have dared to love her? Silence alone had justified his love, and now he had lost that justification. She would despise him. He had forfeited her friendship for ever.

"Are you angry, Sara?" he questioned sadly, after a silence.

"I think I am," said Sara. She kept her stately head averted. "If—if you have loved me, Jeff, why did you never tell me so before?"

"How could I dare?" he said gravely. "I knew I could never win you—that I had no right to dream of you so. Oh, Sara, don't be angry! My love has been reverent and humble. I have asked nothing. I ask nothing now but your friendship. Don't take that from me, Sara. Don't be angry with me."

"I am angry," repeated Sara, "and I think I have a right to be."

"Perhaps so," he said simply, "but not because I have loved you. Such love as mine ought to anger no woman, Sara. But you have a right to be angry with me for presuming to put it into words. I should not have done so—but I could not help it. It rushed to my lips in spite of me. Forgive me."

"I don't know whether I can forgive you for not telling me before," said

Sara steadily. "That is what I have to forgive—not your speaking at last, even if it was dragged from you against your will. Did you think I would make you such a very poor wife, Jeff, that you would not ask me to marry you?"

"Sara!" he said, aghast. "I—I—you were as far above me as a star in the sky—I never dreamed—I never hoped——"

"That I could care for you?" said Sara, looking round at last. "Then you were more modest than a man ought to be, Jeff. I did not know that you loved me, or I should have found some way to make you speak out long ago. I should not have let you waste all these years. I've loved you—ever since we picked mayflowers on the hill, I think—ever since I came home from school, I know. I never cared for anyone else—although I tried to, when I thought you didn't care for me. It mattered nothing to me that the world may have thought there was some social difference between us. There, Jeff, you cannot accuse me of not making my meaning plain."

"Sara," he whispered, wondering, bewildered, half-afraid to believe this unbelievable joy. "I'm not half worthy of you—but—but"—he bent forward and put his arm around her, looking straight into her clear, unshrinking eyes. "Sara, will you be my wife?"

"Yes." She said the word clearly and truly. "And I will think myself a proud and happy and honoured woman to be so, Jeff. Oh, I don't shrink from telling you the truth, you see. You mean too much to me for me to dissemble it. I've hidden it for eighteen years because I didn't think you wanted to hear it, but I'll give myself the delight of saying it frankly now."

She lifted her delicate, high-bred face, fearless love shining in every lineament, to his, and they exchanged their first kiss.

Clorinda's Gifts

"It is a dreadful thing to be poor a fortnight before Christmas," said Clorinda, with the mournful sigh of seventeen years.

Aunt Emmy smiled. Aunt Emmy was sixty, and spent the hours she didn't spend in a bed, on a sofa or in a wheel chair; but Aunt Emmy was never heard to sigh.

"I suppose it is worse then than at any other time," she admitted.

That was one of the nice things about Aunt Emmy. She always sympathized and understood.

"I'm worse than poor this Christmas ... I'm stony broke," said Clorinda dolefully. "My spell of fever in the summer and the consequent doctor's bills have cleaned out my coffers completely. Not a single Christmas present can I give. And I did so want to give some little thing to each of my dearest people. But I simply can't afford it ... that's the hateful, ugly truth."

Clorinda sighed again.

"The gifts which money can purchase are not the only ones we can give," said Aunt Emmy gently, "nor the best, either."

"Oh, I know it's nicer to give something of your own work," agreed Clorinda, "but materials for fancy work cost too. That kind of gift is just as much out of the question for me as any other."

"That was not what I meant," said Aunt Emmy.

"What did you mean, then?" asked Clorinda, looking puzzled.

Aunt Emmy smiled.

"Suppose you think out my meaning for yourself," she said. "That would be better than if I explained it. Besides, I don't think I could explain it. Take the beautiful line of a beautiful poem to help you in your thinking out: 'The gift without the giver is bare.'"

"I'd put it the other way and say, 'The giver without the gift is bare,'" said Clorinda, with a grimace. "That is my predicament exactly. Well, I hope by next Christmas I'll not be quite bankrupt. I'm going into Mr. Callender's store down at Murraybridge in February. He has offered me the place, you know."

"Won't your aunt miss you terribly?" said Aunt Emmy gravely.

Clorinda flushed. There was a note in Aunt Emmy's voice that disturbed her.

"Oh, yes, I suppose she will," she answered hurriedly. "But she'll get used to it very soon. And I will be home every Saturday night, you know. I'm dreadfully tired of being poor, Aunt Emmy, and now that I have a chance to earn something for myself I mean to take it. I can help Aunt Mary, too. I'm to get four dollars a week."

"I think she would rather have your companionship than a part of your salary, Clorinda," said Aunt Emmy. "But of course you must decide for yourself, dear. It is hard to be poor. I know it. I am poor."

"You poor!" said Clorinda, kissing her. "Why, you are the richest woman I know, Aunt Emmy—rich in love and goodness and contentment."

"And so are you, dearie ... rich in youth and health and happiness and

ambition. Aren't they all worth while?"

"Of course they are," laughed Clorinda. "Only, unfortunately, Christmas gifts can't be coined out of them."

"Did you ever try?" asked Aunt Emmy. "Think out that question, too, in your thinking out, Clorinda."

"Well, I must say bye-bye and run home. I feel cheered up—you always cheer people up, Aunt Emmy. How grey it is outdoors. I do hope we'll have snow soon. Wouldn't it be jolly to have a white Christmas? We always have such faded brown Decembers."

Clorinda lived just across the road from Aunt Emmy in a tiny white house behind some huge willows. But Aunt Mary lived there too—the only relative Clorinda had, for Aunt Emmy wasn't really her aunt at all. Clorinda had always lived with Aunt Mary ever since she could remember.

Clorinda went home and upstairs to her little room under the eaves, where the great bare willow boughs were branching athwart her windows. She was thinking over what Aunt Emmy had said about Christmas gifts and giving.

"I'm sure I don't know what she could have meant," pondered Clorinda. "I do wish I could find out if it would help me any. I'd love to remember a few of my friends at least. There's Miss Mitchell ... she's been so good to me all this year and helped me so much with my studies. And there's Mrs. Martin out in Manitoba. If I could only send her something! She must be so lonely out there. And Aunt Emmy herself, of course; and poor old Aunt Kitty down the lane; and Aunt Mary and, yes—Florence too, although she did treat me so meanly. I shall never feel the same to her again. But she gave me a present last Christmas, and so out of mere politeness I ought to give her something."

Clorinda stopped short suddenly. She had just remembered that she would not have liked to say that last sentence to Aunt Emmy. Therefore, there was something wrong about it. Clorinda had long ago learned that there was sure to be something wrong in anything that could not be said to Aunt Emmy. So she stopped to think it over.

Clorinda puzzled over Aunt Emmy's meaning for four days and part of three nights. Then all at once it came to her. Or if it wasn't Aunt Emmy's meaning it was a very good meaning in itself, and it grew clearer and expanded in meaning during the days that followed, although at first Clorinda shrank a little from some of the conclusions to which it led her.

"I've solved the problem of my Christmas giving for this year," she told Aunt Emmy. "I have some things to give after all. Some of them quite costly, too; that is, they will cost me something, but I know I'll be better off and richer

after I've paid the price. That is what Mr. Grierson would call a paradox, isn't it? I'll explain all about it to you on Christmas Day."

On Christmas Day, Clorinda went over to Aunt Emmy's. It was a faded brown Christmas after all, for the snow had not come. But Clorinda did not mind; there was such joy in her heart that she thought it the most delightful Christmas Day that ever dawned.

She put the queer cornery armful she carried down on the kitchen floor before she went into the sitting room. Aunt Emmy was lying on the sofa before the fire, and Clorinda sat down beside her.

"I've come to tell you all about it," she said.

Aunt Emmy patted the hand that was in her own.

"From your face, dear girl, it will be pleasant hearing and telling," she said.

Clorinda nodded.

"Aunt Emmy, I thought for days over your meaning ... thought until I was dizzy. And then one evening it just came to me, without any thinking at all, and I knew that I could give some gifts after all. I thought of something new every day for a week. At first I didn't think I could give some of them, and then I thought how selfish I was. I would have been willing to pay any amount of money for gifts if I had had it, but I wasn't willing to pay what I had. I got over that, though, Aunt Emmy. Now I'm going to tell you what I did give.

"First, there was my teacher, Miss Mitchell. I gave her one of father's books. I have so many of his, you know, so that I wouldn't miss one; but still it was one I loved very much, and so I felt that that love made it worth while. That is, I felt that on second thought. At first, Aunt Emmy, I thought I would be ashamed to offer Miss Mitchell a shabby old book, worn with much reading and all marked over with father's notes and pencillings. I was afraid she would think it queer of me to give her such a present. And yet somehow it seemed to me that it was better than something brand new and unmellowed—that old book which father had loved and which I loved. So I gave it to her, and she understood. I think it pleased her so much, the real meaning in it. She said it was like being given something out of another's heart and life.

"Then you know Mrs. Martin ... last year she was Miss Hope, my dear Sunday School teacher. She married a home missionary, and they are in a lonely part of the west. Well, I wrote her a letter. Not just an ordinary letter; dear me, no. I took a whole day to write it, and you should have seen the postmistress's eyes stick out when I mailed it. I just told her everything that had happened in Greenvale since she went away. I made it as newsy and cheerful and loving as I possibly could. Everything bright and funny I could

think of went into it.

"The next was old Aunt Kitty. You know she was my nurse when I was a baby, and she's very fond of me. But, well, you know, Aunt Emmy, I'm ashamed to confess it, but really I've never found Aunt Kitty very entertaining, to put it mildly. She is always glad when I go to see her, but I've never gone except when I couldn't help it. She is very deaf, and rather dull and stupid, you know. Well, I gave her a whole day. I took my knitting yesterday, and sat with her the whole time and just talked and talked. I told her all the Greenvale news and gossip and everything else I thought she'd like to hear. She was so pleased and proud; she told me when I came away that she hadn't had such a nice time for years.

"Then there was ... Florence. You know, Aunt Emmy, we were always intimate friends until last year. Then Florence once told Rose Watson something I had told her in confidence. I found it out and I was so hurt. I couldn't forgive Florence, and I told her plainly I could never be a real friend to her again. Florence felt badly, because she really did love me, and she asked me to forgive her, but it seemed as if I couldn't. Well, Aunt Emmy, that was my Christmas gift to her ... my forgiveness. I went down last night and just put my arms around her and told her that I loved her as much as ever and wanted to be real close friends again.

"I gave Aunt Mary her gift this morning. I told her I wasn't going to Murraybridge, that I just meant to stay home with her. She was so glad—and I'm glad, too, now that I've decided so."

"Your gifts have been real gifts, Clorinda," said Aunt Emmy. "Something of you—the best of you—went into each of them."

Clorinda went out and brought her cornery armful in.

"I didn't forget you, Aunt Emmy," she said, as she unpinned the paper.

There was a rosebush—Clorinda's own pet rosebush—all snowed over with fragrant blossoms.

Aunt Emmy loved flowers. She put her finger under one of the roses and kissed it.

"It's as sweet as yourself, dear child," she said tenderly. "And it will be a joy to me all through the lonely winter days. You've found out the best meaning of Christmas giving, haven't you, dear?"

"Yes, thanks to you, Aunt Emmy," said Clorinda softly.

Cyrilla's Inspiration

It was a rainy Saturday afternoon and all the boarders at Mrs. Plunkett's were feeling dull and stupid, especially the Normal School girls on the third floor, Cyrilla Blair and Carol Hart and Mary Newton, who were known as The Trio, and shared the big front room together.

They were sitting in that front room, scowling out at the weather. At least, Carol and Mary were scowling. Cyrilla never scowled; she was sitting curled up on her bed with her Greek grammar, and she smiled at the rain and her grumbling chums as cheerfully as possible.

"For pity's sake, Cyrilla, put that grammar away," moaned Mary. "There is something positively uncanny about a girl who can study Greek on Saturday afternoons—at least, this early in the term."

"I'm not really studying," said Cyrilla, tossing the book away. "I'm only pretending to. I'm really just as bored and lonesome as you are. But what else is there to do? We can't stir outside the door; we've nothing to read; we can't make candy since Mrs. Plunkett has forbidden us to use the oil stove in our room; we'll probably quarrel all round if we sit here in idleness; so I've been trying to brush up my Greek verbs by way of keeping out of mischief. Have you any better employment to offer me?"

"If it were only a mild drizzle we might go around and see the Patterson girls," sighed Carol. "But there is no venturing out in such a downpour. Cyrilla, you are supposed to be the brainiest one of us. Prove your claim to such pre-eminence by thinking of some brand-new amusement, especially suited to rainy afternoons. That will be putting your grey matter to better use than squandering it on Greek verbs out of study limits."

"If only I'd got a letter from home today," said Mary, who seemed determined to persist in gloom. "I wouldn't mind the weather. Letters are such cheery things:—especially the letters my sister writes. They're so full of fun and nice little news. The reading of one cheers me up for the day. Cyrilla Blair, what is the matter? You nearly frightened me to death!" Cyrilla had bounded from her bed to the centre of the floor, waving her Greek grammar wildly in the air.

"Girls, I have an inspiration!" she exclaimed.

"Good! Let's hear it," said Carol.

"Let's write letters—rainy-day letters—to everyone in the house," said Cyrilla. "You may depend all the rest of the folks under Mrs. Plunkett's hospitable roof are feeling more or less blue and lonely too, as well as

ourselves. Let's write them the jolliest, nicest letters we can compose and get Nora Jane to take them to their rooms. There's that pale little sewing girl, I don't believe she ever gets letters from anybody, and Miss Marshall, I'm sure she doesn't, and poor old Mrs. Johnson, whose only son died last month, and the new music teacher who came yesterday, a letter of welcome to her—and old Mr. Grant, yes, and Mrs. Plunkett too, thanking her for all her kindness to us. You knew she has been awfully nice to us in spite of the oil stove ukase. That's six—two apiece. Let's do it, girls."

Cyrilla's sudden enthusiasm for her plan infected the others.

"It's a nice idea," said Mary, brightening up. "But who's to write to whom? I'm willing to take anybody but Miss Marshall. I couldn't write a line to her to save my life. She'd be horrified at anything funny or jokey and our letters will have to be mainly nonsense—nonsense of the best brand, to be sure, but still nonsense."

"Better leave Miss Marshall out," suggested Carol. "You know she disapproves of us anyhow. She'd probably resent a letter of the sort, thinking we were trying to play some kind of joke on her."

"It would never do to leave her out," said Cyrilla decisively. "Of course, she's a bit queer and unamiable, but, girls, think of thirty years of boarding-house life, even with the best of Plunketts. Wouldn't that sour anybody? You know it would. You'd be cranky and grumbly and disagreeable too, I dare say. I'm really sorry for Miss Marshall. She's had a very hard life. Mrs. Plunkett told me all about her one day. I don't think we should mind her biting little speeches and sharp looks. And anyway, even if she is really as disagreeable as she sometimes seems to be, why, it must make it all the harder for her, don't you think? So she needs a letter most of all. I'll write to her, since it's my suggestion. We'll draw lots for the others."

Besides Miss Marshall, the new music teacher fell to Cyrilla's share. Mary drew Mrs. Plunkett and the dressmaker, and Carol drew Mrs. Johnson and old Mr. Grant. For the next two hours the girls wrote busily, forgetting all about the rainy day, and enjoying their epistolary labours to the full. It was dusk when all the letters were finished.

"Why, hasn't the afternoon gone quickly after all!" exclaimed Carol. "I just let my pen run on and jotted down any good working idea that came into my head. Cyrilla Blair, that big fat letter is never for Miss Marshall! What on earth did you find to write her?"

"It wasn't so hard when I got fairly started," said Cyrilla, smiling. "Now, let's hunt up Nora Jane and send the letters around so that everybody can read his or hers before tea-time. We should have a choice assortment of smiles at

the table instead of all those frowns and sighs we had at dinner." Miss Emily Marshall was at that moment sitting in her little back room, all alone in the dusk, with the rain splashing drearily against the windowpanes outside. Miss Marshall was feeling as lonely and dreary as she looked—and as she had often felt in her life of sixty years. She told herself bitterly that she hadn't a friend in the world—not even one who cared enough for her to come and see her or write her a letter now and then. She thought her boarding-house acquaintances disliked her and she resented their dislike, without admitting to herself that her ungracious ways were responsible for it. She smiled sourly when little ripples of laughter came faintly down the hall from the front room where The Trio were writing their letters and laughing over the fun they were putting into them.

"If they were old and lonesome and friendless they wouldn't see much in life to laugh at, I guess," said Miss Marshall bitterly, drawing her shawl closer about her sharp shoulders. "They never think of anything but themselves and if a day passes that they don't have 'some fun' they think it's a fearful thing to put up with. I'm sick and tired of their giggling and whispering."

In the midst of these amiable reflections Miss Marshall heard a knock at her door. When she opened it there stood Nora Jane, her broad red face beaming with smiles.

"Please, Miss, here's a letter for you," she said.

"A letter for me!" Miss Marshall shut her door and stared at the fat envelope in amazement. Who could have written it? The postman came only in the morning. Was it some joke, perhaps? Those giggling girls? Miss Marshall's face grew harder as she lighted her lamp and opened the letter suspiciously.

"Dear Miss Marshall," it ran in Cyrilla's pretty girlish writing, "we girls are so lonesome and dull that we have decided to write rainy-day letters to everybody in the house just to cheer ourselves up. So I'm going to write to you just a letter of friendly nonsense."

Pages of "nonsense" followed, and very delightful nonsense it was, for Cyrilla possessed the happy gift of bright and easy letter-writing. She commented wittily on all the amusing episodes of the boarding-house life for the past month; she described a cat-fight she had witnessed from her window that morning and illustrated it by a pen-and-ink sketch of the belligerent felines; she described a lovely new dress her mother had sent her from home and told all about the class party to which she had worn it; she gave an account of her vacation camping trip to the mountains and pasted on one page a number of small snapshots taken during the outing; she copied a joke she had read in the paper that morning and discussed the serial story in the boarding-

house magazine which all the boarders were reading; she wrote out the directions for a new crocheted tidy her sister had made—Miss Marshall had a mania for crocheting; and she finally wound up with "all the good will and good wishes that Nora Jane will consent to carry from your friend, Cyrilla Blair."

Before Miss Marshall had finished reading that letter she had cried three times and laughed times past counting. More tears came at the end—happy, tender tears such as Miss Marshall had not shed for years. Something warm and sweet and gentle seemed to thrill to life within her heart. So those girls were not such selfish, heedless young creatures as she had supposed! How kind it had been in Cyrilla Blair to think of her and write so to her. She no longer felt lonely and neglected. Her whole sombre world had been brightened to sunshine by that merry friendly letter.

Mrs. Plunkett's table was surrounded by a ring of smiling faces that night. Everybody seemed in good spirits in spite of the weather. The pale little dressmaker, who had hardly uttered a word since her arrival a week before, talked and laughed quite merrily and girlishly, thanking Cyrilla unreservedly for her "jolly letter." Old Mr. Grant did not grumble once about the rain or the food or his rheumatism and he told Carol that she might be a good letter writer in time if she looked after her grammar more carefully—which, from Mr. Grant, was high praise. All the others declared that they were delighted with their letters—all except Miss Marshall. She said nothing but later on, when Cyrilla was going upstairs, she met Miss Marshall in the shadows of the second landing.

"My dear," said Miss Marshall gently, "I want to thank you for your letter, I don't think you can realize just what it has meant to me. I was so—so lonely and tired and discouraged. It heartened me right up. I—I know you have thought me a cross and disagreeable person. I'm afraid I have been, too. But—but—I shall try to be less so in future. If I can't succeed all at once don't mind me because, under it all, I shall always be your friend. And I mean to keep your letter and read it over every time I feel myself getting bitter and hard again." "Dear Miss Marshall, I'm so glad you liked it," said Cyrilla frankly. "We're all your friends and would be glad to be chummy with you. Only we thought perhaps we bothered you with our nonsense."

"Come and see me sometimes," said Miss Marshall with a smile. "I'll try to be 'chummy'—perhaps I'm not yet too old to learn the secret of friendliness. Your letter has made me think that I have missed much in shutting all young life out from mine as I have done. I want to reform in this respect if I can."

When Cyrilla reached the front room she found Mrs. Plunkett there.

"I've just dropped in, Miss Blair," said that worthy woman, "to say that I

dunno as I mind your making candy once in a while if you want to. Only do be careful not to set the place on fire. Please be particularly careful not to set it on fire."

"We'll try," promised Cyrilla with dancing eyes. When the door closed behind Mrs. Plunkett the three girls looked at each other.

"Cyrilla, that idea of yours was a really truly inspiration," said Carol solemnly.

"I believe it was," said Cyrilla, thinking of Miss Marshall.

Dorinda's Desperate Deed

Dorinda had been home for a whole wonderful week and the little Pages were beginning to feel acquainted with her. When a girl goes away when she is ten and doesn't come back until she is fifteen, it is only to be expected that her family should regard her as somewhat of a stranger, especially when she is really a Page, and they are really all Carters except for the name. Dorinda had been only ten when her Aunt Mary—on the Carter side—had written to Mrs. Page, asking her to let Dorinda come to her for the winter.

Mrs. Page, albeit she was poor—nobody but herself knew how poor—and a widow with five children besides Dorinda, hesitated at first. She was afraid, with good reason, that the winter might stretch into other seasons; but Mary had lost her own only little girl in the summer, and Mrs. Page shuddered at the thought of what her loneliness must be. So, to comfort her, Mrs. Page had let Dorinda go, stipulating that she must come home in the spring. In the spring, when Dorinda's bed of violets was growing purple under the lilac bush, Aunt Mary wrote again. Dorinda was contented and happy, she said. Would not Emily let her stay for the summer? Mrs. Page cried bitterly over that letter and took sad counsel with herself. To let Dorinda stay with her aunt for the summer really meant, she knew, to let her stay altogether. Mrs. Page was finding it harder and harder to get along; there was so little and the children needed so much; Dorinda would have a good home with her Aunt Mary if she could only prevail on her rebellious mother heart to give her up. In the end she agreed to let Dorinda stay for the summer—and Dorinda had never been home since.

But now Dorinda had come back to the little white house on the hill at Willowdale, set back from the road in a smother of apple trees and vines. Aunt Mary had died very suddenly and her only son, Dorinda's cousin, had gone to Japan. There was nothing for Dorinda to do save to come home, to enter again

into her old unfilled place in her mother's heart, and win a new place in the hearts of the brothers and sisters who barely remembered her at all. Leicester had been nine and Jean seven when Dorinda went away; now they were respectively fourteen and twelve.

At first they were a little shy with this big, practically brand-new sister, but this soon wore off. Nobody could be shy long with Dorinda; nobody could help liking her. She was so brisk and jolly and sympathetic—a real Page, so everybody said—while the brothers and sisters were Carter to their marrow; Carters with fair hair and blue eyes, and small, fine, wistful features; but Dorinda had merry black eyes, plump, dusky-red cheeks, and a long braid of glossy dark hair, which was perpetually being twitched from one shoulder to another as Dorinda whisked about the house on domestic duties intent.

In a week Dorinda felt herself one of the family again, with all the cares and responsibilities thereof resting on her strong young shoulders. Dorinda and her mother talked matters out fully one afternoon over their sewing, in the sunny south room where the winds got lost among the vines halfway through the open window. Mrs. Page sighed and said she really did not know what to do. Dorinda did not sigh; she did not know just what to do either, but there must be something that could be done—there is always something that can be done, if one can only find it. Dorinda sewed hard and pursed up her red lips determinedly.

"Don't you worry, Mother Page," she said briskly. "We'll be like that glorious old Roman who found a way or made it. I like overcoming difficulties. I've lots of old Admiral Page's fighting blood in me, you know. The first step is to tabulate just exactly what difficulties among our many difficulties must be ravelled out first—the capital difficulties, as it were. Most important of all comes—"

"Leicester," said Mrs. Page.

Dorinda winked her eyes as she always did when she was doubtful.

"Well, I knew he was one of them, but I wasn't going to put him the very first. However, we will. Leicester's case stands thus. He is a pretty smart boy—if he wasn't my brother, I'd say he was a very smart boy. He has gone as far in his studies as Willowdale School can take him, has qualified for entrance into the Blue Hill Academy, wants to go there this fall and begin the beginnings of a college course. Well, of course, Mother Page, we can't send Leicester to Blue Hill any more than we can send him to the moon."

"No," mourned Mrs. Page, "and the poor boy feels so badly over it. His heart is set on going to college and being a doctor like his father. He believes he could work his way through, if he could only get a start. But there isn't any

chance. And I can't afford to keep him at school any longer. He is going into Mr. Churchill's store at Willow Centre in the fall. Mr. Churchill has very kindly offered him a place. Leicester hates the thought of it—I know he does, although he never says so."

"Next to Leicester's college course we want—"

"Music lessons for Jean."

Dorinda winked again.

"Are music lessons for Jean really a difficulty?" she said. "That is, one spelled with a capital?"

"Oh, yes, Dorinda dear. At least, I'm worried over it. Jean loves music so, and she has never had anything, poor child, not even as much school as she ought to have had. I've had to keep her home so much to help me with the work. She has been such a good, patient little girl too, and her heart is set on music lessons."

"Well, she must have them then—after we get Leicester's year at the academy for him. That's two. The third is a new—"

"The roof must be shingled this fall," said Mrs. Page anxiously. "It really must, Dorinda. It is no better than a sieve. We are nearly drowned every time it rains. But I don't know where the money to do it is going to come from."

"Shingles for the roof, three," said Dorinda, as if she were carefully jotting down something in a mental memorandum. "And fourth—now, Mother Page, I will have my say this time—fourthly, biggest capital of all, a Nice, New Dress and a Warm Fur Coat for Mother Page this winter. Yes, yes, you must have them, dearest. It's absolutely necessary. We can wait a year or so for college courses and music lessons to grow; we can set basins under the leaks and borrow some more if we haven't enough. But a new dress and coat for you we must, shall, and will have, however it is to be brought about."

"I wouldn't mind if I never got another new stitch, if I could only manage the other things," said Mrs. Page stoutly. "If your Uncle Eugene would only help us a little, until Leicester got through! He really ought to. But of course he never will."

"Have you ever asked him?" said Dorinda.

"Oh, my dear, no; of course not," said Mrs. Page in a horrified tone, as if Dorinda had asked if she had ever stolen a neighbour's spoons.

"I don't see why you shouldn't," said Dorinda seriously.

"Oh, Dorinda, Uncle Eugene hates us all. He is terribly bitter against us. He would never, never listen to any request for help, even if I could bring

myself to make it."

"Mother, what was the trouble between us and Uncle Eugene? I have never known the rights of it. I was too small to understand when I was home before. All I remember is that Uncle Eugene never came to see us or spoke to us when he met us anywhere, and we were all afraid of him somehow. I used to think of him as an ogre who would come creeping up the back stairs after dark and carry me off bodily if I wasn't good. What made him our enemy? And how did he come to get all of Grandfather Page's property when Father got nothing?"

"Well, you know, Dorinda, that your Grandfather Page was married twice. Eugene was his first wife's son, and your father the second wife's. Eugene was a great deal older than your father—he was twenty-five when your father was born. He was always an odd man, even in his youth, and he had been much displeased at his father's second marriage. But he was very fond of your father—whose mother, as you know, died at his birth—and they were good friends and comrades until just before your father went to college. They then quarrelled; the cause of the quarrel was insignificant; with anyone else than Eugene a reconciliation would soon have been effected. But Eugene never was friendly with your father from that time. I think he was jealous of old Grandfather's affection; thought the old man loved your father best. And then, as I have said, he was very eccentric and stubborn. Well, your father went away to college and graduated, and then—we were married. Grandfather Page was very angry with him for marrying me. He wanted him to marry somebody else. He told him he would disinherit him if he married me. I did not know this until we were married. But Grandfather Page kept his word. He sent for a lawyer and had a new will made, leaving everything to Eugene. I think, nay, I am sure, that he would have relented in time, but he died the very next week; they found him dead in his bed one morning, so Eugene got everything; and that is all there is of the story, Dorinda."

"And Uncle Eugene has been our enemy ever since?"

"Yes, ever since. So you see, Dorinda dear, that I cannot ask any favours of Uncle Eugene."

"Yes, I see," said Dorinda understandingly. To herself she added, "But I don't see why I shouldn't."

Dorinda thought hard and long for the next few days about the capital difficulties. She could think of only one thing to do and, despite old Admiral Page's fighting blood, she shrank from doing it. But one night she found Leicester with his head down on his books and—no, it couldn't be tears in his eyes, because Leicester laughed scornfully at the insinuation.

"I wouldn't cry over it, Dorinda; I hope I'm more of a man than that. But I

do really feel rather cut up because I've no chance of getting to college. And I hate the thought of going into a store. But I know I must for Mother's sake, and I mean to pitch in and like it in spite of myself when the time comes. Only —only—"

And then Leicester got up and whistled and went to the window and stood with his back to Dorinda.

"That settles it," said Dorinda out loud, as she brushed her hair before the glass that night. "I'll do it."

"Do what?" asked Jean from the bed.

"A desperate deed," said Dorinda solemnly, and that was all she would say.

Next day Mrs. Page and Leicester went to town on business. In the afternoon Dorinda put on her best dress and hat and started out. Admiral Page's fighting blood was glowing in her cheeks as she walked briskly up the hill road, but her heart beat in an odd fashion.

"I wonder if I am a little scared, 'way down deep," said Dorinda. "I believe I am. But I'm going to do it for all that, and the scareder I get the more I'll do it."

Oaklawn, where Uncle Eugene lived, was two miles away. It was a fine old place in beautiful grounds. But Dorinda did not quail before its splendours; nor did her heart fail her, even after she had rung the bell and had been shown by a maid into a very handsome parlour, but it still continued to beat in that queer fashion halfway up her throat.

Presently Uncle Eugene came in, a tall, black-eyed old man, with a fine head of silver hair that should have framed a ruddy, benevolent face, instead of Uncle Eugene's hard-lipped, bushy-browed countenance.

Dorinda stood up, dusky and crimson, with brave, glowing eyes. Uncle Eugene looked at her sharply.

"Who are you?" he said bluntly.

"I am your niece, Dorinda Page," said Dorinda steadily.

"And what does my niece, Dorinda Page, want with me?" demanded Uncle Eugene, motioning to her to sit down and sitting down himself. But Dorinda remained standing. It is easier to fight on your feet.

"I want you to do four things, Uncle Eugene," she said, as calmly as if she were making the most natural and ordinary request in the world. "I want you to lend us the money to send Leicester to Blue Hill Academy; he will pay it back to you when he gets through college. I want you to lend Jean the money for music lessons; she will pay you back when she gets far enough along to

give lessons herself. And I want you to lend me the money to shingle our house and get Mother a new dress and fur coat for the winter. I'll pay you back sometime for that, because I am going to set up as a dressmaker pretty soon."

"Anything more?" said Uncle Eugene, when Dorinda stopped.

"Nothing more just now, I think," said Dorinda reflectively.

"Why don't you ask for something for yourself?" said Uncle Eugene.

"I don't want anything for myself," said Dorinda promptly. "Or—yes, I do, too. I want your friendship, Uncle Eugene."

"Be kind enough to sit down," said Uncle Eugene.

Dorinda sat.

"You are a Page," said Uncle Eugene. "I saw that as soon as I came in. I will send Leicester to college and I shall not ask or expect to be paid back. Jean shall have her music lessons, and a piano to practise them on as well. The house shall be shingled, and the money for the new dress and coat shall be forthcoming. You and I will be friends."

"Thank you," gasped Dorinda, wondering if, after all, it wasn't a dream.

"I would have gladly assisted your mother before," said Uncle Eugene, "if she had asked me. I had determined that she must ask me first. I knew that half the money should have been your father's by rights. I was prepared to hand it over to him or his family, if I were asked for it. But I wished to humble his pride, and the Carter pride, to the point of asking for it. Not a very amiable temper, you will say? I admit it. I am not amiable and I never have been amiable. You must be prepared to find me very unamiable. I see that you are waiting for a chance to say something polite and pleasant on that score, but you may save yourself the trouble. I shall hope and expect to have you visit me often. If your mother and your brothers and sisters see fit to come with you, I shall welcome them also. I think that this is all it is necessary to say just now. Will you stay to tea with me this evening?"

Dorinda stayed to tea, since she knew that Jean was at home to attend to matters there. She and Uncle Eugene got on famously. When she left, Uncle Eugene, grim and hard-lipped as ever, saw her to the door.

"Good evening, Niece Dorinda. You are a Page and I am proud of you. Tell your mother that many things in this life are lost through not asking for them. I don't think you are in need of the information for yourself."

Her Own People

The Taunton School had closed for the summer holidays. Constance Foster and Miss Channing went down the long, elm-shaded street together, as they generally did, because they happened to board on the same block downtown.

Constance was the youngest teacher on the staff, and had charge of the Primary Department. She had taught in Taunton school a year, and at its close she was as much of a stranger in the little corps of teachers as she had been at the beginning. The others thought her stiff and unapproachable; she was unpopular in a negative way with all except Miss Channing, who made it a profession to like everybody, the more so if other people disliked them. Miss Channing was the oldest teacher on the staff, and taught the fifth grade. She was short and stout and jolly; nothing, not even the iciest reserve, ever daunted Miss Channing.

"Isn't it good to think of two whole blessed months of freedom?" she said jubilantly. "Two months to dream, to be lazy, to go where one pleases, no exercises to correct, no reports to make, no pupils to keep in order. To be sure, I love them every one, but I'll love them all the more for a bit of a rest from them. Isn't it good?"

A little satirical smile crossed Constance Foster's dark, discontented face, looking just then all the more discontented in contrast to Miss Channing's rosy, beaming countenance.

"It's very good, if you have anywhere to go, or anybody who cares where you go," she said bitterly. "For my own part, I'm sorry school is closed. I'd rather go on teaching all summer."

"Heresy!" said Miss Channing. "Rank heresy! What are your vacation plans?"

"I haven't any," said Constance wearily. "I've put off thinking about vacation as long as I possibly could. You'll call that heresy, too, Miss Channing."

"It's worse than heresy," said Miss Channing briskly. "It's a crying necessity for blue pills, that's what it is. Your whole mental and moral and physical and spiritual system must be out of kilter, my child. No vacation plans! You must have vacation plans. You must be going somewhere."

"Oh, I suppose I'll hunt up a boarding place somewhere in the country, and go there and mope until September."

"Have you no friends, Constance?"

"No—no, I haven't anybody in the world. That is why I hate vacation, that is why I've hated to hear you and the others discussing your vacation plans.

You all have somebody to go to. It has just filled me up with hatred of my life."

Miss Channing swallowed her honest horror at such a state of feeling.

"Constance, tell me about yourself. I've often wanted to ask you, but I was always a little afraid to. You seem so reserved and—and, as if you didn't want to be asked about yourself."

"I know it. I know I'm stiff and hateful, and that nobody likes me, and that it is all my own fault. No, never mind trying to smooth it over, Miss Channing. It's the truth, and it hurts me, but I can't help it. I'm getting more bitter and pessimistic and unwholesome every day of my life. Sometimes it seems as if I hated all the world because I'm so lonely in it. I'm nobody. My mother died when I was born—and Father—oh, I don't know. One can't say anything against one's father, Miss Channing. But I had a hard childhood—or rather, I didn't have any childhood at all. We were always moving about. We didn't seem to have any friends at all. My mother might have had relatives somewhere, but I never heard of any. I don't even know where her home was. Father never would talk of her. He died two years ago, and since then I've been absolutely alone."

"Oh, you poor girl," said Miss Channing softly.

"I want friends," went on Constance, seeming to take a pleasure in open confession now that her tongue was loosed. "I've always just longed for somebody belonging to me to love. I don't love anybody, Miss Channing, and when a girl is in that state, she is all wrong. She gets hard and bitter and resentful—I have, anyway. I struggled against it at first, but it has been too much for me. It poisons everything. There is nobody to care anything about me, whether I live or die."

"Oh, yes, there is One," said Miss Channing gently. "God cares, Constance."

Constance gave a disagreeable little laugh.

"That sounds like Miss Williams—she is so religious. God doesn't mean anything to me, Miss Channing. I've just the same resentful feeling toward him that I have for all the world, if he exists at all. There, I've shocked you in good earnest now. You should have left me alone, Miss Channing."

"God means nothing to you because you've never had him translated to you through human love, Constance," said Miss Channing seriously. "No, you haven't shocked me—at least, not in the way you mean. I'm only terribly sorry."

"Oh, never mind me," said Constance, freezing up into her reserve again as

if she regretted her confidences. "I'll get along all right. This is one of my off days, when everything looks black."

Miss Channing walked on in silence. She must help Constance, but Constance was not easily helped. When school reopened, she might be able to do something worthwhile for the girl, but just now the only thing to do was to put her in the way of a pleasant vacation.

"You spoke of boarding," she said, when Constance paused at the door of her boarding-house. "Have you any particular place in view? No? Well, I know a place which I am sure you would like. I was there two summers ago. It is a country place about a hundred miles from here. Pine Valley is its name. It's restful and homey, and the people are so nice. If you like, I'll give you the address of the family I boarded with."

"Thank you," said Constance indifferently. "I might as well go there as anywhere else."

"Yes, but listen to me, dear. Don't take your morbidness with you. Open your heart to the summer, and let its sunshine in, and when you come back in the fall, come prepared to let us all be your friends. We'd like to be, and while friendship doesn't take the place of the love of one's own people, still it is a good and beautiful thing. Besides, there are other unhappy people in the world—try to help them when you meet them, and you'll forget about yourself. Good-by for now, and I hope you'll have a pleasant vacation in spite of yourself."

Constance went to Pine Valley, but she took her evil spirit with her. Not even the beauty of the valley, with its great balmy pines, and the cheerful friendliness of its people could exorcise it.

Nevertheless, she liked the place and found a wholesome pleasure in the long tramps she took along the piney roads.

"I saw such a pretty spot in my ramble this afternoon," she told her landlady one evening. "It is about three miles from here at the end of the valley. Such a picturesque, low-eaved little house, all covered over with honeysuckle. It was set between a big orchard and an old-fashioned flower garden with great pines at the back."

"Heartsease Farm," said Mrs. Hewitt promptly. "Bless you, there's only one place around here of that description. Mr. and Mrs. Bruce, Uncle Charles and Aunt Flora, as we all call them, live there. They are the dearest old couple alive. You ought to go and see them, they'd be delighted. Aunt Flora just loves company. They're real lonesome by times."

"Haven't they any children?" asked Constance indifferently. Her interest

was in the place, not in the people.

"No. They had a niece once, though. They brought her up and they just worshipped her. She ran away with a worthless fellow—I forget his name, if I ever knew it. He was handsome and smooth-tongued, but he was a scamp. She died soon after and it just broke their hearts. They don't even know where she was buried, and they never heard anything more about her husband. I've heard that Aunt Flora's hair turned snow-white in a month. I'll take you up to see her some day when I find time."

Mrs. Hewitt did not find time, but thereafter Constance ordered her rambles that she might frequently pass Heartsease Farm. The quaint old spot had a strange attraction for her. She found herself learning to love it, and so unused was this unfortunate girl to loving anything that she laughed at herself for her foolishness.

One evening a fortnight later Constance, with her arms full of ferns and wood-lilies, came out of the pine woods above Heartsease Farm just as heavy raindrops began to fall. She had prolonged her ramble unseasonably, and it was now nearly night, and very certainly a rainy night at that. She was three miles from home and without even an extra wrap.

She hurried down the lane, but by the time she reached the main road, the few drops had become a downpour. She must seek shelter somewhere, and Heartsease Farm was the nearest. She pushed open the gate and ran up the slope of the yard between the hedges of sweetbriar. She was spared the trouble of knocking, for as she came to a breathless halt on the big red sandstone doorstep, the door was flung open, and the white-haired, happy-faced little woman standing on the threshold had seized her hand and drawn her in bodily before she could speak a word.

"I saw you coming from upstairs," said Aunt Flora gleefully, "and I just ran down as fast as I could. Dear, dear, you are a little wet. But we'll soon dry you. Come right in—I've a bit of a fire in the grate, for the evening is chilly. They laughed at me for loving a fire so, but there's nothing like its snap and sparkle. You're rained in for the night, and I'm as glad as I can be. I know who you are—you are Miss Foster. I'm Aunt Flora, and this is Uncle Charles."

Constance let herself be put into a cushiony chair and fussed over with an unaccustomed sense of pleasure. The rain was coming down in torrents, and she certainly was domiciled at Heartsease Farm for the night. Somehow, she felt glad of it. Mrs. Hewitt was right in calling Aunt Flora sweet, and Uncle Charles was a big, jolly, ruddy-faced old man with a hearty manner. He shook Constance's hand until it ached, threw more pine knots in the fire and told her he wished it would rain every night if it rained down a nice little girl like her.

She found herself strangely attracted to the old couple. The name of their farm was in perfect keeping with their atmosphere. Constance's frozen soul expanded in it. She chatted merrily and girlishly, feeling as if she had known them all her life.

When bedtime came, Aunt Flora took her upstairs to a little gable room.

"My spare room is all in disorder just now, dearie, we have been painting its floor. So I'm going to put you here in Jeannie's room. Someway you remind me of her, and you are just about the age she was when she left us. If it wasn't for that, I don't think I could put you in her room, not even if every other floor in the house were being painted. It is so sacred to me. I keep it just as she left it, not a thing is changed. Good night dearie, and I hope you'll have pleasant dreams."

When Constance found herself alone in the room, she looked about her with curiosity. It was a very dainty, old-fashioned little room. The floor was covered with braided mats; the two square, small-paned windows were draped with snowy muslin. In one corner was a little white bed with white curtains and daintily ruffled pillows, and in the other a dressing table with a gilt-framed mirror and the various knick-knacks of a girlish toilet. There was a little blue rocker and an ottoman with a work-basket on it. In the work-basket was a bit of unfinished, yellowed lace with a needle sticking in it. A small bookcase under the sloping ceiling was filled with books.

Constance picked up one and opened it at the yellowing title-page. She gave a little cry of surprise. The name written across the page in a fine, dainty script was "Jean Constance Irving," her mother's name!

For a moment Constance stood motionless. Then she turned impulsively and hurried downstairs again. Mr. and Mrs. Bruce were still in the sitting room talking to each other in the firelight.

"Oh," cried Constance excitedly. "I must know, I must ask you. This is my mother's name, Jean Constance Irving, can it be possible she was your little Jeannie?"

A fortnight later Miss Channing received a letter from Constance.

"I am so happy," she wrote. "Oh, Miss Channing, I have found 'mine own people,' and Heartsease Farm is to be my own, own dear home for always.

"It was such a strange coincidence, no, Aunt Flora says it was Providence, and I believe it was, too. I came here one rainy night, and Aunty put me in my mother's room, think of it! My own dear mother's room, and I found her name in a book. And now the mystery is all cleared up, and we are so happy.

"Everything is dear and beautiful, and almost the dearest and most

beautiful thing is that I am getting acquainted with my mother, the mother I never knew before. She no longer seems dead to me. I feel that she lives and loves me, and I am learning to know her better every day. I have her room and her books and all her little girlish possessions. When I read her books, with their passages underlined by her hand, I feel as if she were speaking to me. She was very good and sweet, in spite of her one foolish, bitter mistake, and I want to be as much like her as I can.

"I said that this was almost the dearest and most beautiful thing. The very dearest and most beautiful is this—God means something to me now. He means so much! I remember that you said to me that he meant nothing to me because I had no human love in my heart to translate the divine. But I have now, and it has led me to Him.

"I am not going back to Taunton. I have sent in my resignation. I am going to stay home with Aunty and Uncle. It is so sweet to say home and know what it means.

"Aunty says you must come and spend all your next vacation with us. You see, I have lots of vacation plans now, even for a year ahead. After all, there is no need of the blue pills!

"I feel like a new creature, made over from the heart and soul out. I look back with shame and contrition on the old Constance. I want you to forget her and only remember your grateful friend, the new Constance."

Ida's New Year Cake

Mary Craig and Sara Reid and Josie Pye had all flocked into Ida Mitchell's room at their boarding-house to condole with each other because none of them was able to go home for New Year's. Mary and Josie had been home for Christmas, so they didn't really feel so badly off. But Ida and Sara hadn't even that consolation.

Ida was a third-year student at the Clifton Academy; she had holidays, and nowhere, so she mournfully affirmed, to spend them. At home three brothers and a sister were down with the measles, and, as Ida had never had them, she could not go there; and the news had come too late for her to make any other arrangements.

Mary and Josie were clerks in a Clifton bookstore, and Sara was stenographer in a Clifton lawyer's office. And they were all jolly and thoughtless and very fond of one another.

"This will be the first New Year's I have ever spent away from home," sighed Sara, nibbling chocolate fudge. "It does make me so blue to think of it. And not even a holiday—I'll have to go to work just the same. Now Ida here, she doesn't really need sympathy. She has holidays—a whole fortnight—and nothing to do but enjoy them."

"Holidays are dismal things when you've nowhere to holiday," said Ida mournfully. "The time drags horribly. But never mind, girls, I've a plummy bit of news for you. I'd a letter from Mother today and, bless the dear woman, she is sending me a cake—a New Year's cake—a great big, spicy, mellow, delicious fruit cake. It will be along tomorrow and, girls, we'll celebrate when it comes. I've asked everybody in the house up to my room for New Year's Eve, and we'll have a royal good time."

"How splendid!" said Mary. "There's nothing I like more than a slice of real countrified home-made fruit cake, where they don't scrimp on eggs or butter or raisins. You'll give me a good big piece, won't you, Ida?"

"As much as you can eat," promised Ida. "I can warrant Mother's fruit cake. Yes, we'll have a jamboree. Miss Monroe has promised to come in too. She says she has a weakness for fruit cake."

"Oh!" breathed all the girls. Miss Monroe was their idol, whom they had to be content to worship at a distance as a general thing. She was a clever journalist, who worked on a paper, and was reputed to be writing a book. The girls felt they were highly privileged to be boarding in the same house, and counted that day lost on which they did not receive a businesslike nod or an absent-minded smile from Miss Monroe. If she ever had time to speak to one of them about the weather, that fortunate one put on airs for a week. And now to think that she had actually promised to drop into Ida's room on New Year's Eve and eat fruit cake!

"There goes that funny little namesake of yours, Ida," said Josie, who was sitting by the window. "She seems to be staying in town over the holidays too. Wonder why. Perhaps she doesn't belong anywhere. She really is a most forlorn-appearing little mortal."

There were two Ida Mitchells attending the Clifton Academy. The other Ida was a plain, quiet, pale-faced little girl of fifteen who was in the second year. Beyond that, none of the third-year Ida Mitchell's set knew anything about her, or tried to find out.

"She must be very poor," said Ida carelessly. "She dresses so shabbily, and she always looks so pinched and subdued. She boards in a little house out on Marlboro Road, and I pity her if she has to spend her holidays there, for a more dismal place I never saw. I was there once on the trail of a book I had

lost. Going, girls? Well, don't forget tomorrow night."

Ida spent the next day decorating her room and watching for the arrival of her cake. It hadn't come by tea-time, and she concluded to go down to the express office and investigate. It would be dreadful if that cake didn't turn up in time, with all the girls and Miss Monroe coming in. Ida felt that she would be mortified to death.

Inquiry at the express office discovered two things. A box had come in for Miss Ida Mitchell, Clifton; and said box had been delivered to Miss Ida Mitchell, Clifton.

"One of our clerks said he knew you personally—boarded next door to you—and he'd take it round himself," the manager informed her.

"There must be some mistake," said Ida in perplexity. "I don't know any of the clerks here. Oh—why—there's another Ida Mitchell in town! Can it be possible my cake has gone to her?"

The manager thought it very possible, and offered to send around and see. But Ida said it was on her way home and she would call herself.

At the dismal little house on Marlboro Road she was sent up three flights of stairs to the other Ida Mitchell's small hall bedroom. The other Ida Mitchell opened the door for her. Behind her, on the table, was the cake—such a fine, big, brown cake, with raisins sticking out all over it!

"Why, how do you do, Miss Mitchell!" exclaimed the other Ida with shy pleasure. "Come in. I didn't know you were in town. It's real good of you to come and see me. And just see what I've had sent to me! Isn't it a beauty? I was so surprised when it came—and, oh, so glad! I was feeling so blue and lonesome—as if I hadn't a friend in the world. I—I—yes, I was crying when that cake came. It has just made the world over for me. Do sit down and I'll cut you a piece. I'm sure you're as fond of fruit cake as I am."

Ida sat down in a chair, feeling bewildered and awkward. This was a nice predicament! How could she tell that other Ida that the cake didn't belong to her? The poor thing was so delighted. And, oh, what a bare, lonely little room! The big, luxurious cake seemed to emphasize the bareness and loneliness.

"Who—who sent it to you?" she asked lamely.

"It must have been Mrs. Henderson, because there is nobody else who would," answered the other Ida. "Two years ago I was going to school in Trenton and I boarded with her. When I left her to come to Clifton she told me she would send me a cake for Christmas. Well, I expected that cake last year—and it didn't come. I can't tell you how disappointed I was. You'll think me very childish. But I was so lonely, with no home to go to like the other girls.

But she sent it this year, you see. It is so nice to think that somebody has remembered me at New Year's. It isn't the cake itself—it's the thought behind it. It has just made all the difference in the world. There—just sample it, Miss Mitchell."

The other Ida cut a generous slice from the cake and passed it to her guest. Her eyes were shining and her cheeks were flushed. She was really a very sweet-looking little thing—not a bit like her usual pale, timid self.

Ida ate the cake slowly. What was she to do? She couldn't tell the other Ida the truth about the cake. But the girls she had asked in to help eat it that very evening! And Miss Monroe! Oh, dear, it was too bad. But it couldn't be helped. She wouldn't blot out that light on the other Ida's face for anything! Of course, she would find out the truth in time—probably after she had written to thank Mrs. Henderson for the cake; but meanwhile she would have enjoyed the cake, and the supposed kindness back of it would tide her over her New Year loneliness.

"It's delicious," said Ida heartily, swallowing her own disappointment with the cake. "I'm—I'm glad I happened to drop in as I was passing." Ida hoped that speech didn't come under the head of a fib.

"So am I," said the other Ida brightly. "Oh, I've been so lonesome and downhearted this week. I'm so alone, you see—there isn't anybody to care. Father died three years ago, and I don't remember my mother at all. There is nobody but myself, and it is dreadfully lonely at times. When the Academy is open and I have my lessons to study, I don't mind so much. But the holidays take all the courage out of me."

"We should have fraternized more this week," smiled Ida, regretting that she hadn't thought of it before. "I couldn't go home because of the measles, and I've moped a lot. We might have spent the time together and had a real nice, jolly holiday."

The other Ida blushed with delight.

"I'd love to be friends with you," she said slowly. "I've often thought I'd like to know you. Isn't it odd that we have the same name? It was so nice of you to come and see me. I—I'd love to have you come often."

"I will," said Ida heartily.

"Perhaps you will stay the evening," suggested the other Ida. "I've asked some of the girls who board here in to have some cake, I'm so glad to be able to give them something—they've all been so good to me. They are all clerks in stores and some of them are so tired and lonely. It's so nice to have a pleasure to share with them. Won't you stay?"

"I'd like to," laughed Ida, "but I have some guests of my own invited in for tonight. I must hurry home, for they will most surely be waiting for me."

She laughed again as she thought what else the guests would be waiting for. But her face was sober enough as she walked home.

"But I'm glad I left the cake with her," she said resolutely. "Poor little thing! It means so much to her. It meant only 'a good feed,' as Josie says, to me. I'm simply going to make it my business next term to be good friends with the other Ida Mitchell. I'm afraid we third-year girls are very self-centred and selfish. And I know what I'll do! I'll write to Abby Morton in Trenton to send me Mrs. Henderson's address, and I'll write her a letter and ask her not to let Ida know she didn't send the cake."

Ida went into a confectionery store and invested in what Josie Pye was wont to call "ready-to-wear eatables"—fancy cakes, fruit, and candies. When she reached her room she found it full of expectant girls, with Miss Monroe enthroned in the midst of them—Miss Monroe in a wonderful evening dress of black lace and yellow silk, with roses in her hair and pearls on her neck—all donned in honour of Ida's little celebration. I won't say that, just for a moment, Ida didn't regret that she had given up her cake.

"Good evening, Miss Mitchell," cried Mary Craig gaily. "Walk right in and make yourself at home in your own room, do! We all met in the hall, and knocked and knocked. Finally Miss Monroe came, so we made bold to walk right in. Where is the only and original fruit cake, Ida? My mouth has been watering all day."

"The other Ida Mitchell is probably entertaining her friends at this moment with my fruit cake," said Ida, with a little laugh.

Then she told the whole story.

"I'm so sorry to disappoint you," she concluded, "but I simply couldn't tell that poor, lonely child that the cake wasn't intended for her. I've brought all the goodies home with me that I could buy, and we'll have to do the best we can without the fruit cake."

Their "best" proved to be a very good thing. They had a jolly New Year's Eve, and Miss Monroe sparkled and entertained most brilliantly. They kept their celebration up until twelve to welcome the new year in, and then they bade Ida good night. But Miss Monroe lingered for a moment behind the others to say softly:

"I want to tell you how good and sweet I think it was of you to give up your cake to the other Ida. That little bit of unselfishness was a good guerdon for your new year."

And Ida, radiant-faced at this praise from her idol, answered heartily:

"I'm afraid I'm anything but unselfish, Miss Monroe. But I mean to try to be more this coming year and think a little about the girls outside of my own little set who may be lonely or discouraged. The other Ida Mitchell isn't going to have to depend on that fruit cake alone for comfort and encouragement for the next twelve months."

In the Old Valley

The man halted on the crest of the hill and looked sombrely down into the long valley below. It was evening, and although the hills around him were still in the light the valley was already filled with kindly, placid shadows. A wind that blew across it from the misty blue sea beyond was making wild music in the rugged firs above his head as he stood in an angle of the weather-grey longer fence, knee-deep in bracken. It had been by these firs he had halted twenty years ago, turning for one last glance at the valley below, the home valley which he had never seen since. But then the firs had been little more than vigorous young saplings; they were tall, gnarled trees now, with lichened trunks, and their lower boughs were dead. But high up their tops were green and caught the saffron light of the west. He remembered that when a boy he had thought there was nothing more beautiful than the evening sunshine falling athwart the dark green fir boughs on the hills.

As he listened to the swish and murmur of the wind, the earth-old tune with the power to carry the soul back to the dawn of time, the years fell away from him and he forgot much, remembering more. He knew now that there had always been a longing in his heart to hear the wind-chant in the firs. He had called that longing by other names, but he knew it now for what it was when, hearing, he was satisfied.

He was a tall man with iron-grey hair and the face of a conqueror—strong, pitiless, unswerving. Eagle eyes, quick to discern and unfaltering to pursue; jaw square and intrepid; mouth formed to keep secrets and cajole men to his will—a face that hid much and revealed little. It told of power and intellect, but the soul of the man was a hidden thing. Not in the arena where he had fought and triumphed, giving fierce blow for blow, was it to be shown; but here, looking down on the homeland, with the strength of the hills about him, it rose dominantly and claimed its own. The old bond held. Yonder below him was home—the old house that had sheltered him, the graves of his kin, the wide fields where his boyhood dreams had been dreamed.

Should he go down to it? This was the question he asked himself. He had come back to it, heartsick of his idols of the marketplace. For years they had satisfied him, the buying and selling and getting gain, the pitting of strength and craft against strength and craft, the tireless struggle, the exultation of victory. Then, suddenly, they had failed their worshipper; they ceased to satisfy; the sacrifices he had heaped on their altars availed him nothing in this new need and hunger of his being. His gods mocked him and he wearied of their service. Were there not better things than these, things he had once known and loved and forgotten? Where were the ideals of his youth, the lofty aspirations that had upborne him then? Where was the eagerness and zest of new dawns, the earnestness of well-filled, purposeful hours of labour, the satisfaction of a good day worthily lived, at eventide the unbroken rest of long, starry nights? Where might he find them again? Were they yet to be had for the seeking in the old valley? With the thought came a great yearning for home. He had had many habitations, but he realized now that he had never thought of any of these places as home. That name had all unconsciously been kept sacred to the long, green, seaward-looking glen where he had been born.

So he had come back to it, drawn by a longing not to be resisted. But at the last he felt afraid. There had been many changes, of that he felt sure. Would it still be home? And if not, would not the loss be most irreparable and bitter? Would it not be better to go away, having looked at it from the hill and having heard the saga of the firs, keeping his memory of it unblurred, than risk the probable disillusion of a return to the places that had forgotten him and friends whom the varying years must certainly have changed as he had changed himself? No, he would not go down. It had been a foolish whim to come at all —foolish, because the object of his quest was not to be found there or elsewhere. He could not enter again into the heritage of boyhood and the heart of youth. He could not find there the old dreams and hopes that had made life sweet. He understood that he could not bring back to the old valley what he had taken from it. He had lost that intangible, all-real wealth of faith and idealism and zest; he had bartered it away for the hard, yellow gold of the marketplace, and he realized at last how much poorer he was than when he had left that home valley. His was a name that stood for millions, but he was beggared of hope and purpose.

No, he would not go down. There was no one left there, unchanged and unchanging, to welcome him. He would be a stranger there, even among his kin. He would stay awhile on the hill, until the night came down over it, and then he would go back to his own place.

Down below him, on the crest of a little upland, he saw his old home, a weather-grey house, almost hidden among white birch and apple trees, with a thick fir grove to the north of it. He had been born in that old house; his

earliest memory was of standing on its threshold and looking afar up to the long green hills.

"What is over the hills?" he had asked of his mother. With a smile she had made answer,

"Many things, laddie. Wonderful things, beautiful things, heart-breaking things."

"Some day I shall go over the hills and find them all, Mother," he had said stoutly.

She had laughed and sighed and caught him to her heart. He had no recollection of his father, who had died soon after his son's birth, but how well he remembered his mother, his little, brown-eyed, girlish-faced mother!

He had lived on the homestead until he was twenty. He had tilled the broad fields and gone in and out among the people, and their life had been his life. But his heart was not in his work. He wanted to go beyond the hills and seek what he knew must be there. The valley was too narrow, too placid. He longed for conflict and accomplishment. He felt power and desire and the lust of endeavour stirring in him. Oh, to go over the hills to a world where men lived! Such had been the goal of all his dreams.

When his mother died he sold the farm to his cousin, Stephen Marshall. He supposed it still belonged to him. Stephen had been a good sort of a fellow, a bit slow and plodding, perhaps, bovinely content to dwell within the hills, never hearkening or responding to the lure of the beyond. Yet it might be he had chosen the better part, to dwell thus on the land of his fathers, with a wife won in youth, and children to grow up around him. The childless, wifeless man looking down from the hill wondered if it might have been so with him had he been content to stay in the valley. Perhaps so. There had been Joyce.

He wondered where Joyce was now and whom she had married, for of course she had married. Did she too live somewhere down there in the valley, the matronly, contented mother of lads and lassies? He could see her old home also, not so far from his own, just across a green meadow by way of a footpath and stile and through the firs beyond it. How often he had traversed that path in the old days, knowing that Joyce would be waiting at the end of it among the firs—Joyce, the playmate of childhood, the sweet confidante and companion of youth! They had never been avowed lovers, but he had loved her then, as a boy loves, although he had never said a word of love to her. Joyce alone knew of his longings and his ambitions and his dreams; he had told them all to her freely, sure of the understanding and sympathy no other soul in the valley could give him. How true and strong and womanly and gentle she had always been!

When he left home he had meant to go back to her some day. They had parted without pledge or kiss, yet he knew she loved him and that he loved her. At first they corresponded, then the letters began to grow fewer. It was his fault; he had gradually forgotten. The new, fierce, burning interests that came into his life crowded the old ones out. Boyhood's love was scorched up in that hot flame of ambition and contest. He had not heard from or of Joyce for many years. Now, again, he remembered as he looked down on the homeland fields.

The old places had changed little, whatever he might fear of the people who lived in them. There was the school he had attended, a small, low-eaved, white-washed building set back from the main road among green spruces. Beyond it, amid tall elms, was the old church with its square tower hung with ivy. He felt glad to see it; he had expected to see a new church, offensively spick-and-span and modern, for this church had been old when he was a boy. He recalled the many times he had walked to it on the peaceful Sunday afternoons, sometimes with his mother, sometimes with Joyce.

The sun set far out to sea and sucked down with it all the light out of the winnowed dome of sky. The stars came out singly and crystal clear over the far purple curves of the hills. Suddenly, glancing over his shoulder, he saw through an arch of black fir boughs a young moon swung low in a lake of palely tinted saffron sky. He smiled a little, remembering that in boyhood it had been held a good omen to see the new moon over the right shoulder.

Down in the valley the lights began to twinkle out here and there like earth-stars. He would wait until he saw the kitchen light from the window of his old home. Then he would go. He waited until the whole valley was zoned with a glittering girdle, but no light glimmered out through his native trees. Why was it lacking, that light he had so often hailed at dark, coming home from boyish rambles on the hills? He felt anxious and dissatisfied, as if he could not go away until he had seen it.

When it was quite dark he descended the hill resolutely. He must know why the homelight had failed him. When he found himself in the old garden his heart grew sick and sore with disappointment and a bitter homesickness. It needed but a glance, even in the dimness of the summer night, to see that the old house was deserted and falling to decay. The kitchen door swung open on rusty hinges; the windows were broken and lifeless; weeds grew thickly over the yard and crowded wantonly up to the very threshold through the chinks of the rotten platform.

Cuthbert Marshall sat down on the old red sandstone step of the door and bowed his head in his hands. This was what he had come back to—this ghost and wreck of his past! Oh, bitterness!

From where he sat he saw the new house that Stephen had built beyond the

fir grove, with a cheerful light shining from its window. After a long time he went over to it and knocked at the door. Stephen came to it, a stout grizzled farmer, with a chubby boy on his shoulder. He was not much changed; Cuthbert easily recognized him, but to Stephen Marshall no recognition came of this man with whom he had played and worked for years. Cuthbert was obliged to tell who he was. He was made instantly and warmly welcome. Stephen was unfeignedly glad to see him, and Stephen's comely wife, whom he remembered as a slim, fresh-cheeked valley girl, extended a kind and graceful hospitality. The boys and girls, too, soon made friends with him. Yet he felt himself the stranger and the alien, whom the long, swift-passing years had shut forever from his old place.

He and Stephen talked late that night, and in the morning he yielded to their entreaties to stay another day with them. He spent it wandering about the farm and the old haunts of wood and stream. Yet he could not find himself. This valley had his past in its keeping, but it could not give it back to him; he had lost the master word that might have compelled it.

He asked Stephen fully about all his old friends and neighbours with one exception. He could not ask him what had become of Joyce Cameron. The question was on his lips a dozen times, but he shrank from uttering it. He had a vague, secret dread that the answer, whatever it might be, would hurt him.

In the evening he yielded to a whim and went across to the Cameron homestead, by the old footpath which was still kept open. He walked slowly and dreamily, with his eyes on the far hills scarfed in the splendour of sunset. So he had walked in the old days, but he had no dreams now of what lay beyond the hills, and Joyce would not be waiting among the firs.

The stile he remembered was gone, replaced by a little rustic gate. As he passed through it he lifted his eyes and there before him he saw her, standing tall and gracious among the grey trees, with the light from the west falling over her face. So she had stood, so she had looked many an evening of the long-ago. She had not changed; he realized that in the first amazed, incredulous glance. Perhaps there were lines on her face, a thread or two of silver in the soft brown hair, but those splendid steady blue eyes were the same, and the soul of her looked out through them, true to itself, the staunch, brave, sweet soul of the maiden ripened to womanhood.

"Joyce!" he said, stupidly, unbelievingly.

She smiled and put out her hand. "I am glad to see you, Cuthbert," she said simply. "Stephen's Mary told me you had come. And I thought you would be over to see us this evening."

She had offered him only one hand but he took both and held her so,

looking hungrily down at her as a man looks at something he knows must be his salvation if salvation exists for him.

"Is it possible you are here still, Joyce?" he said slowly. "And you have not changed at all."

She coloured slightly and pulled away her hands, laughing. "Oh, indeed I have. I have grown old. The twilight is so kind it hides that, but it is true. Come into the house, Cuthbert. Father and Mother will be glad to see you."

"After a little," he said imploringly. "Let us stay here awhile first, Joyce. I want to make sure that this is no dream. Last night I stood on those hills yonder and looked down, but I meant to go away because I thought there would be no one left to welcome me. If I had known you were here! You have lived here in the old valley all these years?"

"All these years," she said gently, "I suppose you think it must have been a very meagre life?"

"No. I am much wiser now than I was once, Joyce. I have learned wisdom beyond the hills. One learns there—in time—but sometimes the lesson is learned too late. Shall I tell you what I have learned, Joyce? The gist of the lesson is that I left happiness behind me in the old valley, when I went away from it, happiness and peace and the joy of living. I did not miss these things for a long while; I did not even know I had lost them. But I have discovered my loss."

"Yet you have been a very successful man," she said wonderingly.

"As the world calls success," he answered bitterly. "I have place and wealth and power. But that is not success, Joyce. I am tired of these things; they are the toys of grown-up children; they do not satisfy the man's soul. I have come back to the old valley seeking for what might satisfy, but I have little hope of finding it, unless—unless—"

He was silent, remembering that he had forfeited all right to her help in the quest. Yet he realized clearly that only she could help him, only she could guide him back to the path he had missed. It seemed to him that she held in her keeping all the good of his life, all the beauty of his past, all the possibilities of his future. Hers was the master word, but how should he dare ask her to utter it?

They walked among the firs until the stars came out, and they talked of many things. She had kept her freshness of soul and her ideals untarnished. In the peace of the old valley she had lived a life, narrow outwardly, wondrously deep and wide in thought and aspiration. Her native hills bounded the vision of her eyes, but the outlook of the soul was far and unhindered. In the quiet

places and the green ways she had found what he had failed to find—the secret of happiness and content. He knew that if this woman had walked hand in hand with him through the years, life, even in the glare and tumult of that world beyond the hills, would never have lost its meaning for him. Oh, fool and blind that he had been! While he had sought and toiled afar, the best that God had meant for him had been here in the home of youth. When darkness came down through the firs he told her all this, haltingly, blunderingly, yearningly.

"Joyce, is it too late? Can you forgive my mistake, my long blindness? Can you care for me again—a little?"

She turned her face upward to the sky between the swaying fir tops and he saw the reflection of a star in her eyes. "I have never ceased to care," she said in a low tone. "I never really wanted to cease. It would have left life too empty. If my love means so much to you it is yours, Cuthbert—it always has been yours."

He drew her close into his arms, and as he felt her heart beating against his he understood that he had found the way back to simple happiness and true wisdom, the wisdom of loving and the happiness of being loved.

Jane Lavinia

Jane Lavinia put her precious portfolio down on the table in her room, carefully, as if its contents were fine gold, and proceeded to unpin and take off her second-best hat. When she had gone over to the Whittaker place that afternoon, she had wanted to wear her best hat, but Aunt Rebecca had vetoed that uncompromisingly.

"Next thing you'll be wanting to wear your best muslin to go for the cows," said Aunt Rebecca sarcastically. "You go right back upstairs and take off that chiffon hat. If I was fool enough to be coaxed into buying it for you, I ain't going to have you spoil it by traipsing hither and yon with it in the dust and sun. Your last summer's sailor is plenty good enough to go to the Whittakers' in, Jane Lavinia."

"But Mr. Stephens and his wife are from New York," pleaded Jane Lavinia, "and she's so stylish."

"Well, it's likely they're used to seeing chiffon hats," Aunt Rebecca responded, more sarcastically than ever. "It isn't probable that yours would make much of a sensation. Mr. Stephens didn't send for you to show him your chiffon hat, did he? If he did, I don't see what you're lugging that big portfolio

along with you for. Go and put on your sailor hat, Jane Lavinia."

Jane Lavinia obeyed. She always obeyed Aunt Rebecca. But she took off the chiffon hat and pinned on the sailor with bitterness of heart. She had always hated that sailor. Anything ugly hurt Jane Lavinia with an intensity that Aunt Rebecca could never understand; and the sailor hat was ugly, with its stiff little black bows and impossible blue roses. It jarred on Jane Lavinia's artistic instincts. Besides, it was very unbecoming.

I look horrid in it, Jane Lavinia had thought sorrowfully; and then she had gone out and down the velvet-green springtime valley and over the sunny birch hill beyond with a lagging step and a rebellious heart.

But Jane Lavinia came home walking as if on the clear air of the crystal afternoon, her small, delicate face aglow and every fibre of her body and spirit thrilling with excitement and delight. She forgot to fling the sailor hat into its box with her usual energy of dislike. Just then Jane Lavinia had a soul above hats. She looked at herself in the glass and nodded with friendliness.

"You'll do something yet," she said. "Mr. Stephens said you would. Oh, I like you, Jane Lavinia, you dear thing! Sometimes I haven't liked you because you're nothing to look at, and I didn't suppose you could really do anything worthwhile. But I do like you now after what Mr. Stephens said about your drawings."

Jane Lavinia smiled radiantly into the little cracked glass. Just then she was pretty, with the glow on her cheeks and the sparkle in her eyes. Her uncertainly tinted hair and an all-too-certain little tilt of her nose no longer troubled her. Such things did not matter; nobody would mind them in a successful artist. And Mr. Stephens had said that she had talent enough to win success.

Jane Lavinia sat down by her window, which looked west into a grove of firs. They grew thickly, close up to the house, and she could touch their wide, fan-like branches with her hand. Jane Lavinia loved those fir trees, with their whispers and sighs and beckonings, and she also loved her little shadowy, low-ceilinged room, despite its plainness, because it was gorgeous for her with visions and peopled with rainbow fancies.

The stained walls were covered with Jane Lavinia's pictures—most of them pen-and-ink sketches, with a few flights into water colour. Aunt Rebecca sniffed at them and deplored the driving of tacks into the plaster. Aunt Rebecca thought Jane Lavinia's artistic labours a flat waste of time, which would have been much better put into rugs and crochet tidies and afghans. All the other girls in Chestercote made rugs and tidies and afghans. Why must Jane Lavinia keep messing with ink and crayons and water colours?

Jane Lavinia only knew that she must—she could not help it. There was something in her that demanded expression thus.

When Mr. Stephens, who was a well-known artist and magazine illustrator, came to Chestercote because his wife's father, Nathan Whittaker, was ill, Jane Lavinia's heart had bounded with a shy hope. She indulged in some harmless manoeuvring which, with the aid of good-natured Mrs. Whittaker, was crowned with success. One day, when Mr. Whittaker was getting better, Mr. Stephens had asked her to show him some of her work. Jane Lavinia, wearing the despised sailor hat, had gone over to the Whittaker place with some of her best sketches. She came home again feeling as if all the world and herself were transfigured.

She looked out from the window of her little room with great dreamy brown eyes, seeing through the fir boughs the golden western sky beyond, serving as a canvas whereon her fancy painted glittering visions of her future. She would go to New York—and study—and work, oh, so hard—and go abroad—and work harder—and win success—and be great and admired and famous—if only Aunt Rebecca—ah! if only Aunt Rebecca! Jane Lavinia sighed. There was spring in the world and spring in Jane Lavinia's heart; but a chill came with the thought of Aunt Rebecca, who considered tidies and afghans nicer than her pictures.

"But I'm going, anyway," said Jane Lavinia decidedly. "If Aunt Rebecca won't give me the money, I'll find some other way. I'm not afraid of any amount of work. After what Mr. Stephens said, I believe I could work twenty hours out of the twenty-four. I'd be content to live on a crust and sleep in a garret—yes, and wear sailor hats with stiff bows and blue roses the year round."

Jane Lavinia sighed in luxurious renunciation. Oh, it was good to be alive—to be a girl of seventeen, with wonderful ambitions and all the world before her! The years of the future sparkled and gleamed alluringly. Jane Lavinia, with her head on the window sill, looked out into the sunset splendour and dreamed.

Athwart her dreams, rending in twain their frail, rose-tinted fabric, came Aunt Rebecca's voice from the kitchen below, "Jane Lavinia! Jane Lavinia! Ain't you going for the cows tonight?"

Jane Lavinia started up guiltily; she had forgotten all about the cows. She slipped off her muslin dress and hurried into her print; but with all her haste it took time, and Aunt Rebecca was grimmer than ever when Jane Lavinia ran downstairs.

"It'll be dark before we get the cows milked. I s'pose you've been day-

dreaming again up there. I do wish, Jane Lavinia, that you had more sense."

Jane Lavinia made no response. At any other time she would have gone out with a lump in her throat; but now, after what Mr. Stephens had said, Aunt Rebecca's words had no power to hurt her.

"After milking I'll ask her about it," she said to herself, as she went blithely down the sloping yard, across the little mossy bridge over the brook, and up the lane on the hill beyond, where the ferns grew thickly and the grass was beset with tiny blue-eyes like purple stars. The air was moist and sweet. At the top of the lane a wild plum tree hung out its branches of feathery bloom against the crimson sky. Jane Lavinia lingered, in spite of Aunt Rebecca's hurry, to look at it. It satisfied her artistic instinct and made her glad to be alive in the world where wild plums blossomed against springtime skies. The pleasure of it went with her through the pasture and back to the milking yard; and stayed with her while she helped Aunt Rebecca milk the cows.

When the milk was strained into the creamers down at the spring, and the pails washed and set in a shining row on their bench, Jane Lavinia tried to summon up her courage to speak to Aunt Rebecca. They were out on the back verandah; the spring twilight was purpling down over the woods and fields; down in the swamp the frogs were singing a silvery, haunting chorus; a little baby moon was floating in the clear sky above the white-blossoming orchard on the slope.

Jane Lavinia tried to speak and couldn't. For a wonder, Aunt Rebecca spared her the trouble.

"Well, what did Mr. Stephens think of your pictures?" she asked shortly.

"Oh!" Everything that Jane Lavinia wanted to say came rushing at once and together to her tongue's end. "Oh, Aunt Rebecca, he was delighted with them! And he said I had remarkable talent, and he wants me to go to New York and study in an art school there. He says Mrs. Stephens finds it hard to get good help, and if I'd be willing to work for her in the mornings, I could live with them and have my afternoons off. So it won't cost much. And he said he would help me—and, oh, Aunt Rebecca, can't I go?"

Jane Lavinia's breath gave out with a gasp of suspense.

Aunt Rebecca was silent for so long a space that Jane Lavinia had time to pass through the phases of hope and fear and despair and resignation before she said, more grimly than ever, "If your mind is set on going, go you will, I suppose. It doesn't seem to me that I have anything to say in the matter, Jane Lavinia."

"But, oh, Aunt Rebecca," said Jane Lavinia tremulously. "I can't go unless

you'll help me. I'll have to pay for my lessons at the art school, you know."

"So that's it, is it? And do you expect me to give you the money to pay for them, Jane Lavinia?"

"Not give—exactly," stammered Jane Lavinia. "I'll pay it back some time, Aunt Rebecca. Oh, indeed, I will—when I'm able to earn money by my pictures!"

"The security is hardly satisfactory," said Aunt Rebecca immovably. "You know well enough I haven't much money, Jane Lavinia. I thought when I was coaxed into giving you two quarters' lessons with Miss Claxton that it was as much as you could expect me to do for you. I didn't suppose the next thing would be that you'd be for betaking yourself to New York and expecting me to pay your bills there."

Aunt Rebecca turned and went into the house. Jane Lavinia, feeling sore and bruised in spirit; fled to her own room and cried herself to sleep.

Her eyes were swollen the next morning, but she was not sulky. Jane Lavinia never sulked. She did her morning's work faithfully, although there was no spring in her step. That afternoon, when she was out in the orchard trying to patch up her tattered dreams, Aunt Rebecca came down the blossomy avenue, a tall, gaunt figure, with an uncompromising face.

"You'd better go down to the store and get ten yards of white cotton, Jane Lavinia," she said. "If you're going to New York, you'll have to get a supply of underclothing made."

Jane Lavinia opened her eyes.

"Oh, Aunt Rebecca, am I going?"

"You can go if you want to. I'll give you all the money I can spare. It ain't much, but perhaps it'll be enough for a start."

"Oh, Aunt Rebecca, thank you!" exclaimed Jane Lavinia, crimson with conflicting feelings. "But perhaps I oughtn't to take it—perhaps I oughtn't to leave you alone—"

If Aunt Rebecca had shown any regret at the thought of Jane Lavinia's departure, Jane Lavinia would have foregone New York on the spot. But Aunt Rebecca only said coldly, "I guess you needn't worry over that. I can get along well enough."

And with that it was settled. Jane Lavinia lived in a whirl of delight for the next week. She felt few regrets at leaving Chestercote. Aunt Rebecca would not miss her; Jane Lavinia thought that Aunt Rebecca regarded her as a nuisance—a foolish girl who wasted her time making pictures instead of doing

something useful. Jane Lavinia had never thought that Aunt Rebecca had any affection for her. She had been a very little girl when her parents had died, and Aunt Rebecca had taken her to bring up. Accordingly she had been "brought up," and she was grateful to Aunt Rebecca, but there was no closer bond between them. Jane Lavinia would have given love for love unstintedly, but she never supposed that Aunt Rebecca loved her.

On the morning of departure Jane Lavinia was up and ready early. Her trunk had been taken over to Mr. Whittaker's the night before, and she was to walk over in the morning and go with Mr. and Mrs. Stephens to the station. She put on her chiffon hat to travel in, and Aunt Rebecca did not say a word of protest. Jane Lavinia cried when she said good-by, but Aunt Rebecca did not cry. She shook hands and said stiffly, "Write when you get to New York. You needn't let Mrs. Stephens work you to death either."

Jane Lavinia went slowly over the bridge and up the lane. If only Aunt Rebecca had been a little sorry! But the morning was perfect and the air clear as crystal, and she was going to New York, and fame and fortune were to be hers for the working. Jane Lavinia's spirits rose and bubbled over in a little trill of song. Then she stopped in dismay. She had forgotten her watch—her mother's little gold watch; she had left it on her dressing table.

Jane Lavinia hurried down the lane and back to the house. In the open kitchen doorway she paused, standing on a mosaic of gold and shadow where the sunshine fell through the morning-glory vines. Nobody was in the kitchen, but Aunt Rebecca was in the little bedroom that opened off it, crying bitterly and talking aloud between her sobs, "Oh, she's gone and left me all alone—my girl has gone! Oh, what shall I do? And she didn't care—she was glad to go—glad to get away. Well, it ain't any wonder. I've always been too cranky with her. But I loved her so much all the time, and I was so proud of her! I liked her picture-making real well, even if I did complain of her wasting her time. Oh, I don't know how I'm ever going to keep on living now she's gone!"

Jane Lavinia listened with a face from which all the sparkle and excitement had gone. Yet amid all the wreck and ruin of her tumbling castles in air, a glad little thrill made itself felt. Aunt Rebecca was sorry—Aunt Rebecca did love her after all!

Jane Lavinia turned and walked noiselessly away. As she went swiftly up the wild plum lane, some tears brimmed up in her eyes, but there was a smile on her lips and a song in her heart. After all, it was nicer to be loved than to be rich and admired and famous.

When she reached Mr. Whittaker's, everybody was out in the yard ready to start.

"Hurry up, Jane Lavinia," said Mr. Whittaker. "Blest if we hadn't begun to think you weren't coming at all. Lively now."

"I am not going," said Jane Lavinia calmly.

"Not going?" they all exclaimed.

"No. I'm very sorry, and very grateful to you, Mr. Stephens, but I can't leave Aunt Rebecca. She'd miss me too much."

"Well, you little goose!" said Mrs. Whittaker.

Mrs. Stephens said nothing, but frowned coldly. Perhaps her thoughts were less of the loss to the world of art than of the difficulty of hunting up another housemaid. Mr. Stephens looked honestly regretful.

"I'm sorry, very sorry, Miss Slade," he said. "You have exceptional talent, and I think you ought to cultivate it."

"I am going to cultivate Aunt Rebecca," said Jane Lavinia.

Nobody knew just what she meant, but they all understood the firmness of her tone. Her trunk was taken down out of the express wagon, and Mr. and Mrs. Stephens drove away. Then Jane Lavinia went home. She found Aunt Rebecca washing the breakfast dishes, with the big tears rolling down her face.

"Goodness me!" she cried, when Jane Lavinia walked in. "What's the matter? You ain't gone and been too late!"

"No, I've just changed my mind, Aunt Rebecca. They've gone without me. I am not going to New York—I don't want to go. I'd rather stay at home with you."

For a moment Aunt Rebecca stared at her. Then she stepped forward and flung her arms about the girl.

"Oh, Jane Lavinia," she said with a sob, "I'm so glad! I couldn't see how I was going to get along without you, but I thought you didn't care. You can wear that chiffon hat everywhere you want to, and I'll get you a pink organdy dress for Sundays."

Mackereling Out in the Gulf

The mackerel boats were all at anchor on the fishing grounds; the sea was glassy calm—a pallid blue, save for a chance streak of deeper azure where some stray sea breeze ruffled it.

It was about the middle of the afternoon, and intensely warm and breathless. The headlands and coves were blurred by a purple heat haze. The long sweep of the sandshore was so glaringly brilliant that the pained eye sought relief among the rough rocks, where shadows were cast by the big red sandstone boulders. The little cluster of fishing houses nearby were bleached to a silvery grey by long exposure to wind and rain. Far off were several "Yankee" fishing schooners, their sails dimly visible against the white horizon.

Two boats were hauled upon the "skids" that ran from the rocks out into the water. A couple of dories floated below them. Now and then a white gull, flashing silver where its plumage caught the sun, soared landward.

A young man was standing by the skids, watching the fishing boats through a spyglass. He was tall, with a straight, muscular figure clad in a rough fishing suit. His face was deeply browned by the gulf breezes and was attractive rather than handsome, while his eyes, as blue and clear as the gulf waters, were peculiarly honest and frank.

Two wiry, dark-faced French-Canadian boys were perched on one of the boats, watching the fishing fleet with lazy interest in their inky-black eyes, and wondering if the "Yanks" had seined many mackerel that day.

Presently three people came down the steep path from the fish-houses. One of them, a girl, ran lightly forward and touched Benjamin Selby's arm. He lowered his glass with a start and looked around. A flash of undisguised delight transfigured his face.

"Why, Mary Stella! I didn't expect you'd be down this hot day. You haven't been much at the shore lately," he added reproachfully.

"I really haven't had time, Benjamin," she answered carelessly, as she took the glass from his hand and tried to focus it on the fishing fleet. Benjamin steadied it for her; the flush of pleasure was still glowing on his bronzed cheek, "Are the mackerel biting now?"

"Not just now. Who is that stranger with your father, Mary Stella?"

"That is a cousin of ours—a Mr. Braithwaite. Are you very busy, Benjamin?"

"Not busy at all—idle as you see me. Why?"

"Will you take me out for a little row in the dory? I haven't been out for so long."

"Of course. Come—here's the dory—your namesake, you know. I had her fresh painted last week. She's as clean as an eggshell."

The girl stepped daintily off the rocks into the little cream-coloured skiff,

and Benjamin untied the rope and pushed off.

"Where would you like to go, Mary Stella?"

"Oh, just upshore a little way—not far. And don't go out into very deep water, please, it makes me feel frightened and dizzy."

Benjamin smiled and promised. He was rowing along with the easy grace of one used to the oar. He had been born and brought up in sound of the gulf's waves; its never-ceasing murmur had been his first lullaby. He knew it and loved it in every mood, in every varying tint and smile, in every change of wind and tide. There was no better skipper alongshore than Benjamin Selby.

Mary Stella waved her hand gaily to the two men on the rocks. Benjamin looked back darkly.

"Who is that young fellow?" he asked again. "Where does he belong?"

"He is the son of Father's sister—his favourite sister, although he has never seen her since she married an American years ago and went to live in the States. She made Frank come down here this summer and hunt us up. He is splendid, I think. He is a New York lawyer and very clever."

Benjamin made no response. He pulled in his oars and let the dory float amid the ripples. The bottom of white sand, patterned over with coloured pebbles, was clear and distinct through the dark-green water. Mary Stella leaned over to watch the distorted reflection of her face by the dory's side.

"Have you had pretty good luck this week, Benjamin? Father couldn't go out much—he has been so busy with his hay, and Leon is such a poor fisherman."

"We've had some of the best hauls of the summer this week. Some of the Rustler boats caught six hundred to a line yesterday. We had four hundred to the line in our boat."

Mary Stella began absently to dabble her slender brown hand in the water. A silence fell between them, with which Benjamin was well content, since it gave him a chance to feast his eyes on the beautiful face before him.

He could not recall the time when he had not loved Mary Stella. It seemed to him that she had always been a part of his inmost life. He loved her with the whole strength and fidelity of a naturally intense nature. He hoped that she loved him, and he had no rival that he feared. In secret he exalted and deified her as something almost too holy for him to aspire to. She was his ideal of all that was beautiful and good; he was jealously careful over all his words and thoughts and actions that not one might make him more unworthy of her. In all the hardship and toil of his life his love was as his guardian angel, turning his feet from every dim and crooked byway; he trod in no path where he would

not have the girl he loved to follow. The roughest labour was glorified if it lifted him a step nearer the altar of his worship.

But today he felt faintly disturbed. In some strange, indefinable way it seemed to him that Mary Stella was different from her usual self. The impression was vague and evanescent—gone before he could decide wherein the difference lay. He told himself that he was foolish, yet the vexing, transient feeling continued to come and go.

Presently Mary Stella said it was time to go back. Benjamin was in no hurry, but he never disputed her lightest inclination. He turned the dory about and rowed shoreward.

Back on the rocks, Mosey Louis and Xavier, the French Canadians, were looking through the spyglass by turns and making characteristic comments on the fleet. Mr. Murray and Braithwaite were standing by the skids, watching the dory.

"Who is that young fellow?" asked the latter. "What a splendid physique he has! It's a pleasure to watch him rowing."

"That," said the older man, with a certain proprietary pride in his tone, "is Benjamin Selby—the best mackerel fisherman on the island. He's been high line all along the gulf shore for years. I don't know a finer man every way you take him. Maybe you'll think I'm partial," he continued with a smile. "You see, he and Mary Stella think a good deal of each other. I expect to have Benjamin for a son-in-law some day if all goes well."

Braithwaite's expression changed slightly. He walked over to the dory and helped Mary Stella out of it while Benjamin made the painter fast. When the latter turned, Mary Stella was walking across the rocks with her cousin. Benjamin's blue eyes darkened, and he strode moodily over to the boats.

"You weren't out this morning, Mr. Murray?"

"No, that hay had to be took in. Reckon I missed it—pretty good catch, they tell me. Are they getting any now?"

"No. It's not likely the fish will begin to bite again for another hour."

"I see someone standing up in that off boat, don't I?" said Mr. Murray, reaching for the spyglass.

"No, that's only Rob Leslie's crew trying to fool us. They've tried it before this afternoon. They think it would be a joke to coax us out there to broil like themselves."

"Frank," shouted Mr. Murray, "come here, I want you."

Aside to Benjamin he said, "He's my nephew—a fine young chap. You'll

like him, I know."

Braithwaite came over, and Mr. Murray put one hand on his shoulder and one on Benjamin's.

"Boys, I want you to know each other. Benjamin, this is Frank Braithwaite. Frank, this is Benjamin Selby, the high line of the gulf shore, as I told you."

While Mr. Murray was speaking, the two men looked steadily at each other. The few seconds seemed very long; when they had passed, Benjamin knew that the other man was his rival.

Braithwaite was the first to speak. He put out his hand with easy cordiality.

"I am glad to meet you, Mr. Selby," he said heartily, "although I am afraid I should feel very green in the presence of such a veteran fisherman as yourself."

His frank courtesy compelled some return. Benjamin took the proffered hand with restraint.

"I'm sorry there's no mackerel going this afternoon," continued the American. "I wanted to have a chance at them. I never saw mackerel caught before. I suppose I'll be very awkward at first."

"It's not a very hard thing to do," said Benjamin stiffly, speaking for the first time since their meeting. "Most anybody could catch mackerel for a while —it's the sticking to it that counts."

He turned abruptly and went back to his boat. He could not force himself to talk civilly to the stranger, with that newly born demon of distrust gnawing at his heart.

"I think I'll go out," he said. "It's freshening up. I shouldn't wonder if the mackerel schooled soon."

"I'll go, too, then," said Mr. Murray. "Hi, up there! Leon and Pete! Hi, I say!"

Two more French Canadians came running down from the Murray fish-house, where they had been enjoying a siesta. They fished in the Murray boat. A good deal of friendly rivalry as to catch went on between the two boats, while Leon and Mosey Louis were bitter enemies on their own personal account.

"Think you'll try it, Frank?" shouted Mr. Murray.

"Well, not this afternoon," was the answer. "It's rather hot. I'll see what it is like tomorrow."

The boats were quickly launched and glided out from the shadow of the

cliffs. Benjamin stood at his mast. Mary Stella came down to the water's edge and waved her hand gaily.

"Good luck to you and the best catch of the season," she called out.

Benjamin waved his hat in response. His jealousy was forgotten for the moment and he felt that he had been churlish to Braithwaite.

"You'll wish you'd come," he shouted to him. "It's going to be a great evening for fish."

When the boats reached the fishing grounds, they came to and anchored, their masts coming out in slender silhouette against the sky. A row of dark figures was standing up in every boat; the gulfs shining expanse was darkened by odd black streaks—the mackerel had begun to school.

Frank Braithwaite went out fishing the next day and caught 30 mackerel. He was boyishly proud of it. He visited the shore daily after that and soon became very popular. He developed into quite an expert fisherman; nor, when the boats came in, did he shirk work, but manfully rolled up his trousers and helped carry water and "gib" mackerel as if he enjoyed it. He never put on any "airs," and he stoutly took Leon's part against the aggressive Mosey Louis. Even the French Canadians, those merciless critics, admitted that the "Yankee" was a good fellow. Benjamin Selby alone held stubbornly aloof.

One evening the loaded boats came in at sunset. Benjamin sprang from his as it bumped against the skids, and ran up the path. At the corner of his fish-house he stopped and stood quite still, looking at Braithwaite and Mary Stella, who were standing by the rough picket fence of the pasture land. Braithwaite's back was to Benjamin; he held the girl's hand in his and was talking earnestly. Mary Stella was looking up at him, her delicate face thrown back a little. There was a look in her eyes that Benjamin had never seen there before—but he knew what it meant.

His face grew pale and rigid; he clenched his hands and a whirlpool of agony and bitterness surged up in his heart. All the great blossoms of the hope that had shed beauty and fragrance over his rough life seemed suddenly to shrivel up into black unsightliness.

He turned and went swiftly and noiselessly down the road to his boat. The murmur of the sea sounded very far off. Mosey Louis was busy counting out the mackerel, Xavier was dipping up buckets of water and pouring it over the silvery fish. The sun was setting in a bank of purple cloud, and the long black headland to the west cut the golden seas like a wedge of ebony. It was all real and yet unreal. Benjamin went to work mechanically.

Presently Mary Stella came down to her father's boat. Braithwaite followed

slowly, pausing a moment to exchange some banter with saucy Mosey Louis. Benjamin bent lower over his table; now and then he caught the dear tones of Mary Stella's voice or her laughter at some sally of Pete or Leon. He knew when she went up the road with Braithwaite; he caught the last glimpse of her light dress as she passed out of sight on the cliffs above, but he worked steadily on and gave no sign.

It was late when they finished. The tired French Canadians went quickly off to their beds in the fish-house loft. Benjamin stood by the skids until all was quiet, then he walked down the cove to a rocky point that jutted out into the water. He leaned against a huge boulder and laid his head on his arm, looking up into the dark sky. The stars shone calmly down on his misery; the throbbing sea stretched out before him; its low, murmuring moan seemed to be the inarticulate voice of his pain.

The air was close and oppressive; fitful flashes of heat lightning shimmered here and there over the heavy banks of cloud on the horizon; little wavelets sobbed at the base of the rocks.

When Benjamin lifted his head he saw Frank Braithwaite standing between him and the luminous water. He took a step forward, and they came face to face as Braithwaite turned with a start.

Benjamin clenched his hands and fought down a hideous temptation to thrust his rival off the rock.

"I saw you today," he said in a low, intense tone. "What do you think of yourself, coming down here to steal the girl I loved from me? Weren't there enough girls where you came from to choose among? I hate you. I'd kill you —"

"Selby, stop! You don't know what you are saying. If I have wronged you, I swear I did it unintentionally. I loved Stella from the first—who could help it? But I thought she was virtually bound to you, and I did not try to win her away. You don't know what it cost me to remain passive. I know that you have always distrusted me, but hitherto you have had no reason to. But today I found that she was free—that she did not care for you! And I found—or thought I found—that there was a chance for me. I took it. I forgot everything else then."

"So she loves you?" said Benjamin dully.

"Yes," said Braithwaite softly.

Benjamin turned on him with sudden passion.

"I hate you—and I am the most miserable wretch alive, but if she is happy, it is no matter about me. You've won easily what I've slaved and toiled all my

life for. You won't value it as I'd have done—but if you make her happy, nothing else matters. I've only one favour to ask of you. Don't let her come to the shore after this. I can't stand it."

August throbbed and burned itself out. Affairs along shore continued as usual. Benjamin shut his sorrow up in himself and gave no outward sign of suffering. As if to mock him, the season was one of phenomenal prosperity; it was a "mackerel year" to be dated from. He worked hard and unceasingly, sparing himself in no way.

Braithwaite seldom came to the shore now. Mary Stella never. Mr. Murray had tried to speak of the matter, but Benjamin would not let him.

"It's best that nothing be said," he told him with simple dignity. He was so calm that Mr. Murray thought he did not care greatly, and was glad of it. The older man regretted the turn of affairs. Braithwaite would take his daughter far away from him, as his sister had been taken, and he loved Benjamin as his own son.

One afternoon Benjamin stood by his boat and looked anxiously at sea and sky. The French Canadians were eager to go out, for the other boats were catching.

"I don't know about it," said Benjamin doubtfully. "I don't half like the look of things. I believe we're in for a squall before long. It was just such a day three years ago when that terrible squall came up that Joe Otway got drowned in."

The sky was dun and smoky, the glassy water was copper-hued, the air was heavy and breathless. The sea purred upon the shore, lapping it caressingly like some huge feline creature biding its time to seize and crunch its victim.

"I reckon I'll try it," said Benjamin after a final scrutiny. "If a squall does come up, we'll have to run for the shore mighty quick, that's all."

They launched the boat speedily; as there was no wind, they had to row. As they pulled out, Braithwaite and Leon came down the road and began to launch the Murray boat.

"If dem two gits caught in a squall dey'll hav a tam," grinned Mosey Louis. "Dat Leon, he don't know de fust ting 'bout a boat, no more dan a cat!"

Benjamin came to anchor close in, but Braithwaite and Leon kept on until they were further out than any other boat.

"Reckon dey's after cod," suggested Xavier.

The mackerel bit well, but Benjamin kept a close watch on the sky. Suddenly he saw a dark streak advancing over the water from the northwest.

He wheeled around.

"Boys, the squall's coming! Up with the anchor—quick!"

"Dere's plenty tam," grumbled Mosey Louis, who hated to leave the fish. "None of de oder boats is goin' in yit."

The squall struck the boat as he spoke. She lurched and staggered. The water was tossing choppily. There was a sudden commotion all through the fleet and sails went rapidly up. Mosey Louis turned pale and scrambled about without delay. Benjamin was halfway to the shore before the sail went up in the Murray boat.

"Don' know what dey're tinkin' of," growled Mosey Louis. "Dey'll be drown fust ting!"

Benjamin looked back anxiously. Every boat was making for the shore. The gale was steadily increasing. He had his doubts about making a landing himself, and Braithwaite would be twenty minutes later.

"But it isn't my lookout," he muttered.

Benjamin had landed and was hauling up his boat when Mr. Murray came running down the road.

"Frank?" he gasped. "Him and Leon went out, the foolish boys! They neither of them know anything about a time like this."

"I guess they'll be all right," said Benjamin reassuringly. "They were late starting. They may find it rather hard to land."

The other boats had all got in with more or less difficulty. The Murray boat alone was out. Men came scurrying along the shore in frightened groups of two and three.

The boat came swiftly in before the wind. Mr. Murray was half beside himself.

"It'll be all right, sir," said one of the men. "If they can't land here, they can beach her on the sandshore."

"If they only knew enough to do that," wailed the old man. "But they don't—they'll come right on to the rocks."

"Why don't they lower their sail?" said another. "They will upset if they don't."

"They're lowering it now," said Benjamin.

The boat was now about 300 yards from the shore. The sail did not go all the way down—it seemed to be stuck.

"Good God, what's wrong?" exclaimed Mr. Murray.

As he spoke, the boat capsized. A yell of horror rose I from the beach. Mr. Murray sprang toward Benjamin's boat, but one of the men held him back.

"You can't do it, sir. I don't know that anybody can."

Braithwaite and Leon were clinging to the boat. Benjamin Selby, standing in the background, his lips set, his hands clenched, was fighting the hardest battle of his life. He knew that he alone, out of all the men there, possessed the necessary skill and nerve to reach the boat if she could be reached at all. There was a bare chance and a great risk. This man whom he hated was drowning before his eyes. Let him drown, then! Why should he risk—ay, and perchance lose—his life for his enemy? No one could blame him for refusing—and if Braithwaite were out of the way, Mary Stella might yet be his!

The temptation and victory passed in a few brief seconds. He stepped forward, cool and self-possessed.

"I'm going out. I want one man with me. No one with child or wife. Who'll go?"

"I will," shouted Mosey Louis. "I haf some spat wid dat Leon, but I not lak to see him drown for all dat!"

Benjamin offered no objection. The French Canadian's arm was strong and he possessed skill and experience. Mr. Murray caught Benjamin's arm.

"No, no, Benjamin—not you—I can't see both my boys drowned."

Benjamin gently loosed the old man's hold.

"It's for Mary Stella's sake," he said hoarsely. "If I don't come back, tell her that."

They launched the large dory with difficulty and pulled out into the surf. Benjamin did not lose his nerve. His quick arm, his steady eye did not fail. A dozen times the wild-eyed watchers thought the boat was doomed, but as often she righted triumphantly.

At last the drowning men were reached and somehow or other hauled on board Benjamin's craft. It was easier to come back, for they beached the boat on the sand. With a wild cheer the men on the shore rushed into the surf and helped to carry the half-unconscious Braithwaite and Leon ashore and up to the Murray fish-house. Benjamin went home before anyone knew he had gone. Mosey Louis was left behind to reap the honours; he sat in a circle of admiring lads and gave all the details of the rescue.

"Dat Leon, he not tink he know so much now!" he said.

Braithwaite came to the shore next day somewhat pale and shaky. He went straight to Benjamin and held out his hand.

"Thank you," he said simply.

Benjamin bent lower over his work.

"You needn't thank me," he said gruffly. "I wanted to let you drown. But I went out for Mary Stella's sake. Tell me one thing—I couldn't bring myself to ask it of anyone else. When are you to be—married?"

"The 12th of September."

Benjamin did not wince. He turned away and looked out across the sea for a few moments. The last agony of his great renunciation was upon him. Then he turned and held out his hand.

"For her sake," he said earnestly.

Frank Braithwaite put his slender white hand into the fisherman's hard brown palm. There were tears in both men's eyes. They parted in silence.

On the morning of the 12th of September Benjamin Selby went out to the fishing grounds as usual. The catch was good, although the season was almost over. In the afternoon the French Canadians went to sleep. Benjamin intended to row down the shore for salt. He stood by his dory, ready to start, but he seemed to be waiting for something. At last it came: a faint train whistle blew, a puff of white smoke floated across a distant gap in the sandhills.

Mary Stella was gone at last—gone forever from his life. The honest blue eyes looking out over the sea did not falter; bravely he faced his desolate future.

The white gulls soared over the water, little swishing ripples lapped on the sand, and through all the gentle, dreamy noises of the shore came the soft, unceasing murmur of the gulf.

Millicent's Double

"Nonsense," Said Millicent.

"'Nonsense,' said Millicent, pointing to their reflected faces"

When Millicent Moore and Worth Gordon met each other on the first day of the term in the entrance hall of the Kinglake High School, both girls stopped short, startled. Millicent Moore had never seen Worth Gordon before, but Worth Gordon's face she had seen every day of her life, looking at her out

of her own mirror!

They were total strangers, but when two girls look enough alike to be twins, it is not necessary to stand on ceremony. After the first blank stare of amazement, both laughed outright. Millicent held out her hand.

"We ought to know each other right away," she said frankly. "My name is Millicent Moore, and yours is—?"

"Worth Gordon," responded Worth, taking the proffered hand with dancing eyes. "You actually frightened me when you came around that corner. For a moment I had an uncanny feeling that I was a disembodied spirit looking at my own outward shape. I know now what it feels like to have a twin."

"Isn't it odd that we should look so much alike?" said Millicent. "Do you suppose we can be any relation? I never heard of any relations named Gordon."

Worth shook her head. "I'm quite sure we're not," she said. "I haven't any relatives except my father's stepsister with whom I've lived ever since the death of my parents when I was a baby."

"Well, you'll really have to count me as a relative after this," laughed Millicent. "I'm sure a girl who looks as much like you as I do must be at least as much relation as a stepaunt."

From that moment they were firm friends, and their friendship was still further cemented by the fact that Worth found it necessary to change her boarding-house and became Millicent's roommate. Their odd likeness was the wonder of the school and occasioned no end of amusing mistakes, for all the students found it hard to distinguish between them. Seen apart it was impossible to tell which was which except by their clothes and style of hairdressing. Seen together there were, of course, many minor differences which served to distinguish them. Both girls were slight, with dark-brown hair, blue eyes and fair complexions. But Millicent had more colour than Worth. Even in repose, Millicent's face expressed mirth and fun; when Worth was not laughing or talking, her face was rather serious. Worth's eyes were darker, and her nose in profile slightly more aquiline. But still, the resemblance between them was very striking. In disposition they were also very similar. Both were merry, fun-loving girls, fond of larks and jokes. Millicent was the more heedless, but both were impulsive and too apt to do or say anything that came into their heads without counting the cost. One late October evening Millicent came in, her cheeks crimson after her walk in the keen autumn air, and tossed two letters on the study table. "It's a perfect evening, Worth. We had the jolliest tramp. You should have come with us instead of staying in moping over your books."

Worth smiled ruefully. "I simply had to prepare those problems for tomorrow," she said. "You see, Millie dear, there is a big difference between us in some things at least. I'm poor. I simply have to pass my exams and get a teacher's licence. So I can't afford to take any chances. You're just attending high school for the sake of education alone, so you don't really have to grind as I do."

"I'd like to do pretty well in the exams, though, for Dad's sake," answered Millicent, throwing aside her wraps. "But I don't mean to kill myself studying, just the same. Time enough for that when exams draw nigh. They're comfortably far off yet. But I'm in a bit of a predicament, Worth, and I don't know what to do. Here are two invitations for Saturday afternoon and I simply must accept them both. Now, how can I do it? You're a marvel at mathematics —so work out that problem for me.

"See, here's a note from Mrs. Kirby inviting me to tea at Beechwood. She called on me soon after the term opened and invited me to tea the next week. But I had another engagement for that afternoon, so couldn't go. Mr. Kirby is a business friend of Dad's, and they are very nice people. The other invitation is to the annual autumn picnic of the Alpha Gammas. Now, Worth Gordon, I simply must go to that. I wouldn't miss it for anything. But I don't want to offend Mrs. Kirby, and I'm afraid I shall if I plead another engagement a second time. Mother will be fearfully annoyed at me in that case. Dear me, I wish there were two of me, one to go to the Alpha Gammas and one to Beechwood—Worth Gordon!"

"What's the matter?"

"There are two of me! What's the use of a double if not for a quandary like this! Worth, you must go to tea at Beechwood Saturday afternoon in my place. They'll think you are my very self. They'll never know the difference. Go and keep my place warm for me, there's a dear."

"Impossible," cried Worth. "I'd never dare! They'd know there was something wrong."

"They wouldn't—they couldn't. None of the Kirbys have ever seen me except Mrs. Kirby, and she only for a few minutes one evening at dusk. They don't know I have a double and they can't possibly suspect. Do go, Worth. Why, it'll be a regular lark, the best little joke ever! And you'll oblige me immensely besides. Worthie, please."

Worth did not consent all at once; but the idea rather appealed to her for its daring and excitement. It would be a lark—just at that time Worth did not see it in any other light. Besides, she wanted to oblige Millicent, who coaxed vehemently. Finally, Worth yielded and promised Millicent that she would go

to Beechwood in her place.

"You darling!" said Millicent emphatically, flying to her table to write acceptances of both invitations.

Saturday afternoon Worth got ready to keep Millicent's engagement. "Suppose I am found out and expelled from Beechwood in disgrace," she suggested laughingly, as she arranged her lace bertha before the glass.

"Nonsense," said Millicent, pointing to their reflected faces. "The Kirbys can never suspect. Why, if it weren't for the hair and the dresses, I'd hardly know myself which of those reflections belonged to which."

"What if they begin asking me about the welfare of the various members of your family?"

"They won't ask any but the most superficial questions. We're not intimate enough for anything else. I've coached you pretty thoroughly, and I think you'll get on all right."

Worth's courage carried her successfully through the ordeal of arriving at Beechwood and meeting Mrs. Kirby. She was unsuspectingly accepted as Millicent Moore, and found her impersonation of that young lady not at all difficult. No dangerous subject of conversation was introduced and nothing personal was said until Mr. Kirby came in. He looked so scrutinizingly at Worth as he shook hands with her that the latter felt her heart beating very fast. Did he suspect?

"Upon my word, Miss Moore," he said genially, "you gave me quite a start at first. You are very like what a half-sister of mine used to be when a girl long ago. Of course the resemblance must be quite accidental."

"Of course," said Worth, without any very clear sense of what she was saying. Her face was uncomfortably flushed and she was glad when tea was announced.

As nothing more of an embarrassing nature was said, Worth soon recovered her self-possession and was able to enter into the conversation. She liked the Kirbys; still, under her enjoyment, she was conscious of a strange, disagreeable feeling that deepened as the evening wore on. It was not fear—she was not at all afraid of betraying herself now. It had even been easier than she had expected. Then what was it? Suddenly Worth flushed again. She knew now—it was shame. She was a guest in that house as an impostor! What she had done seemed no longer a mere joke. What would her host and hostess say if they knew? That they would never know made no difference. She herself could not forget it, and her realization of the baseness of the deception grew stronger under Mrs. Kirby's cordial kindness.

Worth never forgot that evening. She compelled herself to chat as brightly as possible, but under it all was that miserable consciousness of falsehood, deepening every instant. She was thankful when the time came to leave. "You must come up often, Miss Moore," said Mrs. Kirby kindly. "Look upon Beechwood as a second home while you are in Kinglake. We have no daughter of our own, so we make a hobby of cultivating other people's."

When Millicent returned home from the Alpha Gamma outing, she found Worth in their room, looking soberly at the mirror. Something in her chum's expression alarmed her. "Worth, what is it? Did they suspect?"

"No," said Worth slowly. "They never suspected. They think I am what I pretended to be—Millicent Moore. But, but, I wish I'd never gone to Beechwood, Millie. It wasn't right. It was mean and wrong. It was acting a lie. I can't tell you how ashamed I felt when I realized that."

"Nonsense," said Millicent, looking rather sober, nevertheless. "No harm was done. It's only a good joke, Worth."

"Yes, harm has been done. I've done harm to myself, for one thing. I've lost my self-respect. I don't blame you, Millie. It's all my own fault. I've done a dishonourable thing, dishonourable."

Millicent sighed. "The Alpha Gamma picnic was horribly slow," she said. "I didn't enjoy myself a bit. I wish I had gone to Beechwood. I didn't think about it's being a practical falsehood before. I suppose it was. And I've always prided myself on my strict truthfulness! It wasn't your fault, Worth! It was mine. But it can't be undone now."

"No, it can't be undone," said Worth slowly, "but it might be confessed. We might tell Mrs. Kirby the truth and ask her to forgive us."

"I couldn't do such a thing," cried Millicent. "It isn't to be thought of!"

Nevertheless, Millicent did think of it several times that night and all through the following Sunday. She couldn't help thinking of it. A dishonourable trick! That thought stung Millicent. Monday evening Millicent flung down the book from which she was vainly trying to study.

"Worthie, it's no use. You were right. There's nothing to do but go and 'fess up to Mrs. Kirby. I can't respect Millicent Moore again until I do. I'm going right up now."

"I'll go with you," said Worth quietly. "I was equally to blame and I must take my share of the humiliation."

When the girls reached Beechwood, they were shown into the library where the family were sitting. Mrs. Kirby came smilingly forward to greet Millicent when her eyes fell upon Worth. "Why! why!" she said. "I didn't

know you had a twin sister, Miss Moore."

"Neither I have," said Millicent, laughing nervously. "This is my chum, Worth Gordon, but she is no relation whatever."

At the mention of Worth's name, Mr. Kirby started slightly, but nobody noticed it. Millicent went on in a trembling voice. "We've come up to confess something, Mrs. Kirby. I'm sure you'll think it dreadful, but we didn't mean any harm. We just didn't realize, until afterwards."

Then Millicent, with burning cheeks, told the whole story and asked to be forgiven. "I, too, must apologize," said Worth, when Millicent had finished. "Can you pardon me, Mrs. Kirby?"

Mrs. Kirby had listened in amazed silence, but now she laughed. "Certainly," she said kindly. "I don't suppose it was altogether right for you girls to play such a trick on anybody. But I can make allowances for schoolgirl pranks. I was a school girl once myself, and far from a model one. You have atoned for your mistake by coming so frankly and confessing, and now we'll forget all about it. I think you have learned your lesson. Both of you must just sit down and spend the evening with us. Dear me, but you are bewilderingly alike!"

"I've something I want to say," interposed Mr. Kirby suddenly. "You say your name is Worth Gordon," he added, turning to Worth. "May I ask what your mother's name was?"

"Worth Mowbray," answered Worth wonderingly.

"I was sure of it," said Mr. Kirby triumphantly, "when I heard Miss Moore mention your name. Your mother was my half-sister, and you are my niece."

Everybody exclaimed and for a few moments they all talked and questioned together. Then Mr. Kirby explained fully. "I was born on a farm up-country. My mother was a widow when she married my father, and she had one daughter, Worth Mowbray, five years older than myself. When I was three years old, my mother died. Worth went to live with our mother's only living relative, an aunt. My father and I removed to another section of the country. He, too, died soon after, and I was brought up with an uncle's family. My sister came to see me once when she was a girl of seventeen and, as I remember her, very like you are now. I never saw her again and eventually lost trace of her. Many years later I endeavoured to find out her whereabouts. Our aunt was dead, and the people in the village where she had lived informed me that my sister was also dead. She had married a man named Gordon and had gone away, both she and her husband had died, and I was informed that they left no children, so I made no further inquiries. There is no doubt that you are her daughter. Well, well, this is a pleasant surprise, to find a little niece in this

fashion!"

It was a pleasant surprise to Worth, too, who had thought herself all alone in the world and had felt her loneliness keenly. They had a wonderful evening, talking and questioning and explaining. Mr. Kirby declared that Worth must come and live with them. "We have no daughter," he said. "You must come to us in the place of one, Worth."

Mrs. Kirby seconded this with a cordiality that won Worth's affection at once. The girl felt almost bewildered by her happiness.

"I feel as if I were in a dream," she said to Millicent as they walked to their boarding-house. "It's really all too wonderful to grasp at once. You don't know, Millie, how lonely I've felt often under all my nonsense and fun. Aunt Delia was kind to me, but she was really no relation, she had a large family of her own, and I have always felt that she looked upon me as a rather inconvenient duty. But now I'm so happy!"

"I'm so glad for you, Worth," said Millicent warmly, "although your gain will certainly be my loss, for I shall miss my roommate terribly when she goes to live at Beechwood. Hasn't it all turned out strangely? If you had never gone to Beechwood in my place, this would never have happened."

"Say rather that if we hadn't gone to confess our fault, it would never have happened," said Worth gently. "I'm very, very glad that I have found Uncle George and such a loving welcome to his home. But I'm gladder still that I've got my self-respect back. I feel that I can look Worth Gordon in the face again."

"I've learned a wholesome lesson, too," admitted Millicent.

The Blue North Room

"This," said Sara, laying Aunt Josephina's letter down on the kitchen table with such energy that in anybody but Sara it must have been said she threw it down, "this is positively the last straw! I have endured all the rest. I have given up my chance of a musical education, when Aunt Nan offered it, that I might stay home and help Willard pay the mortgage off—if it doesn't pay us off first—and I have, which was much harder, accepted the fact that we can't possibly afford to send Ray to the Valley Academy, even if I wore the same hat and coat for four winters. I did not grumble when Uncle Joel came here to live because he wanted to be 'near his dear nephew's children.' I felt it my Christian duty to look pleasant when we had to give Cousin Caroline a home to save her from the poorhouse. But my endurance and philosophy, and worst of all, my

furniture, has reached a limit. I cannot have Aunt Josephina come here to spend the winter, because I have no room to put her in."

"Hello, Sally, what's the matter?" asked Ray, coming in with a book. It would have been hard to catch Ray without a book; he generally took one even to bed with him. Ray had a headful of brains, and Sara thought it was a burning shame that there seemed to be no chance for his going to college. "You look all rumpled up in your conscience, beloved sis," the boy went on, chaffingly.

"My conscience is all right," said Sara severely. "It's worse than that. If you please, here's a letter from Aunt Josephina! She writes that she is very lonesome. Her son has gone to South America, and won't be back until spring, and she wants to come and spend the winter with us."

"Well, why not?" asked Ray serenely. Nothing ever bothered Ray. "The more the merrier."

"Ray Sheldon! Where are we to put her? We have no spare room, as you well know."

"Can't she room with Cousin Caroline?"

"Cousin Caroline's room is too small for two. It's full to overflowing with her belongings now, and Aunt Josephina will bring two trunks at least. Try again, bright boy."

"What's the matter with the blue north room?"

"There is nothing the matter with it—oh, nothing at all! We could put Aunt Josephina there, but where will she sleep? Where will she wash her face? Will it not seem slightly inhospitable to invite her to sit on a bare floor? Have you forgotten that there isn't a stick of furniture in the blue north room and, worse still, that we haven't a spare cent to buy any, not even the cheapest kind?"

"I'll give it up," said Ray. "I might have a try at squaring the circle if you asked me, but the solution of the Aunt Josephina problem is beyond me."

"The solution is simply that we must write to Aunt Josephina, politely but firmly, that we can't have her come, owing to lack of accommodation. You must write the letter, Ray. Make it as polite as you can, but above all make it firm."

"Oh, but Sally, dear," protested Ray, who didn't relish having to write such a letter, "isn't this rather hasty, rather inhospitable? Poor Aunt Josephina must really be rather lonely, and it's only natural she should want to visit her relations."

"We're not her relations," cried Sara. "We're not a speck of relation really.

She's only the half-sister of Mother's half-brother. That sounds nice and relationy, doesn't it? And she's fussy and interfering, and she will fight with Cousin Caroline, everybody fights with Cousin Caroline—"

"Except Sara," interrupted Ray, but Sara went on with a rush, "And we won't have a minute's peace all winter. Anyhow, where could we put her even if we wanted her to come? No, we can't have her!"

"Mother was always very fond of Aunt Josephina," said Ray reflectively. Sara had her lips open, all ready to answer whatever Ray might say, but she shut them suddenly and the boy went on. "Aunt Josephina thought a lot of Mother, too. She used to say she knew there was always a welcome for her at Maple Hollow. It does seem a pity, Sally dear, for your mother's daughter to send word to Aunt Josephina, per my mother's son, that there isn't room for her any longer at Maple Hollow."

"I shall leave it to Willard," said Sara abruptly. "If he says to let her come, come she shall, even if Dorothy and I have to camp in the barn."

"I'm going to have a prowl around the garret," said Ray, apropos of nothing.

"And I shall get the tea ready," answered Sara briskly. "Dorothy will be home from school very soon, and I hear Uncle Joel stirring. Willard won't be back till dark, so there is no use waiting for him."

At twilight Sara decided to walk up the lane and meet Willard. She always liked to meet him thus when he had been away for a whole day. Sara thought there was nobody in the world as good and dear as Willard.

It was a dull grey November twilight; the maples in the hollow were all leafless, and the hawthorn hedge along the lane was sere and frosted; a little snow had fallen in the afternoon, and lay in broad patches on the brown fields. The world looked very dull and dispirited, and Sara sighed. She could not help thinking of the dark side of things just then. "Everything is wrong," said poor Sara dolefully. "Willard has to work like a slave, and yet with all his efforts he can barely pay the interest on the mortgage. And Ray ought to go to college. But I don't see how we can ever manage. To be sure, he won't be ready until next fall, but we won't have the money then any more than now. It would take every bit of a hundred and fifty dollars to fit him out with books and clothes, and pay for board and tuition at the academy. If he could just have a year there he could teach and earn his own way through college. But we might as well hope for the moon as one hundred and fifty dollars."

Sara sighed again. She was only eighteen, but she felt very old. Willard was nineteen, and Willard had never had a chance to be young. His father had died when he was twelve, and he had run the farm since then, he and Sara

together indeed, for Sara was a capital planner and manager and worker. The little mother had died two years ago, and the household cares had all fallen on Sara's shoulders since. Sometimes, as now, they pressed very heavily, but a talk with Willard always heartened her up. Willard had his blue spells too, but Sara thought it a special Providence that their blue turns never came together. When one got downhearted the other was always ready to do the cheering up.

Sara was glad to hear Willard whistling when he drove into the lane; it was a sign he was in good spirits. He pulled up, and Sara climbed into the wagon.

"Things go all right today, Sally?" he asked cheerfully.

"There was a letter from Aunt Josephina," answered Sara, anxious to get the worst over, "and she wants to come to Maple Hollow for the winter. I thought at first we just couldn't have her, but I decided to leave it to you."

"Well, we've got a pretty good houseful already," said Willard thoughtfully. "But I suppose if Aunt Josephina wants to come we'd better have her. I always liked Aunt Josephina, and so did Mother, you know."

"I don't know where we can put her. We haven't any spare room, Will."

"Ray and I can sleep in the kitchen loft. You and Dolly take our room, and let Aunt Josephina take yours."

"The kitchen loft isn't really fit to sleep in," said Sara pessimistically. "It's awfully cold, and there're mice and rats—ugh! You and Ray will get nibbled in spots. But it's the only thing to do if we must have Aunt Josephina. I'll get Ray to write to her tomorrow. I couldn't put enough cordiality into the letter if I wrote it myself."

Ray came in while Willard was at supper. There were cobwebs all over him from his head to his heels. "I've solved the Aunt J. problem," he announced cheerfully. "We will furnish the blue north room."

"With what?" asked Sara disbelievingly.

"I've been poking about in the garret and in the carriage house loft," said Ray, "and I've found furniture galore. It's very old and cobwebby—witness my appearance—and very much in want of scrubbing and a few nails. But it will do."

"I'd forgotten about those old things," said Sara slowly. "They've never been used since I can remember, and long before. They were discarded before Mother came here. But I thought they were all broken and quite useless."

"Not at all. I believe we can furbish them up sufficiently to make the room habitable. It will be rather old-fashioned, but then it's Hobson's choice. There are the pieces of an old bed out in the loft, and they can be put together.

There's an old corner cupboard out there too, with leaded glass doors, two old solid wooden armchairs, and a funny old chest of drawers with a writing desk in place of the top drawer, all full of yellow old letters and trash. I found it under a pile of old carpet. Then there's a washstand, and also a towel rack up in the garret, and the funniest old table with three claw legs, and a tippy top. One leg is broken off, but I hunted around and found it, and I guess we can fix it on. And there are two more old chairs and a queer little oval table with a cracked swing mirror on it."

"I have it," exclaimed Sara, with a burst of inspiration, "let us fix up a real old-fashioned room for Aunt Josephina. It won't do to put anything modern with those old things. One would kill the other. I'll put Mother's rag carpet down in it, and the four braided mats Grandma Sheldon gave me, and the old brass candlestick and the Irish chain coverlet. Oh, I believe it will be lots of fun."

It was. For a week the Sheldons hammered and glued and washed and consulted. The north room was already papered with a blue paper of an old-fashioned stripe-and-diamond pattern. The rag carpet was put down, and the braided rugs laid on it. The old bedstead was set up in one corner and, having been well cleaned and polished with beeswax and turpentine, was really a handsome piece of furniture. On the washstand Sara placed a quaint old basin and ewer which had been Grandma Sheldon's. Ray had fixed up the table as good as new; Sara had polished the brass claws, and on the table she put the brass tray, two candlesticks, and snuffers which had been long stowed away in the kitchen loft. The dressing table and swing mirror, with its scroll frame of tarnished gilt, was in the window corner, and opposite it was the old chest of drawers. The cupboard was set up in a corner, and beside it stood the spinning-wheel from the kitchen loft. The big grandfather clock, which had always stood in the hall below was carried up, and two platters of blue willow-ware were set up over the mantel. Above them was hung the faded sampler that Grandma Sheldon had worked ninety years ago when she was a little girl.

"Do you know," said Sara, when they stood in the middle of the room and surveyed the result, "I expected to have a good laugh over this, but it doesn't look funny after all. The things all seem to suit each other, some way, and they look good, don't they? I mean they look real, clear through. I believe that table and those drawers are solid mahogany. And look at the carving on those bedposts. Cleaning them has made such a difference. I do hope Aunt Josephina won't mind their being so old."

Aunt Josephina didn't. She was very philosophical about it when Sara explained that Cousin Caroline had the spare room, and the blue north room was all they had left. "Oh, it will be all right," she said, plainly determined to make the best of things. "Those old things are thought a lot of now, anyhow. I

can't say I fancy them much myself—I like something a little brighter. But the rich folks have gone cracked over them. I know a woman in Boston that's got her whole house furnished with old truck, and as soon as she hears of any old furniture anywhere she's not contented till she's got it. She says it's her hobby, and she spends a heap on it. She'd be in raptures if she saw this old room of yours, Sary."

"Do you mean," said Sara slowly, "that there are people who would buy old things like these?"

"Yes, and pay more for them than would buy a real nice set with a marble-topped burey. You may well say there's lots of fools in the world, Sary." Sara was not saying or thinking any such thing. It was a new idea to her that any value was attached to old furniture, for Sara lived very much out of the world of fads and collectors. But she did not forget what Aunt Josephina had said.

The winter passed away. Aunt Josephina plainly enjoyed her visit, whatever the Sheldons felt about it. In March her son returned, and Aunt Josephina went home to him. Before she left, Sara asked her for the address of the woman whose hobby was old furniture, and the very afternoon after Aunt Josephina had gone Sara wrote and mailed a letter. For a week she looked so mysterious that Willard and Ray could not guess what she was plotting. At the end of that time Mrs. Stanton came.

Mrs. Stanton always declared afterwards that the mere sight of that blue north room gave her raptures. Such a find! Such a discovery! A bedstead with carved posts, a claw-footed table, real old willow-ware plates with the birds' bills meeting! Here was luck, if you like!

When Willard and Ray came home to tea Sara was sitting on the stairs counting her wealth.

"Sally, where did you discover all that long-lost treasure?" demanded Ray.

"Mrs. Stanton of Boston was here today," said Sara, enjoying the moment of revelation hugely. "She makes a hobby of collecting old furniture. I sold her every blessed thing in the blue north room except Mother's carpet and Grandma's mats and sampler. She wanted those too, but I couldn't part with them. She bought everything else and," Sara lifted her hands, full of bills, dramatically, "here are two hundred and fifty dollars to take you to the Valley Academy next fall, Ray."

"It wouldn't be fair to take it for that," said Ray, flushing. "You and Will—" "Will and I say you must take it," said Sara. "Don't we, Will? There is nothing we want so much as to give you a college start. It is an enormous burden off my mind to think it is so nicely provided for. Besides, most of those old things were yours by the right of rediscovery, and you voted first of all to have Aunt

Josephina come."

"You must take it, of course, Ray," said Willard. "Nothing else would give Sara and me so much pleasure. A blessing on Aunt Josephina."

"Amen," said Sara and Ray.

The Christmas Surprise at Enderly Road

"Phil, I'm getting fearfully hungry. When are we going to strike civilization?"

The speaker was my chum, Frank Ward. We were home from our academy for the Christmas holidays and had been amusing ourselves on this sunshiny December afternoon by a tramp through the "back lands," as the barrens that swept away south behind the village were called. They were grown over with scrub maple and spruce, and were quite pathless save for meandering sheep tracks that crossed and recrossed, but led apparently nowhere.

Frank and I did not know exactly where we were, but the back lands were not so extensive but that we would come out somewhere if we kept on. It was getting late and we wished to go home.

"I have an idea that we ought to strike civilization somewhere up the Enderly Road pretty soon," I answered.

"Do you call that civilization?" said Frank, with a laugh.

No Blackburn Hill boy was ever known to miss an opportunity of flinging a slur at Enderly Road, even if no Enderly Roader were by to feel the sting.

Enderly Road was a miserable little settlement straggling back from Blackburn Hill. It was a forsaken looking place, and the people, as a rule, were poor and shiftless. Between Blackburn Hill and Enderly Road very little social intercourse existed and, as the Road people resented what they called the pride of Blackburn Hill, there was a good deal of bad feeling between the two districts.

Presently Frank and I came out on the Enderly Road. We sat on the fence a few minutes to rest and discuss our route home. "If we go by the road it's three miles," said Frank. "Isn't there a short cut?"

"There ought to be one by the wood-lane that comes out by Jacob Hart's," I answered, "but I don't know where to strike it."

"Here is someone coming now; we'll inquire," said Frank, looking up the

curve of the hard-frozen road. The "someone" was a little girl of about ten years old, who was trotting along with a basketful of school books on her arm. She was a pale, pinched little thing, and her jacket and red hood seemed very old and thin.

"Hello, missy," I said, as she came up, and then I stopped, for I saw she had been crying.

"What is the matter?" asked Frank, who was much more at ease with children than I was, and had always a warm spot in his heart for their small troubles. "Has your teacher kept you in for being naughty?"

The mite dashed her little red knuckles across her eyes and answered indignantly, "No, indeed. I stayed after school with Minnie Lawler to sweep the floor."

"And did you and Minnie quarrel, and is that why you are crying?" asked Frank solemnly.

"Minnie and I never quarrel. I am crying because we can't have the school decorated on Monday for the examination, after all. The Dickeys have gone back on us ... after promising, too," and the tears began to swell up in the blue eyes again.

"Very bad behaviour on the part of the Dickeys," commented Frank. "But can't you decorate the school without them?"

"Why, of course not. They are the only big boys in the school. They said they would cut the boughs, and bring a ladder tomorrow and help us nail the wreaths up, and now they won't ... and everything is spoiled ... and Miss Davis will be so disappointed."

By dint of questioning Frank soon found out the whole story. The semi-annual public examination was to be held on Monday afternoon, the day before Christmas. Miss Davis had been drilling her little flock for the occasion; and a program of recitations, speeches, and dialogues had been prepared. Our small informant, whose name was Maggie Bates, together with Minnie Lawler and several other little girls, had conceived the idea that it would be a fine thing to decorate the schoolroom with greens. For this it was necessary to ask the help of the boys. Boys were scarce at Enderly school, but the Dickeys, three in number, had promised to see that the thing was done.

"And now they won't," sobbed Maggie. "Matt Dickey is mad at Miss Davis 'cause she stood him on the floor today for not learning his lesson, and he says he won't do a thing nor let any of the other boys help us. Matt just makes all the boys do as he says. I feel dreadful bad, and so does Minnie."

"Well, I wouldn't cry any more about it," said Frank consolingly. "Crying

won't do any good, you know. Can you tell us where to find the wood-lane that cuts across to Blackburn Hill?" Maggie could, and gave us minute directions. So, having thanked her, we left her to pursue her disconsolate way and betook ourselves homeward.

"I would like to spoil Matt Dickey's little game," said Frank. "He is evidently trying to run things at Enderly Road school and revenge himself on the teacher. Let us put a spoke in his wheel and do Maggie a good turn as well."

"Agreed. But how?"

Frank had a plan ready to hand and, when we reached home, we took his sisters, Carrie and Mabel, into our confidence; and the four of us worked to such good purpose all the next day, which was Saturday, that by night everything was in readiness.

At dusk Frank and I set out for the Enderly Road, carrying a basket, a small step-ladder, an unlit lantern, a hammer, and a box of tacks. It was dark when we reached the Enderly Road schoolhouse. Fortunately, it was quite out of sight of any inhabited spot, being surrounded by woods. Hence, mysterious lights in it at strange hours would not be likely to attract attention.

The door was locked, but we easily got in by a window, lighted our lantern, and went to work. The schoolroom was small, and the old-fashioned furniture bore marks of hard usage; but everything was very snug, and the carefully swept floor and dusted desks bore testimony to the neatness of our small friend Maggie and her chum Minnie.

Our basket was full of mottoes made from letters cut out of cardboard and covered with lissome sprays of fir. They were, moreover, adorned with gorgeous pink and red tissue roses, which Carrie and Mabel had contributed. We had considerable trouble in getting them tacked up properly, but when we had succeeded, and had furthermore surmounted doors, windows, and blackboard with wreaths of green, the little Enderly Road schoolroom was quite transformed.

"It looks nice," said Frank in a tone of satisfaction. "Hope Maggie will like it."

We swept up the litter we had made, and then scrambled out of the window.

"I'd like to see Matt Dickey's face when he comes Monday morning," I laughed, as we struck into the back lands.

"I'd like to see that midget of a Maggie's," said Frank. "See here, Phil, let's attend the examination Monday afternoon. I'd like to see our decorations in

daylight."

We decided to do so, and also thought of something else. Snow fell all day Sunday, so that, on Monday morning, sleighs had to be brought out. Frank and I drove down to the store and invested a considerable share of our spare cash in a varied assortment of knick-knacks. After dinner we drove through to the Enderly Road schoolhouse, tied our horse in a quiet spot, and went in. Our arrival created quite a sensation for, as a rule, Blackburn Hillites did not patronize Enderly Road functions. Miss Davis, the pale, tired-looking little teacher, was evidently pleased, and we were given seats of honour next to the minister on the platform.

Our decorations really looked very well, and were further enhanced by two large red geraniums in full bloom which, it appeared, Maggie had brought from home to adorn the teacher's desk. The side benches were lined with Enderly Road parents, and all the pupils were in their best attire. Our friend Maggie was there, of course, and she smiled and nodded towards the wreaths when she caught our eyes.

The examination was a decided success, and the program which followed was very creditable indeed. Maggie and Minnie, in particular, covered themselves with glory, both in class and on the platform. At its close, while the minister was making his speech, Frank slipped out; when the minister sat down the door opened and Santa Claus himself, with big fur coat, ruddy mask, and long white beard, strode into the room with a huge basket on his arm, amid a chorus of surprised "Ohs" from old and young.

Wonderful things came out of that basket. There was some little present for every child there—tops, knives, and whistles for the boys, dolls and ribbons for the girls, and a "prize" box of candy for everybody, all of which Santa Claus presented with appropriate remarks. It was an exciting time, and it would have been hard to decide which were the most pleased, parents, pupils, or teacher.

In the confusion Santa Claus discreetly disappeared, and school was dismissed. Frank, having tucked his toggery away in the sleigh, was waiting for us outside, and we were promptly pounced upon by Maggie and Minnie, whose long braids were already adorned with the pink silk ribbons which had been their gifts.

"You decorated the school," cried Maggie excitedly. "I know you did. I told Minnie it was you the minute I saw it."

"You're dreaming, child," said Frank.

"Oh, no, I'm not," retorted Maggie shrewdly, "and wasn't Matt Dickey mad this morning! Oh, it was such fun. I think you are two real nice boys and so

does Minnie—don't you Minnie?"

Minnie nodded gravely. Evidently Maggie did the talking in their partnership.

"This has been a splendid examination," said Maggie, drawing a long breath. "Real Christmassy, you know. We never had such a good time before."

"Well, it has paid, don't you think?" asked Frank, as we drove home.

"Rather," I answered.

It did "pay" in other ways than the mere pleasure of it. There was always a better feeling between the Roaders and the Hillites thereafter. The big brothers of the little girls, to whom our Christmas surprise had been such a treat, thought it worthwhile to bury the hatchet, and quarrels between the two villages became things of the past.

The Dissipation of Miss Ponsonby

We hadn't been very long in Glenboro before we managed to get acquainted with Miss Ponsonby. It did not come about in the ordinary course of receiving and returning calls, for Miss Ponsonby never called on anybody; neither did we meet her at any of the Glenboro social functions, for Miss Ponsonby never went anywhere except to church, and very seldom there. Her father wouldn't let her. No, it simply happened because her window was right across the alleyway from ours. The Ponsonby house was next to us, on the right, and between us were only a fence, a hedge of box, and a sprawly acacia tree that shaded Miss Ponsonby's window, where she always sat sewing—patchwork, as I'm alive—when she wasn't working around the house. Patchwork seemed to be Miss Ponsonby's sole and only dissipation of any kind.

We guessed her age to be forty-five at least, but we found out afterward that we were mistaken. She was only thirty-five. She was tall and thin and pale, one of those drab-tinted persons who look as if they had never felt a rosy emotion in their lives. She had any amount of silky, fawn-coloured hair, always combed straight back from her face, and pinned in a big, tight bun just above her neck—the last style in the world for any woman with Miss Ponsonby's nose to adopt. But then I doubt if Miss Ponsonby had any idea what her nose was really like. I don't believe she ever looked at herself critically in a mirror in her life. Her features were rather nice, and her expression tamely sweet; her eyes were big, timid, china-blue orbs that looked as if she had been badly scared when she was little and had never got over it;

she never wore anything but black, and, to crown all, her first name was Alicia.

Miss Ponsonby sat and sewed at her window for hours at a time, but she never looked our way, partly, I suppose, from habit induced by modesty, since the former occupants of our room had been two gay young bachelors, whose names Jerry and I found out all over our window-panes with a diamond.

Jerry and I sat a great deal at ours, laughing and talking, but Miss Ponsonby never lifted her head or eyes. Jerry couldn't stand it long; she declared it got on her nerves; besides, she felt sorry to see a fellow creature wasting so many precious moments of a fleeting lifetime at patchwork. So one afternoon she hailed Miss Ponsonby with a cheerful "hello," and Miss Ponsonby actually looked over and said "good afternoon," as prim as an eighteen-hundred-and-forty fashion plate.

Then Jerry, whose name is Geraldine only in the family Bible, talked to her about the weather. Jerry can talk interestingly about anything. In five minutes she had performed a miracle—she had made Miss Ponsonby laugh. In five minutes more she was leaning half out of the window showing Miss Ponsonby a new, white, fluffy, frivolous, chiffony waist of hers, and Miss Ponsonby was leaning halfway out of hers looking at it eagerly. At the end of a quarter of an hour they were exchanging confidences about their favourite books. Jerry was a confirmed Kiplingomaniac, but Miss Ponsonby adored Laura Jean Libbey. She said sorrowfully she supposed she ought not to read novels at all since her father disapproved. We found out later on that Mr. Ponsonby's way of expressing disapproval was to burn any he got hold of, and storm at his daughter about them like the confirmed old crank he was. Poor Miss Ponsonby had to keep her Laura Jeans locked up in her trunk, and it wasn't often she got a new one.

From that day dated our friendship with Miss Ponsonby, a curious friendship, only carried on from window to window. We never saw Miss Ponsonby anywhere else; we asked her to come over but she said her father didn't allow her to visit anybody. Miss Ponsonby was one of those meek women who are ruled by whomsoever happens to be nearest them, and woe be unto them if that nearest happen to be a tyrant. Her meekness fairly infuriated Jerry.

But we liked Miss Ponsonby and we pitied her. She confided to us that she was very lonely and that she wrote poetry. We never asked to see the poetry, although I think she would have liked to show it. But, as Jerry says, there are limits.

We told Miss Ponsonby all about our dances and picnics and beaus and pretty dresses; she was never tired of hearing of them; we smuggled new

library novels—Jerry got our cook to buy them—and boxes of chocolates, from our window to hers; we sat there on moonlit nights and communed with her while other girls down the street were entertaining callers on their verandahs; we did everything we could for her except to call her Alicia, although she begged us to do so. But it never came easily to our tongues; we thought she must have been born and christened Miss Ponsonby; "Alicia" was something her mother could only have dreamed about her.

We thought we knew all about Miss Ponsonby's past; but even pale, drab, china-blue women can have their secrets and keep them. It was a full half year before we discovered Miss Ponsonby's.

In October, Stephen Shaw came home from the west to visit his father and mother after an absence of fifteen years. Jerry and I met him at a party at his brother-in-law's. We knew he was a bachelor of forty-five or so and had made heaps of money in the lumber business, so we expected to find him short and round and bald, with bulgy blue eyes and a double chin. On the contrary, he was a tall, handsome man with clear-cut features, laughing black eyes like a boy's, and iron-grey hair. That iron-grey hair nearly finished Jerry; she thinks there is nothing so distinguished and she had the escape of her life from falling in love with Stephen Shaw.

He was as gay as the youngest, danced splendidly, went everywhere, and took all the Glenboro girls about impartially. It was rumoured that he had come east to look for a wife but he didn't seem to be in any particular hurry to find her.

One evening he called on Jerry; that is to say, he did ask for both of us, but within ten minutes Jerry had him mewed up in the cosy corner to the exclusion of all the rest of the world. I felt that I was a huge crowd, so I obligingly decamped upstairs and sat down by my window to "muse," as Miss Ponsonby would have said.

It was a glorious moonlight night, with just a hint of October frost in the air—enough to give sparkle and tang. After a few moments I became aware that Miss Ponsonby was also "musing" at her window in the shadow of the acacia tree. In that dim light she looked quite pretty. It was suddenly borne in upon me for the first time that, when Miss Ponsonby was young, she must have been very pretty, with that delicate elusive fashion of beauty which fades so early if the life is not kept in it by love and tenderness. It seemed odd, somehow, to think of Miss Ponsonby as young and pretty. She seemed so essentially middle-aged and faded.

"Lovely night, Miss Ponsonby," I said brilliantly.

"A very beautiful night, dear Elizabeth," answered Miss Ponsonby in that

tired little voice of hers that always seemed as drab-coloured as the rest of her.

"I'm mopy," I said frankly. "Jerry has concentrated herself on Stephen Shaw for the evening and I'm left on the fringe of things."

Miss Ponsonby didn't say anything for a few moments. When she spoke some strange and curious note had come into her voice, as if a chord, long unswept and silent, had been suddenly thrilled by a passing hand.

"Did I understand you to say that Geraldine was—entertaining Stephen Shaw?"

"Yes. He's home from the west and he's delightful," I replied. "All the Glenboro girls are quite crazy over him. Jerry and I are as bad as the rest. He isn't at all young but he's very fascinating."

"Stephen Shaw!" repeated Miss Ponsonby faintly. "So Stephen Shaw is home again!"

"Why, I suppose you would know him long ago," I said, remembering that Stephen Shaw's youth must have been contemporaneous with Miss Ponsonby's.

"Yes, I used to know him," said Miss Ponsonby very slowly.

She did not say anything more, which I thought a little odd, for she was generally full of mild curiosity about all strangers and sojourners in Glenboro. Presently she got up and went away from her window. Deserted even by Miss Ponsonby, I went grumpily to bed.

Then Mrs. George Hubbard gave a big dance. Jerry and I were pleasantly excited. The Hubbards were the smartest of the Glenboro smart set and their entertainments were always quite brilliant affairs for a small country village like ours. This party was professedly given in honour of Stephen Shaw, who was to leave for the west again in a week's time.

On the evening of the party Jerry and I went to our room to dress. And there, across at her window in the twilight, sat Miss Ponsonby, crying. I had never seen Miss Ponsonby cry before.

"What is the matter?" I called out softly and anxiously.

"Oh, nothing," sobbed Miss Ponsonby, "only—only—I'm invited to the party tonight—Susan Hubbard is my cousin, you know—and I would like so much to go."

"Then why don't you?" said Jerry briskly.

"My father won't let me," said Miss Ponsonby, swallowing a sob as if she were a little girl of ten years old. Jerry had to dodge behind the curtain to hide

a smile.

"It's too bad," I said sympathetically, but wondering a little why Miss Ponsonby seemed so worked up about it. I knew she had sometimes been invited out before and had not been allowed to go, but she had never cared apparently.

"Well, what is to be done?" I whispered to Jerry.

"Take Miss Ponsonby to the party with us, of course," said Jerry, popping out from behind the curtain.

I didn't ask her if she expected to fly through the air with Miss Ponsonby, although short of that I couldn't see how the latter was to be got out of the house without her father knowing. The old gentleman had a den off the hall where he always sat in the evening and smoked fiercely, after having locked all the doors to keep the servants in. He was a delightful sort of person, that old Mr. Ponsonby.

Jerry poked her head as far as she could out of the window. "Miss Ponsonby, you are going to the dance," she said in a cautious undertone, "so don't cry any more or your eyes will be dreadfully red."

"It is impossible," said Miss Ponsonby resignedly.

"Nothing is impossible when I make up my mind," said Jerry firmly. "You must get dressed, climb down that acacia tree, and join us in our yard. It will be pitch dark in a few minutes and your father will never know."

I had a frantic vision of Miss Ponsonby scrambling down that acacia tree like an eloping damsel. But Jerry was in dead earnest, and really it was quite possible if Miss Ponsonby only thought so. I did not believe she would think so, but I was mistaken. Her thorough course in Libbey heroines and their marvellous escapades had quite prepared her to contemplate such an adventure calmly—in the abstract at least. But another obstacle presented itself.

"It's impossible," she said again, after her first flash hope. "I haven't a fit dress to wear—I've nothing at all but my black cashmere and it is three years old."

But the more hindrances in Jerry's way when she sets out to accomplish something the more determined and enthusiastic she becomes. I listened to her with amazement.

"I have a dress I'll lend you," she said resolutely. "And I'll go over and fix you up as soon as it's a little darker. Go now and bathe your eyes and just trust to me."

Miss Ponsonby's long habit of obedience to whatever she was told stood

her in good stead now. She obeyed Jerry without another word. Jerry seized me by the waist and waltzed me around the room in an ecstasy.

"Jerry Elliott, how are you going to carry this thing through?" I demanded sternly.

"Easily enough," responded Jerry. "You know that black lace dress of mine—the one with the apricot slip. I've never worn it since I came to Glenboro, so nobody will know it's mine, and I never mean to wear it again for it's got too tight. It's a trifle old-fashioned, but that won't matter for Glenboro, and it will fit Miss Ponsonby all right. She's about my height and figure. I'm determined that poor soul shall have a dissipation for once in her life since she hankers for it. Come on now, Elizabeth. It will be a lark."

I caught Jerry's enthusiasm, and while she hunted out the box containing the black lace dress, I hastily gathered together some other odds and ends I thought might be useful—a black aigrette, a pair of black silk gloves, a spangled gauze fan, and a pair of slippers. They wouldn't have stood daylight, but they looked all right after night. As we left the room I caught up some pale pink roses on my table.

We pushed through a little gap in the privet hedge and found ourselves under the acacia tree with Miss Ponsonby peering anxiously at us from above. I wanted to shriek with laughter, the whole thing seemed so funny and unreal. Jerry, although she hasn't climbed trees since she was twelve, went up that acacia as nimbly as a pussy-cat, took the box and things from me, passed them to Miss Ponsonby, and got in at the window while I went back to my own room to dress, hoping old Mr. Ponsonby wouldn't be running out to ring the fire alarm.

In a very short time I heard Miss Ponsonby and Jerry at the opposite window, and I rushed to mine to see the sight. But Miss Ponsonby, with a red fascinator over her head and a big cape wrapped round her, slipped out of the window and down that blessed acacia tree as neatly and nimbly as if she had been accustomed to doing it for exercise every day of her life. There were possibilities in Miss Ponsonby. In two more minutes they were both safe in our room.

Then Jerry threw off Miss Ponsonby's wraps and stepped back. I know I stared until my eyes stuck out of my head. Was that Miss Ponsonby—that!

The black lace dress, with the pinkish sheen of its slip beneath, suited her slim shape to perfection and clung around her in lovely, filmy curves that made her look willowy and girlish. It was high-necked, just cut away slightly at the throat, and had great, loose, hanging frilly sleeves of lace. Jerry had shaken out her hair and piled it high on her head in satiny twists and loops,

with a pompadour such as Miss Ponsonby could never have thought about. It suited her tremendously and seemed to alter the whole character of her face, giving verve and piquancy to her delicate little features. The excitement had flushed her cheeks into positive pinkness and her eyes were starry. The roses were pinned on her shoulder. Miss Ponsonby, as she stood there, was a pretty woman, with fifteen apparent birthdays the less.

"Oh, Alicia, you look just lovely!" I gasped. The name slipped out quite naturally. I never thought about it at all.

"My dear Elizabeth," she said, "it's like a dream of lost youth."

We got Jerry ready and then we started for the Hubbards', out by our back door and through our neighbour-on-the-left's lane to avoid all observation. Miss Ponsonby was breathless with terror. She was sure every footstep she heard behind her was her father's in pursuit. She almost fainted on the spot when a belated man came tearing along the street. Jerry and I breathed a sigh of devout thanksgiving when we found ourselves safely in the Hubbard parlour.

We were early, but Stephen Shaw was there before us. He came up to us at once, and just then Miss Ponsonby turned around.

"Alicia!" he said.

"How do you do, Stephen?" she said tremulously.

And there he was looking down at her with an expression on his face that none of the Glenboro girls he had been calling on had ever seen. Jerry and I just simply melted away. We can see through grindstones when there are holes in them!

We went out and sat down on the stairs.

"There's a mystery here," said Jerry, "but Miss Ponsonby shall explain it to us before we let her climb up that acacia tree tonight. Now that I come to think of it, the first night he called he asked me about her. Wanted to know if her father were the same old blustering tyrant he always was, and if we knew her at all. I'm afraid I made a little mild fun of her, and he didn't say anything more. Well, I'm awfully glad now that I didn't fall in love with him. I could have, but I wouldn't."

Miss Ponsonby's appearance at the Hubbards' party was the biggest sensation Glenboro had had for years. And in her way, she was a positive belle. She didn't dance, but all the middle-aged men, widowers, wedded, and bachelors, who had known her in her girlhood crowded around her, and she laughed and chatted as I hadn't even imagined Miss Ponsonby could laugh and chat. Jerry and I revelled in her triumph, for did we not feel that it was due to

us? At last Miss Ponsonby disappeared; shortly after Jerry and I blundered into the library to fix some obstreperous hairpins, and there we found her and Stephen Shaw in the cosy corner.

There were no explanations on the road home, for Miss Ponsonby walked behind us with Stephen Shaw in the pale, late-risen October moonshine. But when we had sneaked through the neighbour-to-the-left's lane and reached our side verandah we waited for her, and as soon as Stephen Shaw had gone we laid violent hands on Miss Ponsonby and made her 'fess up there on the dark, chilly verandah, at one o'clock in the morning.

"Miss Ponsonby," said Jerry, "before we assist you in returning to those ancestral halls of yours you've simply got to tell us what all this means."

Miss Ponsonby gave a little, shy, nervous laugh.

"Stephen Shaw and I were engaged to be married long ago," she said simply. "But Father disapproved. Stephen was poor then. And so—and so—I sent him away. What else could I do?"—for Jerry had snorted—"Father had to be obeyed. But it broke my heart. Stephen went away—he was very angry—and I have never seen him since. When Susan Hubbard invited me to the party I felt as if I must go—I must see Stephen once more. I never thought for a minute that he remembered me—or cared still...."

"But he does?" said Jerry breathlessly. Jerry never scruples to ask anything right out that she wants to know.

"Yes," said Miss Ponsonby softly. "Isn't it wonderful? I could hardly believe it—I am so changed. But he said tonight he had never thought of any other woman. He—he came home to see me. But when I never went anywhere, even when I must know he was home, he thought I didn't want to see him. If I hadn't gone tonight—oh, I owe it all to you two dear girls!"

"When are you to be married?" demanded that terrible Jerry.

"As soon as possible," said Miss Ponsonby. "Stephen was going away next week, but he says he will wait until I can get ready."

"Do you think your father will object this time?" I queried.

"No, I don't think so. Stephen is a rich man now, you know. That wouldn't make any difference with me—but Father is very—practical. Stephen is going to see him tomorrow."

"But what if he does object?" I persisted anxiously.

"The acacia tree will still be there," said Miss Ponsonby firmly.

The Falsoms' Christmas Dinner

"Well, so it's all settled," said Stephen Falsom.

"Yes," assented Alexina. "Yes, it is," she repeated, as if somebody had questioned it.

Then Alexina sighed. Whatever "it" was, the fact of its being settled did not seem to bring Alexina any great peace of mind—nor Stephen either, judging from his face, which wore a sort of "suffer and be strong" expression just then. "When do you go?" said Alexina, after a pause, during which she had frowned out of the window and across the Tracy yard. Josephine Tracy and her brother Duncan were strolling about the yard in the pleasant December sunshine, arm in arm, laughing and talking. They appeared to be a nice, harmless pair of people, but the sight of them did not seem to please Alexina.

"Just as soon as we can sell the furniture and move away," said Stephen moodily. "Heigh-ho! So this is what all our fine ambitions have come to, Lexy, your music and my M.D. A place in a department store for you, and one in a lumber mill for me."

"I don't dare to complain," said Alexina slowly. "We ought to be so thankful to get the positions. I am thankful. And I don't mind so very much about my music. But I do wish you could have gone to college, Stephen."

"Never mind me," said Stephen, brightening up determinedly. "I'm going to go into the lumber business enthusiastically. You don't know what unsuspected talents I may develop along that line. The worst of it is that we can't be together. But I'll keep my eyes open, and perhaps I'll find a place for you in Lessing."

Alexina said nothing. Her separation from Stephen was the one point in their fortunes she could not bear to discuss. There were times when Alexina did not see how she was going to exist without Stephen. But she never said so to him. She thought he had enough to worry him without her making matters worse. "Well," said Stephen, getting up, "I'll run down to the office. And see here, Lexy. Day after tomorrow is Christmas. Are we going to celebrate it at all? If so I'd better order the turkey."

Alexina looked thoughtful. "I don't know, Stephen. We're short of money, you know, and the fund is dwindling every day. Don't you think it's a little extravagant to have a turkey for two people? And somehow I don't feel a bit Christmassy. I think I'd rather spend it just like any other day and try to forget that it is Christmas. Everything would be so different."

"That's true, Lexy. And we must look after the bawbees closely, I'll admit."

When Stephen had gone out Alexina cried a little, not very much, because she didn't want her eyes to be red against Stephen's return. But she had to cry a little. As she had said, everything was so different from what it had been a year ago. Their father had been alive then and they had been very cosy and happy in the little house at the end of the street. There had been no mother there since Alexina's birth sixteen years ago. Alexina had kept house for her father and Stephen since she was ten. Stephen was a clever boy and intended to study medicine. Alexina had a good voice, and something was to be done about training it. The Tracys lived next door to them. Duncan Tracy was Stephen's particular chum, and Josephine Tracy was Alexina's dearest friend. Alexina was never lonely when Josie was near by to laugh and chat and plan with.

Then, all at once, troubles came. In June the firm of which Mr. Falsom was a member failed. There was some stigma attached to the failure, too, although the blame did not rest upon Mr. Falsom, but with his partner. Worry and anxiety aggravated the heart trouble from which he had suffered for some time, and a month later he died. Alexina and Stephen were left alone to face the knowledge that they were penniless, and must look about for some way of supporting themselves. At first they hoped to be able to get something to do in Thorndale, so that they might keep their home. This proved impossible. After much discouragement and disappointment Stephen had secured a position in the lumber mill at Lessing, and Alexina was promised a place in a departmental store in the city.

To make matters worse, Duncan Tracy and Stephen had quarrelled in October. It was only a boyish disagreement over some trifle, but bitter words had passed. Duncan, who was a quick-tempered lad, had twitted Stephen with his father's failure, and Stephen had resented it hotly. Duncan was sorry for and ashamed of his words as soon as they were uttered, but he would not humble himself to say so. Alexina had taken Stephen's part and her manner to Josie assumed a tinge of coldness. Josie quickly noticed and resented it, and the breach between the two girls widened almost insensibly, until they barely spoke when they met. Each blamed the other and cherished bitterness in her heart.

When Stephen came home from the post office he looked excited.

"Were there any letters?" asked Alexina.

"Well, rather! One from Uncle James!"

"Uncle James," exclaimed Alexina, incredulously.

"Yes, beloved sis. Oh, you needn't try to look as surprised as I did. And I ordered the turkey after all. Uncle James has invited himself here to dinner on

Christmas Day. You'll have a chance to show your culinary skill, for you know we've always been told that Uncle James was a gourmand."

Alexina read the letter in a maze. It was a brief epistle, stating that the writer wished to make the acquaintance of his niece and nephew, and would visit them on Christmas Day. That was all. But Alexina instantly saw a future of rosy possibilities. For Uncle James, who lived in the city and was really a great-uncle, had never taken the slightest notice of their family since his quarrel with their father twenty years ago; but this looked as if Uncle James were disposed to hold out the olive branch.

"Oh, Stephen, if he likes you, and if he offers to educate you!" breathed Alexina. "Perhaps he will if he is favourably impressed. But we'll have to be so careful, he is so whimsical and odd, at least everybody has always said so. A little thing may turn the scale either way. Anyway, we must have a good dinner for him. I'll have plum pudding and mince pie."

For the next thirty-six hours Alexina lived in a whirl. There was so much to do. The little house was put in apple pie order from top to bottom, and Stephen was set to stoning raisins and chopping meat and beating eggs. Alexina was perfectly reckless; no matter how big a hole it made in their finances Uncle James must have a proper Christmas dinner. A favourable impression must be made. Stephen's whole future—Alexina did not think about her own at all just then—might depend on it.

Christmas morning came, fine and bright and warm. It was more like a morning in early spring than in December, for there was no snow or frost, and the air was moist and balmy. Alexina was up at daybreak, cleaning and decorating at a furious rate. By eleven o'clock everything was finished or going forward briskly. The plum pudding was bubbling in the pot, the turkey —Burton's plumpest—was sizzling in the oven. The shelf in the pantry bore two mince pies upon which Alexina was willing to stake her culinary reputation. And Stephen had gone to the train to meet Uncle James.

From her kitchen window Alexina could see brisk preparations going on in the Tracy kitchen. She knew Josie and Duncan were all alone; their parents had gone to spend Christmas with friends in Lessing. In spite of her hurry and excitement Alexina found time to sigh. Last Christmas Josie and Duncan had come over and eaten their dinner with them. But now last Christmas seemed very far away. And Josie had behaved horridly. Alexina was quite clear on that point.

Then Stephen came with Uncle James. Uncle James was a rather pompous, fussy old man with red cheeks and bushy eyebrows. "H'm! Smells nice in here," was his salutation to Alexina. "I hope it will taste as good as it smells. I'm hungry."

Alexina soon left Uncle James and Stephen talking in the parlour and betook herself anxiously to the kitchen. She set the table in the little dining room, now and then pausing to listen with a delighted nod to the murmur of voices and laughter in the parlour. She felt sure that Stephen was making a favourable impression. She lifted the plum pudding and put it on a plate on the kitchen table; then she took out the turkey, beautifully done, and put it on a platter; finally, she popped the two mince pies into the oven. Just at this moment Stephen stuck his head in at the hall door.

"Lexy, do you know where that letter of Governor Howland's to Father is? Uncle James wants to see it."

Alexina, not waiting to shut the oven door—for delay might impress Uncle James unfavourably—rushed upstairs to get the letter. She was ten minutes finding it. Then, remembering her pies, she flew back to the kitchen. In the middle of the floor she stopped as if transfixed, staring at the table. The turkey was gone. And the plum pudding was gone! And the mince pies were gone! Nothing was left but the platters! For a moment Alexina refused to believe her eyes. Then she saw a trail of greasy drops on the floor to the open door, out over the doorstep, and along the boards of the walk to the back fence.

Alexina did not make a fuss. Even at that horrible moment she remembered the importance of making a favourable impression. But she could not quite keep the alarm and excitement out of her voice as she called Stephen, and Stephen knew that something had gone wrong as he came quickly through the hall. "Is the turkey burned, Lexy?" he cried.

"Burned! No, it's ten times worse," gasped Alexina. "It's gone—gone, Stephen. And the pudding and the mince pies, too. Oh, what shall we do? Who can have taken them?"

It may be stated right here and now that the Falsoms never really knew anything more about the disappearance of their Christmas dinner than they did at that moment. But the only reasonable explanation of the mystery was that a tramp had entered the kitchen and made off with the good things. The Falsom house was right at the end of the street. The narrow backyard opened on a lonely road. Across the road was a stretch of pine woods. There was no house very near except the Tracy one.

Stephen reached this conclusion with a bound. He ran out to the yard gate followed by the distracted Alexina. The only person visible was a man some distance down the road. Stephen leaped over the gate and tore down the road in pursuit of him. Alexina went back to the doorstep, sat down upon it, and began to cry. She couldn't help it. Her hopes were all in ruins around her. There was no dinner for Uncle James.

Josephine Tracy saw her crying. Now, Josie honestly thought that she had a grievance against Alexina. But an Alexina walking unconcernedly by with a cool little nod and her head held high was a very different person from an Alexina sitting on a back doorstep, on Christmas morning, crying. For a moment Josie hesitated. Then she slowly went out and across the yard to the fence. "What is the trouble?" she asked.

Alexina forgot that there was such a thing as dignity to be kept up; or, if she remembered it, she was past caring for such a trifle. "Our dinner is gone," she sobbed. "And there is nothing to give Uncle James to eat except vegetables—and I do so want to make a favourable impression!"

This was not particularly lucid, but Josie, with a flying mental leap, arrived at the conclusion that it was very important that Uncle James, whoever he was, should have a dinner, and she knew where one was to be had. But before she could speak Stephen returned, looking rueful. "No use, Lexy. That man was only old Mr. Byers, and he had seen no signs of a tramp. There is a trail of grease right across the road. The tramp must have taken directly to the woods. We'll simply have to do without our Christmas dinner."

"By no means," said Josie quickly, with a little red spot on either cheek. "Our dinner is all ready—turkey, pudding and all. Let us lend it to you. Don't say a word to your uncle about the accident."

Alexina flushed and hesitated. "It's very kind of you," she stammered, "but I'm afraid—it would be too much—"

"Not a bit of it," Josie interrupted warmly. "Didn't Duncan and I have Christmas dinner at your house last year? Just come and help us carry it over."

"If you lend us your dinner you and Duncan must come and help us eat it," said Alexina, resolutely.

"I'll come of course," said Josie, "and I think that Duncan will too if—if—" She looked at Stephen, the scarlet spots deepening. Stephen coloured too.

"Duncan must come," he said quietly. "I'll go and ask him."

Two minutes later a peculiar procession marched out of the Tracy kitchen door, across the two yards, and into the Falsom house. Josie headed it, carrying a turkey on a platter. Alexina came next with a plum pudding. Stephen and Duncan followed with a hot mince pie apiece. And in a few more minutes Alexina gravely announced to Uncle James that dinner was ready.

The dinner was a pronounced success, marked by much suppressed hilarity among the younger members of the party. Uncle James ate very heartily and seemed to enjoy everything, especially the mince pie.

"This is the best mince pie I have ever sampled," he told Alexina. "I am

glad to know that I have a niece who can make such a mince pie." Alexina cast an agonized look at Josie, and was on the point of explaining that she wasn't the maker of the pie. But Josie frowned her into silence.

"I felt so guilty to sit there and take the credit—your credit," she told Josie afterwards, as they washed up the dishes.

"Nonsense," said Josie. "It wasn't as if you couldn't make mince pies. Your mince pies are better than mine, if it comes to that. It might have spoiled everything if you'd said a word. I must go home now. Won't you and Stephen come over after your uncle goes, and spend the evening with us? We'll have a candy pull."

When Josie and Duncan had gone, Uncle James called his nephew and niece into the parlour, and sat down before them with approving eyes. "I want to have a little talk with you two. I'm sorry I've let so many years go by without making your acquaintance, because you seem worth getting acquainted with. Now, what are your plans for the future?"

"I'm going into a lumber mill at Lessing and Alexina is going into the T. Morson store," said Stephen quietly.

"Tut, tut, no, you're not. And she's not. You're coming to live with me, both of you. If you have a fancy for cutting and carving people up, young man, you must be trained to cut and carve them scientifically, anyhow. As for you, Alexina, Stephen tells me you can sing. Well, there's a good Conservatory of Music in town. Wouldn't you rather go there instead of behind a counter?"

"Oh, Uncle James!" exclaimed Alexina with shining eyes. She jumped up, put her arms about Uncle James' neck and kissed him.

Uncle James said, "Tut, tut," again, but he liked it.

When Stephen had seen his uncle off on the six o'clock train he returned home and looked at the radiant Alexina.

"Well, you made your favourable impression, all right, didn't you?" he said gaily. "But we owe it to Josie Tracy. Isn't she a brick? I suppose you're going over this evening?"

"Yes, I am. I'm so tired that I feel as if I couldn't crawl across the yard, but if I can't you'll have to carry me. Go I will. I can't begin to tell you how glad I am about everything, but really the fact that you and Duncan and Josie and I are good friends again seems the best of all. I'm glad that tramp stole the dinner and I hope he enjoyed it. I don't grudge him one single bite!"

The Fraser Scholarship

Elliot Campbell came down the main staircase of Marwood College and found himself caught up with a whoop into a crowd of Sophs who were struggling around the bulletin board. He was thumped on the back and shaken hands with amid a hurricane of shouts and congratulations.

"Good for you, Campbell! You've won the Fraser. See your little name tacked up there at the top of the list, bracketed off all by itself for the winner? 'Elliott H. Campbell, ninety-two per cent.' A class yell for Campbell, boys!"

While the yell was being given with a heartiness that might have endangered the roof, Elliott, with flushed face and sparkling eyes, pushed nearer to the important typewritten announcement on the bulletin board. Yes, he had won the Fraser Scholarship. His name headed the list of seven competitors.

Roger Brooks, who was at his side, read over the list aloud:

"'Elliott H. Campbell, ninety-two.' I said you'd do it, my boy. 'Edward Stone, ninety-one'—old Ned ran you close, didn't he? But of course with that name he'd no show. 'Kay Milton, eighty-eight.' Who'd have thought slow-going old Kay would have pulled up so well? 'Seddon Brown, eighty-seven; Oliver Field, eighty-four; Arthur McIntyre, eighty-two'—a very respectable little trio. And 'Carl McLean, seventy.' Whew! what a drop! Just saved his distance. It was only his name took him in, of course. He knew you weren't supposed to be strong in mathematics."

Before Elliott could say anything, a professor emerged from the president's private room, bearing the report of a Freshman examination, which he proceeded to post on the Freshman bulletin board, and the rush of the students in that direction left Elliott and Roger free of the crowd. They seized the opportunity to escape.

Elliott drew a long breath as they crossed the campus in the fresh April sunshine, where the buds were swelling on the fine old chestnuts and elms that surrounded Marwood's red brick walls.

"That has lifted a great weight off my mind," he said frankly. "A good deal depended on my winning the Fraser. I couldn't have come back next year if I hadn't got it. That four hundred will put me through the rest of my course."

"That's good," said Roger Brooks heartily.

He liked Elliott Campbell, and so did all the Sophomores. Yet none of them was at all intimate with him. He had no chums, as the other boys had. He boarded alone, "dug" persistently, and took no part in the social life of the

college. Roger Brooks came nearest to being his friend of any, yet even Roger knew very little about him. Elliott had never before said so much about his personal affairs as in the speech just recorded.

"I'm poor—woefully poor," went on Elliott gaily. His success seemed to have thawed his reserve for the time being. "I had just enough money to bring me through the Fresh and Soph years by dint of careful management. Now I'm stone broke, and the hope of the Fraser was all that stood between me and the dismal certainty of having to teach next year, dropping out of my class and coming back in two or three years' time, a complete, rusty stranger again. Whew! I made faces over the prospect."

"No wonder," commented Roger. "The class would have been sorry if you had had to drop out, Campbell. We want to keep all our stars with us to make a shining coruscation at the finish. Besides, you know we all like you for yourself. It would have been an everlasting shame if that little cad of a McLean had won out. Nobody likes him."

"Oh, I had no fear of him," answered Elliott. "I don't see what induced him to go in, anyhow. He must have known he'd no chance. But I was afraid of Stone—he's a born dabster at mathematics, you know, and I only hold my own in them by hard digging."

"Why, Stone couldn't have taken the Fraser over you in any case, if you made over seventy," said Roger with a puzzled look. "You must have known that. McLean was the only competitor you had to fear."

"I don't understand you," said Elliott blankly.

"You must know the conditions of the Fraser!" exclaimed Roger.

"Certainly," responded Elliott. "'The Fraser scholarship, amounting to four hundred dollars, will be offered annually in the Sophomore class. The competitors will be expected to take a special examination in mathematics, and the winner will be awarded two hundred dollars for two years, payable in four annual instalments, the payment of any instalment to be conditional on the winner's attending the required classes for undergraduates and making satisfactory progress therein.' Isn't that correct?"

"So far as it goes, old man. You forget the most important part of all. 'Preference is to be given to competitors of the name Fraser, Campbell or McLean, provided that such competitor makes at least seventy per cent in his examination.' You don't mean to tell me that you didn't know that!"

"Are you joking?" demanded Elliott with a pale face.

"Not a joke. Why, man, it's in the calendar."

"I didn't know it," said Elliott slowly. "I read the calendar announcement

only once, and I certainly didn't notice that condition."

"Well, that's curious. But how on earth did you escape hearing it talked about? It's always discussed extensively among the boys, especially when there are two competitors of the favoured names, which doesn't often happen."

"I'm not a very sociable fellow," said Elliott with a faint smile. "You know they call me 'the hermit.' As it happened, I never talked the matter over with anyone or heard it referred to. I—I wish I had known this before."

"Why, what difference does it make? It's all right, anyway. But it is odd to think that if your name hadn't been Campbell, the Fraser would have gone to McLean over the heads of Stone and all the rest. Their only hope was that you would both fall below seventy. It's an absurd condition, but there it is in old Professor Fraser's will. He was rich and had no family. So he left a number of bequests to the college on ordinary conditions. I suppose he thought he might humour his whim in one. His widow is a dear old soul, and always makes a special pet of the boy who wins the Fraser. Well, here's my street. So long, Campbell."

Elliott responded almost curtly and walked onward to his boarding-house with a face from which all the light had gone. When he reached his room he took down the Marwood calendar and whirled over the leaves until he came to the announcement of bursaries and scholarships. The Fraser announcement, as far as he had read it, ended at the foot of the page. He turned the leaf and, sure enough, at the top of the next page, in a paragraph by itself, was the condition: "Preference shall be given to candidates of the name Fraser, Campbell or McLean, provided that said competitor makes at least seventy per cent in his examination."

Elliott flung himself into a chair by his table and bowed his head on his hands. He had no right to the Fraser Scholarship. His name was not Campbell, although perhaps nobody in the world knew it save himself, and he remembered it only by an effort of memory.

He had been born in a rough mining camp in British Columbia, and when he was a month old his father, John Hanselpakker, had been killed in a mine explosion, leaving his wife and child quite penniless and almost friendless. One of the miners, an honest, kindly Scotchman named Alexander Campbell, had befriended Mrs. Hanselpakker and her little son in many ways, and two years later she had married him. They returned to their native province of Nova Scotia and settled in a small country village. Here Elliott had grown up, bearing the name of the man who was a kind and loving father to him, and whom he loved as a father. His mother had died when he was ten years old and his stepfather when he was fifteen. On his deathbed he asked Elliott to retain his name.

"I've cared for you and loved you since the time you were born, lad," he said. "You seem like my own son, and I've a fancy to leave you my name. It's all I can leave you, for I'm a poor man, but it's an honest name, lad, and I've kept it free from stain. See that you do likewise, and you'll have your mother's blessing and mine."

Elliott fought a hard battle that spring evening.

"Hold your tongue and keep the Fraser," whispered the tempter. "Campbell is your name. You've borne it all your life. And the condition itself is a ridiculous one—no fairness about it. You made the highest marks and you ought to be the winner. It isn't as if you were wronging Stone or any of the others who worked hard and made good marks. If you throw away what you've won by your own hard labour, the Fraser goes to McLean, who made only seventy. Besides, you need the money and he doesn't. His father is a rich man."

"But I'll be a cheat and a cad if I keep it," Elliott muttered miserably. "Campbell isn't my legal name, and I'd never again feel as if I had even the right of love to it if I stained it by a dishonest act. For it would be stained, even though nobody but myself knew it. Father said it was a clean name when he left it, and I cannot soil it."

The tempter was not silenced so easily as that. Elliott passed a sleepless night of indecision. But next day he went to Marwood and asked for a private interview with the president. As a result, an official announcement was posted that afternoon on the bulletin board to the effect that, owing to a misunderstanding, the Fraser Scholarship had been wrongly awarded. Carl McLean was posted as winner.

The story soon got around the campus, and Elliott found himself rather overwhelmed with sympathy, but he did not feel as if he were very much in need of it after all. It was good to have done the right thing and be able to look your conscience in the face. He was young and strong and could work his own way through Marwood in time.

"No condolences, please," he said to Roger Brooks with a smile. "I'm sorry I lost the Fraser, of course, but I've my hands and brains left. I'm going straight to my boarding-house to dig with double vim, for I've got to take an examination next week for a provincial school certificate. Next winter I'll be a flourishing pedagogue in some up-country district."

He was not, however. The next afternoon he received a summons to the president's office. The president was there, and with him was a plump, motherly-looking woman of about sixty.

"Mrs. Fraser, this is Elliott Hanselpakker, or Campbell, as I understand he

prefers to be called. Elliott, I told your story to Mrs. Fraser last evening, and she was greatly interested when she heard your rather peculiar name. She will tell you why herself."

"I had a young half-sister once," said Mrs. Fraser eagerly. "She married a man named John Hanselpakker and went West, and somehow I lost all trace of her. There was, I regret to say, a coolness between us over her marriage. I disapproved of it because she married a very poor man. When I heard your name, it struck me that you might be her son, or at least know something about her. Her name was Mary Helen Rodney, and I loved her very dearly in spite of our foolish quarrel."

There was a tremour in Mrs. Fraser's voice and an answering one in Elliott's as he replied: "Mary Helen Rodney was my dear mother's name, and my father was John Hanselpakker."

"Then you are my nephew," exclaimed Mrs. Fraser. "I am your Aunt Alice. My boy, you don't know how much it means to a lonely old woman to have found you. I'm the happiest person in the world!"

She slipped her arm through Elliott's and turned to the sympathetic president with shining eyes.

"He is my boy forever, if he will be. Blessings on the Fraser Scholarship!"

"Blessings rather on the manly boy who wouldn't keep it under false colours," said the president with a smile. "I think you are fortunate in your nephew, Mrs. Fraser."

So Elliott Hanselpakker Campbell came back to Marwood the next year after all.

The Girl at the Gate

Something very strange happened the night old Mr. Lawrence died. I have never been able to explain it and I have never spoken of it except to one person and she said that I dreamed it. I did not dream it ... I saw and heard, waking.

We had not expected Mr. Lawrence to die then. He did not seem very ill ... not nearly so ill as he had been during his previous attack. When we heard of his illness I went over to Woodlands to see him, for I had always been a great favourite with him. The big house was quiet, the servants going about their work as usual, without any appearance of excitement. I was told that I could not see Mr. Lawrence for a little while, as the doctor was with him. Mrs. Yeats,

the housekeeper, said the attack was not serious and asked me to wait in the blue parlour, but I preferred to sit down on the steps of the big, arched front door. It was an evening in June. Woodlands was very lovely; to my right was the garden, and before me was a little valley abrim with the sunset. In places under the big trees it was quite dark even then.

There was something unusually still in the evening ... a stillness as of waiting. It set me thinking of the last time Mr. Lawrence had been ill ... nearly a year ago in August. One night during his convalescence I had watched by him to relieve the nurse. He had been sleepless and talkative, telling me many things about his life. Finally he told me of Margaret.

I knew a little about her ... that she had been his sweetheart and had died very young. Mr. Lawrence had remained true to her memory ever since, but I had never heard him speak of her before.

"She was very beautiful," he said dreamily, "and she was only eighteen when she died, Jeanette. She had wonderful pale-golden hair and dark-brown eyes. I have a little ivory miniature of her. When I die it is to be given to you, Jeanette. I have waited a long while for her. You know she promised she would come."

I did not understand his meaning and kept silence, thinking that he might be wandering a little in his mind.

"She promised she would come and she will keep her word," he went on. "I was with her when she died. I held her in my arms. She said to me, 'Herbert, I promise that I will be true to you forever, through as many years of lonely heaven as I must know before you come. And when your time is at hand I will come to make your deathbed easy as you have made mine. I will come, Herbert.' She solemnly promised, Jeanette. We made a death-tryst of it. And I know she will come."

He had fallen asleep then and after his recovery he had not alluded to the matter again. I had forgotten it, but I recalled it now as I sat on the steps among the geraniums that June evening. I liked to think of Margaret ... the lovely girl who had died so long ago, taking her lover's heart with her to the grave. She had been a sister of my grandfather, and people told me that I resembled her slightly. Perhaps that was why old Mr. Lawrence had always made such a pet of me.

Presently the doctor came out and nodded to me cheerily. I asked him how Mr. Lawrence was.

"Better ... better," he said briskly. "He will be all right tomorrow. The attack was very slight. Yes, of course you may go in. Don't stay longer than half an hour."

Mrs. Stewart, Mr. Lawrence's sister, was in the sickroom when I went in. She took advantage of my presence to lie down on the sofa a little while, for she had been up all the preceding night. Mr. Lawrence turned his fine old silver head on the pillow and smiled a greeting. He was a very handsome old man; neither age nor illness had marred his finely modelled face or impaired the flash of his keen, steel-blue eyes. He seemed quite well and talked naturally and easily of many commonplace things.

At the end of the doctor's half-hour I rose to go. Mrs. Stewart had fallen asleep and he would not let me wake her, saying he needed nothing and felt like sleeping himself. I promised to come up again on the morrow and went out.

It was dark in the hall, where no lamp had been lighted, but outside on the lawn the moonlight was bright as day. It was the clearest, whitest night I ever saw. I turned aside into the garden, meaning to cross it, and take the short way over the west meadow home. There was a long walk of rose bushes leading across the garden to a little gate on the further side ... the way Mr. Lawrence had been wont to take long ago when he went over the fields to woo Margaret. I went along it, enjoying the night. The bushes were white with roses, and the ground under my feet was all snowed over with their petals. The air was still and breezeless; again I felt that sensation of waiting ... of expectancy. As I came up to the little gate I saw a young girl standing on the other side of it. She stood in the full moonlight and I saw her distinctly.

She was tall and slight and her head was bare. I saw that her hair was a pale gold, shining somewhat strangely about her head as if catching the moonbeams. Her face was very lovely and her eyes large and dark. She was dressed in something white and softly shimmering, and in her hand she held a white rose ... a very large and perfect one. Even at the time I found myself wondering where she could have picked it. It was not a Woodlands rose. All the Woodlands roses were smaller and less double.

She was a stranger to me, yet I felt that I had seen her or someone very like her before. Possibly she was one of Mr. Lawrence's many nieces who might have come up to Woodlands upon hearing of his illness.

As I opened the gate I felt an odd chill of positive fear. Then she smiled as if I had spoken my thought.

"Do not be frightened," she said. "There is no reason you should be frightened. I have only come to keep a tryst."

The words reminded me of something, but I could not recall what it was. The strange fear that was on me deepened. I could not speak.

She came through the gateway and stood for a moment at my side.

"It is strange that you should have seen me," she said, "but now behold how strong and beautiful a thing is faithful love—strong enough to conquer death. We who have loved truly love always—and this makes our heaven."

She walked on after she had spoken, down the long rose path. I watched her until she reached the house and went up the steps. In truth I thought the girl was someone not quite in her right mind. When I reached home I did not speak of the matter to anyone, not even to inquire who the girl might possibly be. There seemed to be something in that strange meeting that demanded my silence.

The next morning word came that old Mr. Lawrence was dead. When I hurried down to Woodlands I found all in confusion, but Mrs. Yeats took me into the blue parlour and told me what little there was to tell.

"He must have died soon after you left him, Miss Jeanette," she sobbed, "for Mrs. Stewart wakened at ten o'clock and he was gone. He lay there, smiling, with such a strange look on his face as if he had just seen something that made him wonderfully happy. I never saw such a look on a dead face before."

"Who is here besides Mrs. Stewart?" I asked.

"Nobody," said Mrs. Yeats. "We have sent word to all his friends but they have not had time to arrive here yet."

"I met a young girl in the garden last night," I said slowly. "She came into the house. I did not know her but I thought she must be a relative of Mr. Lawrence's."

Mrs. Yeats shook her head.

"No. It must have been somebody from the village, although I didn't know of anyone calling after you went away."

I said nothing more to her about it.

After the funeral Mrs. Stewart gave me Margaret's miniature. I had never seen it or any picture of Margaret before. The face was very lovely—also strangely like my own, although I am not beautiful. It was the face of the young girl I had met at the gate!

The Light on the Big Dipper

"Don't let Nellie run out of doors, Mary Margaret, and be careful of the fire, Mary Margaret. I expect we'll be back pretty soon after dark, so don't be

lonesome, Mary Margaret."

Mary Margaret laughed and switched her long, thick braid of black hair from one shoulder to the other.

"No fear of my being lonesome, Mother Campbell. I'll be just as careful as can be and there are so many things to be done that I'll be as busy and happy as a bee all day long. Nellie and I will have just the nicest kind of a time. I won't get lonesome, but if I should feel just tempted to, I'll think, Father is on his way home. He will soon be here.' And that would drive the lonesomeness away before it dared to show its face. Don't you worry, Mother Campbell."

Mother Campbell smiled. She knew she could trust Mary Margaret—careful, steady, prudent little Mary Margaret. Little! Ah, that was just the trouble. Careful and steady and prudent as Mary Margaret might be, she was only twelve years old, after all, and there would not be another soul besides her and Nellie on the Little Dipper that whole day. Mrs. Campbell felt that she hardly dared to go away under such circumstances. And yet she must dare it. Oscar Bryan had sailed over from the mainland the evening before with word that her sister Nan—her only sister, who lived in Cartonville—was ill and about to undergo a serious operation. She must go to see her, and Uncle Martin was waiting with his boat to take her over to the mainland to catch the morning train for Cartonville.

If five-year-old Nellie had been quite well Mrs. Campbell would have taken both her and Mary Margaret and locked up the house. But Nellie had a very bad cold and was quite unfit to go sailing across the harbour on a raw, chilly November day. So there was nothing to do but leave Mary Margaret in charge, and Mary Margaret was quite pleased at the prospect.

"You know, Mother Campbell, I'm not afraid of anything except tramps. And no tramps ever come to the Dippers. You see what an advantage it is to live on an island! There, Uncle Martin is waving. Run along, little mother."

Mary Margaret watched the boat out of sight from the window and then betook herself to the doing of her tasks, singing blithely all the while. It was rather nice to be left in sole charge like this—it made you feel so important and grown-up. She would do everything very nicely and Mother would see when she came back what a good housekeeper her daughter was.

Mary Margaret and Nellie and Mrs. Campbell had been living on the Little Dipper ever since the preceding April. Before that they had always lived in their own cosy home at the Harbour Head. But in April Captain Campbell had sailed in the Two Sisters for a long voyage and, before he went, Mrs. Campbell's brother, Martin Clowe, had come to them with a proposition. He ran a lobster cannery on the Little Dipper, and he wanted his sister to go and

keep house for him while her husband was away. After some discussion it was so arranged, and Mrs. Campbell and her two girls moved to the Little Dipper. It was not a lonesome place then, for the lobstermen and their families lived on it, and boats were constantly sailing to and fro between it and the mainland. Mary Margaret enjoyed her summer greatly; she bathed and sailed and roamed over the rocks, and on fine days her Uncle George, who kept the lighthouse on the Big Dipper, and lived there all alone, often came over and took her across to the Big Dipper. Mary Margaret thought the lighthouse was a wonderful place. Uncle George taught her how to light the lamps and manage the light.

When the lobster season dosed, the men took up codfishing and carried this on till October, when they all moved back to the mainland. But Uncle Martin was building a house for himself at Harbour Head and did not wish to move until the ice formed over the bay because it would then be so much easier to transport his goods and chattels; so the Campbells stayed with him until the Captain should return.

Mary Margaret found plenty to do that day and wasn't a bit lonesome. But when evening came she didn't feel quite so cheerful. Nellie had fallen asleep, and there wasn't another living creature except the cat on the Little Dipper. Besides, it looked like a storm. The harbour was glassy calm, but the sky was very black and dour in the northeast—like snow, thought weather-wise Mary Margaret. She hoped her mother would get home before it began, and she wished the lighthouse star would gleam out on the Big Dipper. It would seem like the bright eye of a steady old friend. Mary Margaret always watched for it every night; just as soon as the sun went down the big lighthouse star would flash goldenly out in the northeastern sky.

"I'll sit down by the window and watch for it," said Mary Margaret to herself. "Then, when it is lighted, I'll get up a nice warm supper for Mother and Uncle Martin."

Mary Margaret sat down by the kitchen window to watch. Minute after minute passed, but no light flashed out on the Big Dipper. What was the matter? Mary Margaret began to feel uneasy. It was too cloudy to tell just when the sun had set, but she was sure it must be down, for it was quite dark in the house. She lighted a lamp, got the almanac, and hunted out the exact time of sunsetting. The sun had been down fifteen minutes!

And there was no light on the Big Dipper!

Mary Margaret felt alarmed and anxious. What was wrong at the Big Dipper? Was Uncle George away? Or had something happened to him? Mary Margaret was sure he had never forgotten!

Fifteen minutes longer did Mary Margaret watch restlessly at the window.

Then she concluded that something was desperately wrong somewhere. It was half an hour after sunset and the Big Dipper light, the most important one along the whole coast, was not lighted. What would she do? What could she do?

The answer came swift and dear into Mary Margaret's steady, sensible little mind. She must go to the Big Dipper and light the lamps!

But could she? Difficulties came crowding thick and fast into her thoughts. It was going to snow; the soft broad flakes were falling already. Could she row the two miles to the Big Dipper in the darkness and the snow? If she could, dare she leave Nellie all alone in the house? Oh, she couldn't! Somebody at the Harbour Head would surely notice that the Big Dipper light was unlighted and would go over to investigate the cause. But suppose they shouldn't? If the snow came thicker they might never notice the absence of the light. And suppose there was a ship away out there, as there nearly always was, with the dangerous rocks and shoals of the outer harbour to pass, with precious lives on board and no guiding beacon on the Big Dipper.

Mary Margaret hesitated no longer. She must go.

Bravely, briskly and thoughtfully she made her preparations. First, the fire was banked and the draughts dosed; then she wrote a little note for her mother and laid it on the table. Finally she wakened Nellie.

"Nellie," said Mary Margaret, speaking very kindly and determinedly, "there is no light on the Big Dipper and I've got to row over and see about it. I'll be back as quickly as I can, and Mother and Uncle Martin will soon be here. You won't be afraid to stay alone, will you, dearie? You mustn't be afraid, because I have to go. And, Nellie, I'm going to tie you in your chair; it's necessary, because I can't lock the door, so you mustn't cry; nothing will hurt you, and I want you to be a brave little girl and help sister all you can."

Nellie, too sleepy and dazed to understand very clearly what Mary Margaret was about, submitted to be wrapped up in quilts and bound securely in her chair. Then Mary Margaret tied the chair fast to the wall so that Nellie couldn't upset it. That's safe, she thought. Nellie can't run out now or fall on the stove or set herself afire.

Mary Margaret put on her jacket, hood and mittens, and took Uncle Martin's lantern. As she went out and closed the door, a little wail from Nellie sounded on her ear. For a moment she hesitated, then the blackness of the Big Dipper confirmed her resolution. She must go. Nellie was really quite safe and comfortable. It would not hurt her to cry a little, and it might hurt somebody a great deal if the Big Dipper light failed. Setting her lips firmly, Mary Margaret ran down to the shore.

Like all the Harbour girls, Mary Margaret could row a boat from the time she was nine years old. Nevertheless, her heart almost failed her as she got into the little dory and rowed out. The snow was getting thick. Could she pull across those black two miles between the Dippers before it got so much thicker that she would lose her way? Well, she must risk it. She had set the light in the kitchen window; she must keep it fair behind her and then she would land on the lighthouse beach. With a murmured prayer for help and guidance she pulled staunchly away.

It was a long, hard row for the little twelve-year-old arms. Fortunately there was no wind. But thicker and thicker came the snow; finally the kitchen light was hidden in it. For a moment Mary Margaret's heart sank in despair; the next it gave a joyful bound, for, turning, she saw the dark tower of the lighthouse directly behind her. By the aid of her lantern she rowed to the landing, sprang out and made her boat fast. A minute later she was in the lighthouse kitchen.

The door leading to the tower stairs was open and at the foot of the stairs lay Uncle George, limp and white.

"Oh, Uncle George," gasped Mary Margaret, "what is the matter? What has happened?"

"Mary Margaret! Thank God! I was just praying to Him to send somebody to 'tend the light. Who's with you?"

"Nobody.... I got frightened because there was no light and I rowed over. Mother and Uncle Martin are away."

"You don't mean to say you rowed yourself over here alone in the dark and snow! Well, you are the pluckiest little girl about this harbour! It's a mercy I've showed you how to manage the light. Run up and start it at once. Don't mind about me. I tumbled down those pesky stairs like the awkward old fool I am and I've broke my leg and hurt my back so bad I can't crawl an inch. I've been lying here for three mortal hours and they've seemed like three years. Hurry with the light, Mary Margaret."

Mary Margaret hurried. Soon the Big Dipper light was once more gleaming cheerfully athwart the stormy harbour. Then she ran back to her uncle. There was not much she could do for him beyond covering him warmly with quilts, placing a pillow under his head, and brewing him a hot drink of tea.

"I left a note for Mother telling her where I'd gone, Uncle George, so I'm sure Uncle Martin will come right over as soon as they get home."

"He'll have to hurry. It's blowing up now ... hear it ... and snowing thick. If

your mother and Martin haven't left the Harbour Head before this, they won't leave it tonight. But, anyhow, the light is lit. I don't mind my getting smashed up compared to that. I thought I'd go crazy lying here picturing to myself a vessel out on the reefs."

That night was a very long and anxious one. The storm grew rapidly worse, and snow and wind howled around the lighthouse. Uncle George soon grew feverish and delirious, and Mary Margaret, between her anxiety for him and her dismal thoughts of poor Nellie tied in her chair over at the Little Dipper, and the dark possibility of her mother and Uncle Martin being out in the storm, felt almost distracted. But the morning came at last, as mornings blessedly will, be the nights never so long and anxious, and it dawned fine and clear over a white world. Mary Margaret ran to the shore and gazed eagerly across at the Little Dipper. No smoke was visible from Uncle Martin's house!

She could not leave Uncle George, who was raving wildly, and yet it was necessary to obtain assistance somehow. Suddenly she remembered the distress signal. She must hoist it. How fortunate that Uncle George had once shown her how!

Ten minutes later there was a commotion over at Harbour Head where the signal was promptly observed, and very soon—although it seemed long enough to Mary Margaret—a boat came sailing over to the Big Dipper. When the men landed they were met by a very white-faced little girl who gasped out a rather disjointed story of a light that hadn't been lighted and an uncle with a broken leg and a sister tied in her chair, and would they please see to Uncle George at once, for she must go straight over to the other Dipper?

One of the men rowed her over, but before they were halfway there another boat went sailing across the harbour, and Mary Margaret saw a woman and two men land from it and hurry up to the house.

That is Mother and Uncle Martin, but who can the other man be? wondered Mary Margaret.

When she reached the cottage her mother and Uncle Martin were reading her note, and Nellie, just untied from the chair where she had been found fast asleep, was in the arms of a great, big, brown, bewhiskered man. Mary Margaret just gave one look at the man. Then she flew across the room with a cry of delight.

"Father!"

For ten minutes not one intelligible word was said, what with laughing and crying and kissing. Mary Margaret was the first to recover herself and say briskly, "Now, do explain, somebody. Tell me how it all happened."

"Martin and I got back to Harbour Head too late last night to cross over," said her mother. "It would have been madness to try to cross in the storm, although I was nearly wild thinking of you two children. It's well I didn't know the whole truth or I'd have been simply frantic. We stayed at the Head all night, and first thing this morning came your father."

"We came in last night," said Captain Campbell, "and it was pitch dark, not a light to be seen and beginning to snow. We didn't know where we were and I was terribly worried, when all at once the Big Dipper light I'd been looking for so vainly flashed out, and everything was all right in a moment. But, Mary Margaret, if that light hadn't appeared, we'd never have got in past the reefs. You've saved your father's ship and all the lives in her, my brave little girl."

"Oh!" Mary Margaret drew a long breath and her eyes were starry with tears of happiness. "Oh, I'm so thankful I went over. And I had to tie Nellie in her chair, Mother, there was no other way. Uncle George broke his leg and is very sick this morning, and there's no breakfast ready for anyone and the fire black out ... but that doesn't matter when Father is safe ... and oh, I'm so tired!"

And then Mary Margaret sat down just for a moment, intending to get right up and help her mother light the fire, laid her head on her father's shoulder, and fell sound asleep before she ever suspected it.

The Prodigal Brother

Miss Hannah was cutting asters in her garden. It was a very small garden, for nothing would grow beyond the shelter of the little, grey, low-eaved house which alone kept the northeast winds from blighting everything with salt spray; but small as it was, it was a miracle of blossoms and a marvel of neatness. The trim brown paths were swept clean of every leaf or fallen petal, each of the little square beds had its border of big white quahog clamshells, and not even a sweet-pea vine would have dared to straggle from its appointed course under Miss Hannah's eye.

Miss Hannah had always lived in the little grey house down by the shore, so far away from all the other houses in Prospect and so shut away from them by a circle of hills that it had a seeming isolation. Not another house could Miss Hannah see from her own doorstone; she often declared she could not have borne it if it had not been for the lighthouse beacon at night flaming over the northwest hill behind the house like a great unwinking, friendly star that never failed even on the darkest night. Behind the house a little tongue of the St. Lawrence gulf ran up between the headlands until the wavelets of its tip

almost lapped against Miss Hannah's kitchen doorstep. Beyond, to the north, was the great crescent of the gulf, whose murmur had been Miss Hannah's lullaby all her life. When people wondered to her how she could endure living in such a lonely place, she retorted that the loneliness was what she loved it for, and that the lighthouse star and the far-away call of the gulf had always been company enough for her and always would be ... until Ralph came back. When Ralph came home, of course, he might like a livelier place and they might move to town or up-country as he wished.

"Of course," said Miss Hannah with a proud smile, "a rich man mightn't fancy living away down here in a little grey house by the shore. He'll be for building me a mansion, I expect, and I'd like it fine. But until he comes I must be contented with things as they are."

People always smiled to each other when Miss Hannah talked like this. But they took care not to let her see the smile.

Miss Hannah snipped her white and purple asters off ungrudgingly and sang, as she snipped, an old-fashioned song she had learned long ago in her youth. The day was one of October's rarest, and Miss Hannah loved fine days. The air was clear as golden-hued crystal, and all the slopes around her were mellow and hazy in the autumn sunshine. She knew that beyond those sunny slopes were woods glorying in crimson and gold, and she would have the delight of a walk through them later on when she went to carry the asters to sick Millie Starr at the Bridge. Flowers were all Miss Hannah had to give, for she was very poor, but she gave them with a great wealth of friendliness and goodwill.

Presently a wagon drove down her lane and pulled up outside of her white garden paling. Jacob Delancey was in it, with a pretty young niece of his who was a visitor from the city, and Miss Hannah, her sheaf of asters in her arms, went over to the paling with a sparkle of interest in her faded blue eyes. She had heard a great deal of the beauty of this strange girl. Prospect people had been talking of nothing else for a week, and Miss Hannah was filled with a harmless curiosity concerning her. She always liked to look at pretty people, she said; they did her as much good as her flowers.

"Good afternoon, Miss Hannah," said Jacob Delancey. "Busy with your flowers, as usual, I see."

"Oh, yes," said Miss Hannah, managing to stare with unobtrusive delight at the girl while she talked. "The frost will soon be coming now, you know; so I want to live among them as much as I can while they're here."

"That's right," assented Jacob, who made a profession of cordial agreement with everybody and would have said the same words in the same tone had

Miss Hannah announced a predilection for living in the cellar. "Well, Miss Hannah, it's flowers I'm after myself just now. We're having a bit of a party at our house tonight, for the young folks, and my wife told me to call and ask you if you could let us have a few for decoration."

"Of course," said Miss Hannah, "you can have these. I meant them for Millie, but I can cut the west bed for her."

She opened the gate and carried the asters over to the buggy. Miss Delancey took them with a smile that made Miss Hannah remember the date forever.

"Lovely day," commented Jacob genially.

"Yes," said Miss Hannah dreamily. "It reminds me of the day Ralph went away twenty years ago. It doesn't seem so long. Don't you think he'll be coming back soon, Jacob?"

"Oh, sure," said Jacob, who thought the very opposite.

"I have a feeling that he's coming very soon," said Miss Hannah brightly. "It will be a great day for me, won't it, Jacob? I've been poor all my life, but when Ralph comes back everything will be so different. He will be a rich man and he will give me everything I've always wanted. He said he would. A fine house and a carriage and a silk dress. Oh, and we will travel and see the world. You don't know how I look forward to it all. I've got it all planned out, all I'm going to do and have. And I believe he will be here very soon. A man ought to be able to make a fortune in twenty years, don't you think, Jacob?"

"Oh, sure," said Jacob. But he said it a little uncomfortably. He did not like the job of throwing cold water, but it seemed to him that he ought not to encourage Miss Hannah's hopes. "Of course, you shouldn't think too much about it, Miss Hannah. He mightn't ever come back, or he might be poor."

"How can you say such things, Jacob?" interrupted Miss Hannah indignantly, with a little crimson spot flaming out in each of her pale cheeks. "You know quite well he will come back. I'm as sure of it as that I'm standing here. And he will be rich, too. People are always trying to hint just as you've done to me, but I don't mind them. I know."

She turned and went back into her garden with her head held high. But her sudden anger floated away in a whiff of sweet-pea perfume that struck her in the face; she waved her hand in farewell to her callers and watched the buggy down the lane with a smile.

"Of course, Jacob doesn't know, and I shouldn't have snapped him up so quick. It'll be my turn to crow when Ralph does come. My, but isn't that girl pretty. I feel as if I'd been looking at some lovely picture. It just makes a good

day of this. Something pleasant happens to me most every day and that girl is today's pleasant thing. I just feel real happy and thankful that there are such beautiful creatures in the world and that we can look at them."

"Well, of all the queer delusions!" Jacob Delancey was ejaculating as he and his niece drove down the lane.

"What is it all about?" asked Miss Delancey curiously.

"Well, it's this way, Dorothy. Long ago Miss Hannah had a brother who ran away from home. It was before their father and mother died. Ralph Walworth was as wild a young scamp as ever was in Prospect and a spendthrift in the bargain. Nobody but Hannah had any use for him, and she just worshipped him. I must admit he was real fond of her too, but he and his father couldn't get on at all. So finally he ups and runs away; it was generally supposed he went to the mining country. He left a note for Hannah bidding her goodbye and telling her that he was going to make his fortune and would come back to her a rich man. There's never been a word heard tell of him since, and in my opinion it's doubtful if he's still alive. But Miss Hannah, as you saw, is sure and certain he'll come back yet with gold dropping out of his pockets. She's as sane as anyone everyway else, but there is no doubt she's a little cracked on that p'int. If he never turns up she'll go on hoping quite happy to her death. But if he should turn up and be poor, as is ten times likelier than anything else, I believe it'd most kill Miss Hannah. She's terrible proud for all she's so sweet, and you saw yourself how mad she got when I kind of hinted he mightn't be rich. If he came back poor, after all her boasting about him, I don't fancy he'd get much of a welcome from her. And she'd never hold up her head again, that's certain. So it's to be hoped, say I, that Ralph Walworth never will turn up, unless he comes in a carriage and four, which is about as likely, in my opinion, as that he'll come in a pumpkin drawn by mice."

When October had passed and the grey November days came, the glory of Miss Hannah's garden was over. She was very lonely without her flowers. She missed them more this year than ever. On fine days she paced up and down the walks and looked sadly at the drooping, unsightly stalks and vines. She was there one afternoon when the northeast wind was up and doing, whipping the gulf waters into whitecaps and whistling up the inlet and around the grey eaves. Miss Hannah was mournfully patting a frosted chrysanthemum under its golden chin when she saw a man limping slowly down the lane.

"Now, who can that be?" she murmured. "It isn't any Prospect man, for there's nobody lame around here."

She went to the garden gate to meet him. He came haltingly up the slope and paused before her, gazing at her wistfully. He looked old and bent and broken, and his clothes were poor and worn. Who was he? Miss Hannah felt

that she ought to know him, and her memory went groping back amongst all her recollections. Yet she could think of nobody but her father, who had died fifteen years before.

"Don't ye know me, Hannah?" said the man wistfully. "Have I changed so much as all that?"

"Ralph!"

It was between a cry and a laugh. Miss Hannah flew through the gate and caught him in her arms. "Ralph, my own dear brother! Oh, I always knew you'd come back. If you knew how I've looked forward to this day!" She was both laughing and crying now. Her face shone with a soft gladness. Ralph Walworth shook his head sadly.

"It's a poor wreck of a man I am come back to you, Hannah," he said. "I've never accomplished anything and my health's broken and I'm a cripple as ye see. For a time I thought I'd never show my face back here, such a failure as I be, but the longing to see you got too strong. It's naught but a wreck I am, Hannah."

"You're my own dear brother," cried Miss Hannah. "Do you think I care how poor you are? And if your health is poor I'm the one to nurse you up, who else than your only sister, I'd like to know! Come right in. You're shivering in this wind. I'll mix you a good hot currant drink. I knew them black currants didn't bear so plentiful for nothing last summer. Oh, this is a good day and no mistake!"

In twenty-four hours' time everybody in Prospect knew that Ralph Walworth had come home, crippled and poor. Jacob Delancey shook his head as he drove away from the station with Ralph's shabby little trunk standing on end in his buggy. The station master had asked him to take it down to Miss Hannah's, and Jacob did not fancy the errand. He was afraid Miss Hannah would be in a bad way and he did not know what to say to her.

She was in her garden, covering her pansies with seaweed, when he drove up, and she came to the garden gate to meet him, all smiles.

"So you've brought Ralph's trunk, Mr. Delancey. Now, that was real good of you. He was going over to the station to see about it himself, but he had such a cold I persuaded him to wait till tomorrow. He's lying down asleep now. He's just real tired. He brought this seaweed up from the shore for me this morning and it played him out. He ain't strong. But didn't I tell you he was coming back soon? You only laughed at me, but I knew."

"He isn't very rich, though," said Jacob jokingly. He was relieved to find that Miss Hannah did not seem to be worrying over this.

"That doesn't matter," cried Miss Hannah. "Why, he's my brother! Isn't that enough? I'm rich if he isn't, rich in love and happiness. And I'm better pleased in a way than if he had come back rich. He might have wanted to take me away or build a fine house, and I'm too old to be making changes. And then he wouldn't have needed me. I'd have been of no use to him. As it is, it's just me he needs to look after him and coddle him. Oh, it's fine to have somebody to do things for, somebody that belongs to you. I was just dreading the loneliness of the winter, and now it's going to be such a happy winter. I declare last night Ralph and I sat up till morning talking over everything. He's had a hard life of it. Bad luck and illness right along. And last winter in the lumber woods he got his leg broke. But now he's come home and we're never going to be parted again as long as we live. I could sing for joy, Jacob."

"Oh, sure," assented Jacob cordially. He felt a little dazed. Miss Hannah's nimble change of base was hard for him to follow, and he had an injured sense of having wasted a great deal of commiseration on her when she didn't need it at all. "Only I kind of thought, we all thought, you had such plans."

"Well, they served their turn," interrupted Miss Hannah briskly. "They amused me and kept me interested till something real would come in their place. If I'd had to carry them out I dare say they'd have bothered me a lot. Things are more comfortable as they are. I'm happy as a bird, Jacob."

"Oh, sure," said Jacob. He pondered the business deeply all the way back home, but could make nothing of it.

"But I ain't obliged to," he concluded sensibly. "Miss Hannah's satisfied and happy and it's nobody else's concern. However, I call it a curious thing."

The Redemption of John Churchill

John Churchill walked slowly, not as a man walks who is tired, or content to saunter for the pleasure of it, but as one in no haste to reach his destination through dread of it. The day was well on to late afternoon in mid-spring, and the world was abloom. Before him and behind him wound a road that ran like a red ribbon through fields of lush clovery green. The orchards scattered along it were white and fragrant, giving of their incense to a merry south-west wind; fence-corner nooks were purple with patches of violets or golden-green with the curly heads of young ferns. The roadside was sprinkled over with the gold dust of dandelions and the pale stars of wild strawberry blossoms. It seemed a day through which a man should walk lightly and blithely, looking the world and his fellows frankly in the face, and opening his heart to let the springtime

in.

But John Churchill walked laggingly, with bent head. When he met other wayfarers or was passed by them, he did not lift his face, but only glanced up under his eyebrows with a furtive look that was replaced by a sort of shamed relief when they had passed on without recognizing him. Some of them he knew for friends of the old time. Ten years had not changed them as he had been changed. They had spent those ten years in freedom and good repute, under God's blue sky, in His glad air and sunshine. He, John Churchill, had spent them behind the walls of a prison.

His close-clipped hair was grey; his figure, encased in an ill-fitting suit of coarse cloth, was stooped and shrunken; his face was deeply lined; yet he was not an old man in years. He was only forty; he was thirty when he had been convicted of embezzling the bank funds for purposes of speculation and had been sent to prison, leaving behind a wife and father who were broken-hearted and a sister whose pride had suffered more than her heart.

He had never seen them since, but he knew what had happened in his absence. His wife had died two months later, leaving behind her a baby boy; his father had died within the year. He had killed them; he, John Churchill, who loved them, had killed them as surely as though his hand had struck them down in cold blood. His sister had taken the baby, his little son whom he had never seen, but for whom he had prepared such a birthright of dishonour. She had never forgiven her brother and she never wrote to him. He knew that she would have brought the boy up either in ignorance of his father's crime or in utter detestation of it. When he came back to the world after his imprisonment, there was not a single friendly hand to clasp his and help him struggle up again. The best his friends had been able to do for him was to forget him.

He was filled with bitterness and despair and a gnawing hatred of the world of brightness around him. He had no place in it; he was an ugly blot on it. He was a friendless, wifeless, homeless man who could not so much as look his fellow men in the face, who must henceforth consort with outcasts. In his extremity he hated God and man, burning with futile resentment against both.

Only one feeling of tenderness yet remained in his heart; it centred around the thought of his little son.

When he left the prison he had made up his mind what to do. He had a little money which his father had left him, enough to take him west. He would go there, under a new name. There would be novelty and adventure to blot out the memories of the old years. He did not care what became of him, since there was no one else to care. He knew in his heart that his future career would probably lead him still further and further downward, but that did not matter. If there had been anybody to care, he might have thought it worthwhile to

struggle back to respectability and trample his shame under feet that should henceforth walk only in the ways of honour and honesty. But there was nobody to care. So he would go to his own place.

But first he must see little Joey, who must be quite a big boy now, nearly ten years old. He would go home and see him just once, even although he dreaded meeting aversion in the child's eyes. Then, when he had bade him good-bye, and, with him, good-bye to all that remained to make for good in his desolated existence, he would go out of his life forever.

"I'll go straight to the devil then," he said sullenly. "That's where I belong, a jail-bird at whom everybody except other jail-birds looks askance. To think what I was once, and what I am now! It's enough to drive a man mad! As for repenting, bah! Who'd believe that I really repented, who'd give me a second chance on the faith of it? Not a soul. Repentance won't blot out the past. It won't give me back my wife whom I loved above everything on earth and whose heart I broke. It won't restore me my unstained name and my right to a place among honourable men. There's no chance for a man who has fallen as low as I have. If Emily were living, I could struggle for her sake. But who'd be fool enough to attempt such a fight with no motive and not one chance of success in a hundred. Not I. I'm down and I'll stay down. There's no climbing up again."

He celebrated his first day of freedom by getting drunk, although he had never before been an intemperate man. Then, when the effects of the debauch wore off, he took the train for Alliston; he would go home and see little Joey once.

Nobody at the station where he alighted recognized him or paid any attention to him. He was as a dead man who had come back to life to find himself effaced from recollection and his place knowing him no more. It was three miles from the station to where his sister lived, and he resolved to walk the distance. Now that the critical moment drew near, he shrank from it and wished to put it off as long as he could.

When he reached his sister's home he halted on the road and surveyed the place over its snug respectability of iron fence. His courage failed him at the thought of walking over that trim lawn and knocking at that closed front door. He would slip around by the back way; perhaps, who knew, he might come upon Joey without running the gauntlet of his sister's cold, offended eyes. If he might only find the boy and talk to him for a little while without betraying his identity, meet his son's clear gaze without the danger of finding scorn or fear in it—his heart beat high at the thought.

He walked furtively up the back way between high, screening hedges of spruce. When he came to the gate of the yard, he paused. He heard voices just

beyond the thick hedge, children's voices, and he crept as near as he could to the sound and peered through the hedge, with a choking sensation in his throat and a smart in his eyes. Was that Joey, could that be his little son? Yes, it was; he would have known him anywhere by his likeness to Emily. Their boy had her curly brown hair, her sensitive mouth, above all, her clear-gazing, truthful grey eyes, eyes in which there was never a shadow of falsehood or faltering.

Joey Churchill was sitting on a stone bench in his aunt's kitchen yard, holding one of his black-stockinged knees between his small, brown hands. Jimmy Morris was standing opposite to him, his back braced against the trunk of a big, pink-blossomed apple tree, his hands in his pockets, and a scowl on his freckled face. Jimmy lived next door to Joey and as a rule they were very good friends, but this afternoon they had quarrelled over the right and proper way to construct an Indian ambush in the fir grove behind the pig-house. The argument was long and warm and finally culminated in personalities. Just as John Churchill dropped on one knee behind the hedge, the better to see Joey's face, Jimmy Morris said scornfully:

"I don't care what you say. Nobody believes you. Your father is in the penitentiary."

The taunt struck home as it always did. It was not the first time that Joey had been twitted with his father by his boyish companions. But never before by Jimmy! It always hurt him, and he had never before made any response to it. His face would flush crimson, his lips would quiver, and his big grey eyes darken miserably with the shadow that was on his life; he would turn away in silence. But that Jimmy, his best beloved chum, should say such a thing to him; oh, it hurt terribly.

There is nothing so merciless as a small boy. Jimmy saw his advantage and vindictively pursued it.

"Your father stole money, that's what he did! You know he did. I'm pretty glad my father isn't a thief. Your father is. And when he gets out of prison, he'll go on stealing again. My father says he will. Nobody'll have anything to do with him, my father says. His own sister won't have anything to do with him. So there, Joey Churchill!"

"There will somebody have something to do with him!" cried Joey hotly. He slid off the bench and faced Jimmy proudly and confidently. The unseen watcher on the other side of the hedge saw his face grow white and intense and set-lipped, as if it had been the face of a man. The grey eyes were alight with a steady, fearless glow.

"I'll have something to do with him. He is my father and I love him. I don't care what he did, I love him just as well as if he was the best man in the world.

I love him better than if he was as good as your father, because he needs it more. I've always loved him ever since I found out about him. I'd write to him and tell him so, if Aunt Beatrice would tell me where to send the letter. Aunt Beatrice won't ever talk about him or let me talk about him, but I think about him all the time. And he's going to be a good man yet, yes, he is, just as good as your father, Jimmy Morris. I'm going to make him good. I made up my mind years ago what I would do and I'm going to do it, so there, Jimmy."

"I don't see what you can do," muttered Jimmy, already ashamed of what he had said and wishing he had let Joey's father alone.

"I'll tell you what I can do!" Joey was confronting all the world now, with his head thrown back and his face flushed with his earnestness. "I can love him and stand by him, and I will. When he gets out of—of prison, he'll come to see me, I know he will. And I'm just going to hug him and kiss him and say, 'Never mind, Father. I know you're sorry for what you've done, and you're never going to do it any more. You're going to be a good man and I'm going to stand by you.' Yes, sir, that's just what I'm going to say to him. I'm all the children he has and there's nobody else to love him, because I know Aunt Beatrice doesn't. And I'm going with him wherever he goes."

"You can't," said Jimmy in a scared tone. "Your Aunt Beatrice won't let you."

"Yes, she will. She'll have to. I belong to my father. And I think he'll be coming pretty soon some way. I'm pretty sure the time must be 'most up. I wish he would come. I want to see him as much as can be, 'cause I know he'll need me. And I'll be proud of him yet, Jimmy Morris, yes, I'll be just as proud as you are of your father. When I get bigger, nobody will call my father names, I can tell you. I'll fight them if they do, yes, sir, I will. My father and I are going to stand by each other like bricks. Aunt Beatrice has lots of children of her own and I don't believe she'll be a bit sorry when I go away. She's ashamed of my father 'cause he did a bad thing. But I'm not, no, sir. I'm going to love him so much that I'll make up to him for everything else. And you can just go home, Jimmy Morris, so there!"

Jimmy Morris went home, and when he had gone, Joey flung himself face downward in the grass and fallen apple blossoms and lay very still.

On the other side of the spruce hedge knelt John Churchill with bowed head. The tears were running freely down his face, but there was a new, tender light in his eyes. The bitterness and despair had fallen out of his heart, leaving a great peace and a dawning hope in their place. Bless that loyal little soul! There was something to live for after all—there was a motive to make the struggle worthwhile. He must justify his son's faith in him; he must strive to make himself worthy of this sweet, pure, unselfish love that was offered to

him, as a divine draught is offered to the parched lips of a man perishing from thirst. Aye, and, God helping him, he would. He would redeem the past. He would go west, but under his own name. His little son should go with him; he would work hard; he would pay back the money he had embezzled, as much of it as he could, if it took the rest of his life to do so. For his boy's sake he must cleanse his name from the dishonour he had brought on it. Oh, thank God, there was somebody to care, somebody to love him, somebody to believe him when he said humbly, "I repent." Under his breath he said, looking heavenward:

"God be merciful to me, a sinner."

Then he stood up erectly, went through the gate and over the grass to the motionless little figure with its face buried in its arms.

"Joey boy," he said huskily. "Joey boy."

Joey sprang to his feet with tears still glistening in his eyes. He saw before him a bent, grey-headed man looking at him lovingly and wistfully. Joey knew who it was—the father he had never seen. With a glad cry of welcome he sprang into the outstretched arms of the man whom his love had already won back to God.

The Schoolmaster's Letters

At sunset the schoolmaster went up to his room to write a letter to her. He always wrote to her at the same time—when the red wave of the sunset, flaming over the sea, surged in at the little curtainless window and flowed over the pages he wrote on. The light was rose-red and imperial and spiritual, like his love for her, and seemed almost to dye the words of the letters in its own splendid hues—the letters to her which she never was to see, whose words her eyes never were to read, and whose love and golden fancy and rainbow dreams never were to be so much as known by her. And it was because she never was to see them that he dared to write them, straight out of his full heart, taking the exquisite pleasure of telling her what he never could permit himself to tell her face to face. Every evening he wrote thus to her, and the hour so spent glorified the entire day. The rest of the hours—all the other hours of the commonplace day—he was merely a poor schoolmaster with a long struggle before him, one who might not lift his eyes to gaze on a star. But at this hour he was her equal, meeting her soul to soul, telling out as a man might all his great love for her, and wearing the jewel of it on his brow. What wonder indeed that the precious hour which made him a king, crowned with a mighty

and unselfish passion, was above all things sacred to him? And doubly sacred when, as tonight, it followed upon an hour spent with her? Its mingled delight and pain were almost more than he could bear.

He went through the kitchen and the hall and up the narrow staircase with a glory in his eyes that thus were held from seeing his sordid surroundings. Link Houseman, sprawled out on the platform before the kitchen door, saw him pass with that rapt face, and chuckled. Link was ill enough to look at any time, with his sharp, freckled features and foxy eyes. When he chuckled his face was that of an unholy imp.

But the schoolmaster took no heed of him. Neither did he heed the girl whom he met in the hall. Her handsome, sullen face flushed crimson under the sting of his utter disregard, and her black eyes followed him up the stairs with a look that was not good to see.

"Sis," whispered Link piercingly, "come out here! I've got a joke to tell you, something about the master and his girl. You ain't to let on to him you know, though. I found it out last night when he was off to the shore. That old key of Uncle Jim's was just the thing. He's a softy, and no mistake."

Upstairs in his little room, the schoolmaster was writing his letter. The room was as bare and graceless as all the other rooms of the farmhouse where he had boarded during his term of teaching; but it looked out on the sea, and was hung with such priceless tapestry of his iris dreams and visions that it was to him an apartment in a royal palace. From it he gazed afar on bays that were like great cups of sapphire brimming over with ruby wine for gods to drain, on headlands that were like amethyst, on wide sweeps of sea that were blue and far and mysterious; and ever the moan and call of the ocean's heart came up to his heart as of one great, hopeless love and longing crying out to another love and longing, as great and hopeless. And here, in the rose-radiance of the sunset, with the sea-music in the dim air, he wrote his letter to her.

My Lady: How beautiful it is to think that there is nothing to prevent my loving you! There is much—everything—to prevent me from telling you that I love you. But nothing has any right to come between my heart and its own; it is permitted to love you forever and ever and serve and reverence you in secret and silence. For so much, dear, I thank life, even though the price of the permission must always be the secret and the silence.

I have just come from you, my lady. Your voice is still in my ears; your eyes are still looking into mine, gravely yet half smilingly, sweetly yet half provokingly. Oh, how dear and human and girlish and queenly you are—half saint and half very womanly woman! And how I love you with all there is of me to love—heart and soul and brain, every fibre of body and spirit thrilling to the wonder and marvel and miracle of it! You do not know it, my sweet, and

you must never know it. You would not even wish to know it, for I am nothing to you but one of many friends, coming into your life briefly and passing out of it, of no more account to you than a sunshiny hour, a bird's song, a bursting bud in your garden. But the hour and the bird and the flower gave you a little delight in their turn, and when you remembered them once before forgetting, that was their reward and blessing. That is all I ask, dear lady, and I ask that only in my own heart. I am content to love you and be forgotten. It is sweeter to love you and be forgotten than it would be to love any other woman and live in her lifelong remembrance: so humble has love made me, sweet, so great is my sense of my own unworthiness.

Yet love must find expression in some fashion, dear, else it is only pain, and hence these letters to you which you will never read. I put all my heart into them; they are the best and highest of me, the buds of a love that can never bloom openly in the sunshine of your life. I weave a chaplet of them, dear, and crown you with it. They will never fade, for such love is eternal.

It is a whole summer since I first met you. I had been waiting for you all my life before and did not know it. But I knew it when you came and brought with you a sense of completion and fulfilment. This has been the precious year of my life, the turning-point to which all things past tended and all things future must look back. Oh, my dear, I thank you for this year! It has been your royal gift to me, and I shall be rich and great forever because of it. Nothing can ever take it from me, nothing can mar it. It were well to have lived a lifetime of loneliness for such a boon—the price would not be too high. I would not give my one perfect summer for a generation of other men's happiness.

There are those in the world who would laugh at me, who would pity me, Una. They would say that the love I have poured out in secret at your feet has been wasted, that I am a poor weak fool to squander all my treasure of affection on a woman who does not care for me and who is as far above me as that great white star that is shining over the sea. Oh, my dear, they do not know, they cannot understand. The love I have given you has not left me poorer. It has enriched my life unspeakably; it has opened my eyes and given me the gift of clear vision for those things that matter; it has been a lamp held before my stumbling feet whereby I have avoided snares and pitfalls of baser passions and unworthy dreams. For all this I thank you, dear, and for all this surely the utmost that I can give of love and reverence and service is not too much.

I could not have helped loving you. But if I could have helped it, knowing with just what measure of pain and joy it would brim my cup, I would have chosen to love you, Una. There are those who strive to forget a hopeless love. To me, the greatest misfortune that life could bring would be that I should

forget you. I want to remember you always and love you and long for you. That would be unspeakably better than any happiness that could come to me through forgetting.

Dear lady, good night. The sun has set; there is now but one fiery dimple on the horizon, as if a golden finger had dented it—now it is gone; the mists are coming up over the sea.

A kiss on each of your white hands, dear. Tonight I am too humble to lift my thoughts to your lips.

The schoolmaster folded up his letter and held it against his cheek for a little space while he gazed out on the silver-shining sea with his dark eyes full of dreams. Then he took from his shabby trunk a little inlaid box and unlocked it with a twisted silver key. It was full of letters—his letters to Una. The first had been written months ago, in the early promise of a northern spring. They linked together the golden weeks of the summer. Now, in the purple autumn, the box was full, and the schoolmaster's term was nearly ended.

He took out the letters reverently and looked over them, now and then murmuring below his breath some passages scattered through the written pages. He had laid bare his heart in those letters, writing out what he never could have told her, even if his love had been known and returned, for dead and gone generations of stern and repressed forefathers laid their unyielding fingers of reserve on his lips, and the shyness of dreamy, book-bred youth stemmed the language of eye and tone.

I will love you forever and ever. And even though you know it not, surely such love will hover around you all your life. Like an invisible benediction, not understood but dimly felt, guarding you from ill and keeping far from you all things and thoughts of harm and evil!

Sometimes I let myself dream. And in those dreams you love me, and we go out to meet life together. I have dreamed that you kissed me—dreamed it so reverently that the dream did your womanhood no wrong. I have dreamed that you put your hands in mine and said, "I love you." Oh, the rapture of it!

We may give all we will if we do not ask for a return. There should be no barter in love. If, by reason of the greatness of my love for you, I were to ask your love in return, I should be a base creature. It is only because I am content to love and serve for the sake of loving and serving that I have the right to love you.

I have a memory of a blush of yours—a rose of the years that will bloom forever in my garden of remembrance. Tonight you blushed when I came upon you suddenly among the flowers. You were startled—perhaps I had broken too rudely on some girlish musing; and straightway your round, pale curve of

cheek and your white arch of brow were made rosy as with the dawn of beautiful sunrise. I shall see you forever as you looked at that time. In my mad moments I shall dream, knowing all the while that it is only a dream, that you blushed with delight at my coming. I shall be able to picture forevermore how you would look at one you loved.

Tonight the moon was low in the west. It hung over the sea like a shallop of ruddy gold moored to a star in the harbour of the night. I lingered long and watched it, for I knew that you, too, were watching it from your window that looks on the sea. You told me once that you always watched the moon set. It has been a bond between us ever since.

This morning I rose at dawn and walked on the shore to think of you, because it seemed the most fitting time. It was before sunrise, and the world was virgin. All the east was a shimmer of silver and the morning star floated in it like a dissolving pearl. The sea was a great miracle. I walked up and down by it and said your name over and over again. The hour was sacred to you. It was as pure and unspoiled as your own soul. Una, who will bring into your life the sunrise splendour and colour of love?

Do you know how beautiful you are, Una? Let me tell you, dear. You are tall, yet you have to lift your eyes a little to meet mine. Such dear eyes, Una! They are dark blue, and when you smile they are like wet violets in sunshine. But when you are pensive they are more lovely still—the spirit and enchantment of the sea at twilight passes into them then. Your hair has the gloss and brownness of ripe nuts, and your face is always pale. Your lips have a trick of falling apart in a half-smile when you listen. They told me before I knew you that you were pretty. Pretty! The word is cheap and tawdry. You are beautiful, with the beauty of a pearl or a star or a white flower.

Do you remember our first meeting? It was one evening last spring. You were in your garden. The snow had not all gone, but your hands were full of pale, early flowers. You wore a white shawl over your shoulders and head. Your face was turned upward a little, listening to a robin's call in the leafless trees above you. I thought God had never made anything so lovely and love-deserving. I loved you from that moment, Una.

This is your birthday. The world has been glad of you for twenty years. It is fitting that there have been bird songs and sunshine and blossom today, a great light and fragrance over land and sea. This morning I went far afield to a long, lonely valley lying to the west, girt round about with dim old pines, where feet of men seldom tread, and there I searched until I found some rare flowers meet to offer you. I sent them to you with a little book, an old book. A new book, savouring of the shop and marketplace, however beautiful it might be, would not do for you. So I sent the book that was my mother's. She read it

and loved it—the faded rose-leaves she placed in it are there still. At first, dear, I almost feared to send it. Would you miss its meaning? Would you laugh a little at the shabby volume with its pencil marks and its rose-leaves? But I knew you would not; I knew you would understand.

Today I saw you with the child of your sister in your arms. I felt as the old painters must have felt when they painted their Madonnas. You bent over his shining golden head, and on your face was the mother passion and tenderness that is God's finishing touch to the beauty of womanhood. The next moment you were laughing with him—two children playing together. But I had looked upon you in that brief space. Oh, the pain and joy of it!

It is so sweet, dear, to serve you a little, though it be only in opening a door for you to pass through, or handing you a book or a sheet of music! Love wishes to do so much for the beloved! I can do so little for you, but that little is sweet.

This evening I read to you the poem which you had asked me to read. You sat before me with your brown head leaning on your hands and your eyes cast down. I stole dear glances at you between the lines. When I finished I put a red, red rose from your garden between the pages and crushed the book close on it. That poem will always be dear to me, stained with the life-blood of a rose-like hour.

I do not know which is the sweeter, your laughter or your sadness. When you laugh you make me glad, but when you are sad I want to share in your sadness and soothe it. I think I am nearer to you in your sorrowful moods.

Today I met you by accident at the turn of the lane. Nothing told me that you were coming—not even the wind, that should have known. I was sad, and then all at once I saw you, and wondered how I could have been sad. You walked past me with a smile, as if you had tossed me a rose. I stood and watched you out of sight. That meeting was the purple gift the day gave me.

Today I tried to write a poem to you, Una, but I could not find words fine enough, as a lover could find no raiment dainty enough for his bride. The old words other men have used in singing to their loves seemed too worn and common for you. I wanted only new words, crystal clear or coloured only by the iris of the light, not words that have been steeped and stained with all the hues of other men's thoughts. So I burned the verses that were so unworthy of you.

Una, some day you will love. You will watch for him; you will blush at his coming, be sad at his going. Oh, I cannot think of it!

Today I saw you when you did not see me. I was walking on the shore, and as I came around a rock you were sitting on the other side. I drew back a little

and looked at you. Your hands were clasped over your knees; your hat had fallen back, and the sea wind was ruffling your hair. Your face was lifted to the sky, your lips were parted, your eyes were full of light. You seemed to be listening to something that made you happy. I crept gently away, that I might not mar your dream. Of what were you thinking, Una?

I must leave you soon. Sometimes I think I cannot bear it. Oh, Una, how selfish it is of me to wish that you might love me! Yet I do wish it, although I have nothing to offer you but a great love and all my willing work of hand and brain. If you loved me, I fear I should be weak enough to do you the wrong of wooing you. I want you so much, dear!

The schoolmaster added the last letter to the others and locked the box. When he unlocked it again, two days later, the letters were gone.

He gazed at the empty box with dilated eyes. At first he could not realize what had happened. The letters could not be gone! He must have made a mistake, have put them in some other place! With trembling fingers he ransacked his trunk. There was no trace of the letters. With a groan he dropped his face in his hands and tried to think.

His letters were gone—those precious letters, held almost too sacred for his own eyes to read after they were written—had been stolen from him! The inmost secrets of his soul had been betrayed. Who had done this hideous thing?

He rose and went downstairs. In the farmyard he found Link tormenting his dog. Link was happy only when he was tormenting something. He never had been afraid of anything in his life before, but now absolute terror took possession of him at sight of the schoolmaster's face. Physical strength and force had no power to frighten the sullen lad, but all the irresistible might of a fine soul roused to frenzy looked out in the young man's blazing eyes, dilated nostrils, and tense white mouth. It cowed the boy, because it was something he could not understand. He only realized that he was in the presence of a force that was not to be trifled with.

"Link, where are my letters?" said the schoolmaster.

"I didn't take 'em, Master!" cried Link, crumpling up visibly in his sheer terror. "I didn't. I never teched 'em! It was Sis. I told her not to—I told her you'd be awful mad, but she wouldn't tend to me. It was Sis took 'em. Ask her, if you don't believe me."

The schoolmaster believed him. Nothing was too horrible to believe just then. "What has she done with them?" he said hoarsely.

"She—she sent 'em to Una Clifford," whimpered Link. "I told her not to.

She's mad at you, cause you went to see Una and wouldn't go with her. She thought Una would be mad at you for writing 'em, cause the Cliffords are so proud and think themselves above everybody else. So she sent 'em. I—I told her not to."

The schoolmaster said not another word. He turned his back on the whining boy and went to his room. He felt sick with shame. The indecency of the whole thing revolted him. It was as if his naked heart had been torn from his breast and held up to the jeers of a vulgar world by the merciless hand of a scorned and jealous woman. He felt stunned as if by a physical blow.

After a time his fierce anger and shame died into a calm desperation. The deed was done beyond recall. It only remained for him to go to Una, tell her the truth, and implore her pardon. Then he must go from her sight and presence forever.

It was dusk when he went to her home. They told him that she was in the garden, and he found her there, standing at the curve of the box walk, among the last late-blooming flowers of the summer.

Have you thought from his letters that she was a wonderful woman of marvellous beauty? Not so. She was a sweet and slender slip of girlhood, with girlhood's own charm and freshness. There were thousands like her in the world—thank God for it!—but only one like her in one man's eyes.

He stood before her mute with shame, his boyish face white and haggard. She had blushed crimson all over her dainty paleness at sight of him, and laid her hand quickly on the breast of her white gown. Her eyes were downcast and her breath came shortly.

He thought her silence the silence of anger and scorn. He wished that he might fling himself in the dust at her feet.

"Una—Miss Clifford—forgive me!" he stammered miserably. "I—I did not send them. I never meant that you should see them. A shameful trick has been played upon me. Forgive me!"

"For what am I to forgive you?" she asked gravely. She did not look up, but her lips parted in the little half-smile he loved. The blush was still on her face.

"For my presumption," he whispered. "I—I could not help loving you, Una. If you have read the letters you know all the rest."

"I have read the letters, every word," she answered, pressing her hand a little more closely to her breast. "Perhaps I should not have done so, for I soon discovered that they were not meant for me to read. I thought at first you had sent them, although the writing of the address on the packet did not look like

yours; but even when I knew you did not I could not help reading them all. I do not know who sent them, but I am very grateful to the sender."

"Grateful?" he said wonderingly.

"Yes. I have something to forgive you, but not—not your presumption. It is your blindness, I think—and—and your cruel resolution to go away and never tell me of your—your love for me. If it had not been for the sending of these letters I might never have known. How can I forgive you for that?"

"Una!" he said. He had been very blind, but he was beginning to see. He took a step nearer and took her hands. She threw up her head and gazed, blushingly, steadfastly, into his eyes. From the folds of her gown she drew forth the little packet of letters and kissed it.

"Your dear letters!" she said bravely. "They have given me the right to speak out. I will speak out! I love you, dear! I will be content to wait through long years until you can claim me. I—I have been so happy since your letters came!"

He put his arms around her and drew her head close to his. Their lips met.

The Story of Uncle Dick

I had two schools offered me that summer, one at Rocky Valley and one at Bayside. At first I inclined to Rocky Valley; it possessed a railway station and was nearer the centres of business and educational activity. But eventually I chose Bayside, thinking that its country quietude would be a good thing for a student who was making school-teaching the stepping-stone to a college course.

I had reason to be glad of my choice, for in Bayside I met Uncle Dick. Ever since it has seemed to me that not to have known Uncle Dick would have been to miss a great sweetness and inspiration from my life. He was one of those rare souls whose friendship is at once a pleasure and a benediction, showering light from their own crystal clearness into all the dark corners in the souls of others until, for the time being at least, they reflected his own simplicity and purity. Uncle Dick could no more help bringing delight into the lives of his associates than could the sunshine or the west wind or any other of the best boons of nature.

I had been in Bayside three weeks before I met him, although his farm adjoined the one where I boarded and I passed at a little distance from his house every day in my short cut across the fields to school. I even passed his

garden unsuspectingly for a week, never dreaming that behind that rank of leafy, rustling poplars lay a veritable "God's acre" of loveliness and fragrance. But one day as I went by, a whiff of something sweeter than the odours of Araby brushed my face and, following the wind that had blown it through the poplars, I went up to the white paling and found there a trellis of honeysuckle, and beyond it Uncle Dick's garden. Thereafter I daily passed close by the fence that I might have the privilege of looking over it.

It would be hard to define the charm of that garden. It did not consist in order or system, for there was no trace of either, except, perhaps, in that prim row of poplars growing about the whole domain and shutting it away from all idle and curious eyes. For the rest, I think the real charm must have been in its unexpectedness. At every turn and in every nook you stumbled on some miracle of which you had never dreamed. Or perhaps the charm was simply that the whole garden was an expression of Uncle Dick's personality.

In one corner a little green dory, filled with earth, overflowed in a wave of gay annuals. In the centre of the garden an old birch-bark canoe seemed sailing through a sea of blossoms, with a many-coloured freight of geraniums. Paths twisted and turned among flowering shrubs, and clumps of old-fashioned perennials were mingled with the latest fads of the floral catalogues. The mid-garden was a pool of sunshine, with finely sifted winds purring over it, but under the poplars there were shadows and growing things that loved the shadows, crowding about the old stone benches at each side. Somehow, my daily glimpse of Uncle Dick's garden soon came to symbolize for me a meaning easier to translate into life and soul than into words. It was a power for good within me, making its influence felt in many ways.

Finally I caught Uncle Dick in his garden. On my way home one evening I found him on his knees among the rosebushes, and as soon as he saw me he sprang up and came forward with outstretched hand. He was a tall man of about fifty, with grizzled hair, but not a thread of silver yet showed itself in the ripples of his long brown beard. Later I discovered that his splendid beard was Uncle Dick's only vanity. So fine and silky was it that it did not hide the candid, sensitive curves of his mouth, around which a mellow smile, tinged with kindly, quizzical humour, always lingered. His face was tanned even more deeply than is usual among farmers, for he had an inveterate habit of going about hatless in the most merciless sunshine; but the line of forehead under his hair was white as milk, and his eyes were darkly blue and as tender as a woman's.

"How do you do, Master?" he said heartily. (The Bayside pedagogue was invariably addressed as "Master" by young and old.) "I'm glad to see you. Here I am, trying to save my rosebushes. There are green bugs on 'em, Master—green bugs, and they're worrying the life out of me."

I smiled, for Uncle Dick looked very unlike a worrying man, even over such a serious accident as green bugs.

"Your roses don't seem to mind, Mr. Oliver," I said. "They are the finest I have ever seen."

The compliment to his roses, well-deserved as it was, did not at first engage his attention. He pretended to frown at me.

"Don't get into any bad habit of mistering me, Master," he said. "You'd better begin by calling me Uncle Dick from the start and then you won't have the trouble of changing. Because it would come to that—it always does. But come in, come in! There's a gate round here. I want to get acquainted with you. I have a taste for schoolmasters. I didn't possess it when I was a boy" (a glint of fun appeared in his blue eyes). "It's an acquired taste."

I accepted his invitation and went, not only into his garden but, as was proved later, into his confidence and affection. He linked his arm with mine and piloted me about to show me his pets.

"I potter about this garden considerable," he said. "It pleases the women folks to have lots of posies."

I laughed, for Uncle Dick was a bachelor and considered to be a hopeless one.

"Don't laugh, Master," he said, pressing my arm. "I've no woman folk of my own about me now, 'tis true. But all the girls in the district come to Uncle Dick when they want flowers for their little diversions. Besides—perhaps—sometimes—"

Uncle Dick broke off and stood in a brown study, looking at an old stump aflame with nasturtiums for fully three minutes. Later on I was to learn the significance of that pause and reverie.

I spent the whole evening with Uncle Dick. After we had explored the garden he took me into his house and into his "den." The house was a small white one and wonderfully neat inside, considering the fact that Uncle Dick was his own housekeeper. His "den" was a comfortable place, its one window so shadowed by a huge poplar that the room had a grotto-like effect of emerald gloom. I came to know it well, for, at Uncle Dick's invitation, I did my studying there and browsed at will among his classics. We soon became close friends. Uncle Dick had always "chummed with the masters," as he said, but our friendship went deeper. For my own part, I preferred his company to that of any young man I knew. There was a perennial spring of youth in Uncle Dick's soul that yet had all the fascinating flavour of ripe experience. He was clever, kindly, humorous and, withal, so crystal clear of mind and heart that an

atmosphere partaking of childhood hung around him.

I knew Uncle Dick's outward history as the Bayside people knew it. It was not a very eventful one. He had lost his father in boyhood; before that there had been some idea of Dick's going to college. After his father's death he seemed quietly to have put all such hopes away and settled down to look after the farm and take care of his invalid stepmother. This woman, as I learned from others, but never from Uncle Dick, had been a peevish, fretful, exacting creature, and for nearly thirty years Uncle Dick had been a very slave to her whims and caprices.

"Nobody knows what he had to put up with, for he never complained," Mrs. Lindsay, my landlady, told me. "She was out of her mind once and she was liable to go out of it again if she was crossed in anything. He was that good and patient with her. She was dreadful fond of him too, for all she did almost worry his life out. No doubt she was the reason he never married. He couldn't leave her and he knew no woman would go in there. Uncle Dick never courted anyone, unless it was Rose Lawrence. She was a cousin of my man's. I've heard he had a kindness for her; it was years ago, before I came to Bayside. But anyway, nothing came of it. Her father's health failed and he had to go out to California. Rose had to go with him, her mother being dead, and that was the end of Uncle Dick's love affair."

But that was not the end of it, as I discovered when Uncle Dick gave me his confidence. One evening I went over and, piloted by the sound of shrieks and laughter, found Uncle Dick careering about the garden, pursued by half a dozen schoolgirls who were pelting him with overblown roses. At sight of the master my pupils instantly became prim and demure and, gathering up their flowery spoil, they beat a hasty retreat down the lane.

"Those little girls are very sweet," said Uncle Dick abruptly. "Little blossoms of life! Have you ever wondered, Master, why I haven't some of my own blooming about the old place instead of just looking over the fence of other men's gardens, coveting their human roses?"

"Yes, I have," I answered frankly. "It has been a puzzle to me why you, Uncle Dick, who seem to me fitted above all men I have ever known for love and husbandhood and fatherhood, should have elected to live your life alone."

"It has not been a matter of choice," said Uncle Dick gently. "We can't always order our lives as we would, Master. I loved a woman once and she loved me. And we love each other still. Do you think I could bear life else? I've an interest in it that the Bayside folk know nothing of. It has kept youth in my heart and joy in my soul through long, lonely years. And it's not ended yet, Master—it's not ended yet! Some day I hope to bring a wife here to my old house—my wife, my rose of joy!"

He was silent for a space, gazing at the stars. I too kept silence, fearing to intrude into the holy places of his thought, although I was tingling with interest in this unsuspected outflowering of romance in Uncle Dick's life.

After a time he said gently,

"Shall I tell you about it, Master? I mean, do you care to know?"

"Yes," I answered, "I do care to know. And I shall respect your confidence, Uncle Dick."

"I know that. I couldn't tell you, otherwise," he said. "I don't want the Bayside folk to know—it would be a kind of desecration. They would laugh and joke me about it, as they tease other people, and I couldn't bear that. Nobody in Bayside knows or suspects, unless it's old Joe Hammond at the post office. And he has kept my secret, or what he knows of it, well. But somehow I feel that I'd like to tell you, Master.

"Twenty-five years ago I loved Rose Lawrence. The Lawrences lived where you are boarding now. There was just the father, a sickly man, and Rose, my "Rose of joy," as I called her, for I knew my Emerson pretty well even then. She was sweet and fair, like a white rose with just a hint of pink in its cup. We loved each other, but we couldn't marry then. My mother was an invalid, and one time, before I had learned to care for Rose, she, the mother, had asked me to promise her that I'd never marry as long as she lived. She didn't think then that she would live long, but she lived for twenty years, Master, and she held me to my promise all the time. Yes, it was hard"—for I had given an indignant exclamation—"but you see, Master, I had promised and I had to keep my word. Rose said I was right in doing it. She said she was willing to wait for me, but she didn't know, poor girl, how long the waiting was to be. Then her father's health failed completely, and the doctor ordered him to another climate. They went to California. That was a hard parting, Master. But we promised each other that we would be true, and we have been. I've never seen my Rose of joy since then, but I've had a letter from her every week. When the mother died, five years ago, I wanted to move to California and marry Rose. But she wrote that her father was so poorly she couldn't marry me yet. She has to wait on him every minute, and he's restless, and they move here and there—a hard life for my poor girl. So I had to take a new lease of patience, Master. One learns how to wait in twenty years. But I shall have her some day, God willing. Our love will be crowned yet. So I wait, Master, and try to keep my life and soul clean and wholesome and young for her.

"That's my story, Master, and we'll not say anything more about it just now, for I dare say you don't exactly know what to say. But at times I'll talk of her to you and that will be a rare pleasure to me; I think that was why I wanted you to know about her."

He did talk often to me of her, and I soon came to realize what this far-away woman meant in his life. She was for him the centre of everything. His love was strong, pure, and idyllic—the ideal love of which the loftiest poets sing. It glorified his whole inner life with a strange, unfailing radiance. I found that everything he did was done with an eye single to what she would think of it when she came. Especially did he put his love into his garden.

"Every flower in it stands for a thought of her, Master," he said. "It is a great joy to think that she will walk in this garden with me some day. It will be complete then—my Rose of joy will be here to crown it."

That summer and winter passed away, and when spring came again, lettering her footsteps with violets in the meadows and waking all the sleeping loveliness of old homestead gardens, Uncle Dick's long deferred happiness came with her. One evening when I was in our "den," mid-deep in study of old things that seemed musty and unattractive enough in contrast with the vivid, newborn, out-of-doors, Uncle Dick came home from the post office with an open letter in his hand. His big voice trembled as he said,

"Master, she's coming home. Her father is dead and she has nobody in the world now but me. In a month she will be here. Don't talk to me of it yet—I want to taste the joy of it in silence for a while."

He hastened away to his garden and walked there until darkness fell, with his face uplifted to the sky, and the love rapture of countless generations shining in his eyes. Later on, we sat on one of the old stone benches and Uncle Dick tried to talk practically.

Bayside people soon found out that Rose Lawrence was coming home to marry Uncle Dick. Uncle Dick was much teased, and suffered under it; it seemed, as he had said, desecration. But the real goodwill and kindly feeling in the banter redeemed it.

He went to the station to meet Rose Lawrence the day she came. When I went home from school Mrs. Lindsay told me she was in the parlour and took me in to be introduced. I was bitterly disappointed. Somehow, I had expected to meet, not indeed a young girl palpitating with youthful bloom, but a woman of ripe maturity, dowered with the beauty of harmonious middle-age—the feminine counterpart of Uncle Dick. Instead, I found in Rose Lawrence a small, faded woman of forty-five, gowned in shabby black. She had evidently been very pretty once, but bloom and grace were gone. Her face had a sweet and gentle expression, but was tired and worn, and her fair hair was plentifully streaked with grey. Alas, I thought compassionately, for Uncle Dick's dreams! What a shock the change to her must have given him! Could this be the woman on whom he had lavished such a life-wealth of love and reverence? I tried to talk to her, but I found her shy and timid. She seemed to me

uninteresting and commonplace. And this was Uncle Dick's Rose of joy!

I was so sorry for Uncle Dick that I shrank from meeting him. Nevertheless, I went over after tea, fearing that he might misunderstand, nay, rather, understand, my absence. He was in the garden, and he came down the path where the buds were just showing. There was a smile on his face and the glory in his eyes was quite undimmed.

"Master, she's come. And she's not a bit changed. I feared she would be, but she is just the same—my sweet little Rose of joy!"

I looked at Uncle Dick in some amazement. He was thoroughly sincere, there was no doubt of that, and I felt a great throb of relief. He had found no disillusioning change. I saw Rose Lawrence merely with the cold eyes of the stranger. He saw her through the transfiguring medium of a love that made her truly his Rose of joy. And all was well.

They were married the next morning and walked together over the clover meadow to their home. In the evening I went over, as I had promised Uncle Dick to do. They were in the garden, with a great saffron sky over them and a glory of sunset behind the poplars. I paused unseen at the gate. Uncle Dick was big and splendid in his fine new wedding suit, and his faded little bride was hanging on his arm. Her face was upturned to him; it was a glorified face, so transformed by the tender radiance of love shining through it that I saw her then as Uncle Dick must always see her, and no longer found it hard to understand how she could be his Rose of joy. Happiness clothed them as a garment; they were crowned king and queen in the bridal realm of the springtime.

The Understanding of Sister Sara

June First.

I began this journal last New Year's—wrote two entries in it and then forgot all about it. I came across it today in a rummage—Sara insists on my cleaning things out thoroughly every once in so long—and I'm going to keep it up. I feel the need of a confidant of some kind, even if it is only an inanimate journal. I have no other. And I cannot talk my thoughts over with Sara—she is so unsympathetic.

Sara is a dear good soul and I love her as much as she will let me. I am also very grateful to her. She brought me up when our mother died. No doubt she had a hard time of it, poor dear, for I never was easily brought up, perversely preferring to come up in my own way. But Sara did her duty

unflinchingly and—well, it's not for me to say that the result does her credit. But it really does, considering the material she had to work with. I'm a bundle of faults as it is, but I tremble to think what I would have been if there had been no Sara.

Yes, I love Sara, and I'm grateful to her. But she doesn't understand me in the least. Perhaps it is because she is so much older than I am, but it doesn't seem to me that Sara could really ever have been young. She laughs at things I consider the most sacred and calls me a romantic girl, in a tone of humorous toleration. I am chilled and thrown back on myself, and the dreams and confidences I am bubbling over with have no outlet. Sara couldn't understand—she is so practical. When I go to her with some beautiful thought I have found in a book or poem she is quite likely to say, "Yes, yes, but I noticed this morning that the braid was loose on your skirt, Beatrice. Better go and sew it on before you forget again. 'A stitch in time saves nine.'"

When I come home from a concert or lecture, yearning to talk over the divine music or the wonderful new ideas with her, she will say, "Yes, yes, but are you sure you didn't get your feet damp? Better go and change your stockings, my dear. 'An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.'"

So I have given up trying to talk things over with Sara. This old journal will be better.

Last night Sara and I went to Mrs. Trent's musicale. I had to sing and I had the loveliest new gown for the occasion. At first Sara thought my old blue dress would do. She said we must economize this summer and told me I was entirely too extravagant in the matter of clothes. I cried about it after I went to bed. Sara looked at me very sharply the next morning without saying anything. In the afternoon she went uptown and bought some lovely pale yellow silk organdie. She made it up herself—Sara is a genius at dressmaking—and it was the prettiest gown at the musicale. Sara wore her old grey silk made over. Sara doesn't care anything about dress, but then she is forty.

Walter Shirley was at the Trents'. The Shirleys are a new family here; they moved to Atwater two months ago. Walter is the oldest son and has been at college in Marlboro all winter so that nobody here knew him until he came home a fortnight ago. He is very handsome and distinguished-looking and everybody says he is so clever. He plays the violin just beautifully and has such a melting, sympathetic voice and the loveliest deep, dark, inscrutable eyes. I asked Sara when we came home if she didn't think he was splendid.

"He'd be a nice boy if he wasn't rather conceited," said Sara.

After that it was impossible to say anything more about Mr. Shirley.

I am glad he is going to be in Atwater all summer. We have so few really

nice young men here; they go away just as soon as they grow up and those who stay are just the muffs. I wonder if I shall see Mr. Shirley soon again.

June Thirtieth.

It does not seem possible that it is only a month since my last entry. It seems more like a year—a delightful year. I can't believe that I am the same Beatrice Mason who wrote then. And I am not, either. She was just a simple little girl, knowing nothing but romantic dreams. I feel that I am very much changed. Life seems so grand and high and beautiful. I want to be a true noble woman. Only such a woman could be worthy of—of—a fine, noble man. But when I tried to say something like this to Sara she replied calmly:

"My dear child, the average woman is quite good enough for the average man. If she can cook his meals decently and keep his buttons sewed on and doesn't nag him he will think that life is a pretty comfortable affair. And that reminds me, I saw holes in your black lace stockings yesterday. Better go and darn them at once. 'Procrastination is the thief of time.'"

Sara cannot understand.

Blanche Lawrence was married yesterday to Ted Martin. I thought it the most solemn and sacred thing I had ever listened to—the marriage ceremony, I mean. I had never thought much about it before. I don't see how Blanche could care anything for Ted—he is so stout and dumpy; with shallow blue eyes and a little pale moustache. I must say I do not like fair men. But there is no doubt that he and Blanche love each other devotedly and that fact sufficed to make the service very beautiful to me—those two people pledging each other to go through life together, meeting its storm and sunshine hand in hand, thinking joy the sweeter because they shared it, finding sorrow sacred because it came to them both.

When Sara and I walked home from the church Sara said, "Well, considering the chances she has had, Blanche Lawrence hasn't done so well after all."

"Oh, Sara," I cried, "she has married the man she loves and who loves her. What better is there to do? I thought it beautiful."

"They should have waited another year at least," said Sara severely. "Ted Martin has only been practising law for a year, and he had nothing to begin with. He can't have made enough in one year in Atwater to justify him in setting up housekeeping. I think a man ought to be ashamed of himself to take a girl from a good home to an uncertainty like that."

"Not if she loved him and was willing to share the uncertainty," I said softly.

"Love won't pay the butcher's bill," said Sara with a sniff, "and landlords have an unfeeling preference for money over affection. Besides, Blanche is a mere child, far too young to be burdened with the responsibilities of life."

Blanche is twenty—two years older than I am. But Sara talks as if I were a mere infant.

July Thirtieth.

Oh, I am so happy! I wonder if there is another girl in the world as happy as I am tonight. No, of course there cannot be, because there is only one Walter!

Walter and I are engaged. It happened last night when we were sitting out in the moonlight under the silver maple on the lawn. I cannot write down what he said—the words are too sacred and beautiful to be kept anywhere but in my own heart forever and ever as long as I live. And I don't remember just what I said. But we understood each other perfectly at last.

Of course Sara had to do her best to spoil things. Just as Walter had taken my hand in his and bent forward with his splendid earnest eyes just burning into mine, and my heart was beating so furiously, Sara came to the front door and called out, "Beatrice! Beatrice! Have you your rubbers on? And don't you think it is too damp out there for you in that heavy dew? Better come into the house, both of you. Walter has a cold now."

"Oh, we'll be in soon, Sara," I said impatiently. But we didn't go in for an hour, and when we did Sara was cross, and after Walter had gone she told me I was a very silly girl to be so reckless of my health and risk getting pneumonia loitering out in the dew with a sentimental boy.

I had had some vague thoughts of telling Sara all about my new happiness, for it was so great I wanted to talk it over with somebody, but I couldn't after that. Oh, I wish I had a mother! She could understand. But Sara cannot.

Walter and I have decided to keep our engagement a secret for a month—just our own beautiful secret unshared by anyone. Then before he goes back to college he is going to tell Sara and ask her consent. I don't think Sara will refuse it exactly. She really likes Walter very well. But I know she will be horrid and I just dread it. She will say I am too young and that a boy like Walter has no business to get engaged until he is through college and that we haven't known each other long enough to know anything about each other and that we are only a pair of romantic children. And after she has said all this and given a disapproving consent she will begin to train me up in the way a good housekeeper should go, and talk to me about table linen and the best way to manage a range and how to tell if a chicken is really a chicken or only an old hen. Oh, I know Sara! She will set the teeth of my spirit on edge a dozen times

a day and rub all the bloom off my dear, only, little romance with her horrible practicalities. I know one must learn about those things of course and I do want to make Walter's home the best and dearest and most comfortable spot on earth for him and be the very best little wife and housekeeper I can be when the time comes. But I want to dream my dreams first and Sara will wake me up so early to realities.

This is why we determined to keep one month sacred to ourselves. Walter will graduate next spring—he is to be a doctor—and then he intends to settle down in Atwater and work up a practice. I am sure he will succeed for everyone likes him so much. But we are to be married as soon as he is through college because he has a little money of his own—enough to set up housekeeping in a modest way with care and economy. I know Sara will talk about risk and waiting and all that just as she did in Ted Martin's case. But then Sara does not understand.

Oh, I am so happy! It almost frightens me—I don't see how anything so wonderful can last. But it will last, for nothing can ever separate Walter and me, and as long as we are together and love each other this great happiness will be mine. Oh, I want to be so good and noble for his sake. I want to make life "one grand sweet song." I have gone about the house today feeling like a woman consecrated and set apart from other women by Walter's love. Nothing could spoil it, not even when Sara scolded me for letting the preserves burn in the kettle because I forgot to stir them while I was planning out our life together. Sara said she really did not know what would happen to me some day if I was so careless and forgetful. But then, Sara does not understand.

August Twentieth.

It is all over. Life is ended for me and I do not know how I can face the desolate future. Walter and I have quarrelled and our engagement is broken. He is gone and my heart is breaking.

I hardly know how it began. I'm sure I never meant to flirt with Jack Ray. I never did flirt with him either, in spite of Walter's unmanly accusations. But Walter has been jealous of Jack all summer, although he knew perfectly well he needn't be, and two nights ago at the Morley dance poor Jack seemed so dull and unhappy that I tried to cheer him up a little and be kind to him. I danced with him three times and sat out another dance just to talk with him in a real sisterly fashion. But Walter was furious and last night when he came up he said horrid things—things no girl of any spirit could endure, and things he could never have said to me if he had really cared one bit for me. We had a frightful quarrel and when I saw plainly that Walter no longer loved me I told him that he was free and that I never wanted to see him again and that I hated him. He glared at me and said that I should have my wish—I never should see

him again and he hoped he would never again meet such a faithless, fickle girl. Then he went away and slammed the front door.

I cried all night, but today I went about the house singing. I would not for the world let other people know how Walter has treated me. I will hide my broken heart under a smiling face bravely. But, oh, I am so miserable! Just as soon as I am old enough I mean to go away and be a trained nurse. There is nothing else left in life for me. Sara does not suspect that anything is wrong and I am so thankful she does not. She would not understand.

September Sixth.

Today I read this journal over and thought I would burn it, it is so silly. But on second thought I concluded to keep it as a reminder of how blind and selfish I was and how good Sara is. For I am happy again and everything is all right, thanks to Sara. The very day after our quarrel Walter left Atwater. He did not have to return to college for three weeks, but he went to visit some friends down in Charlotteville and I heard—Mollie Roach told me—Mollie Roach was always wild about Walter herself—that he was not coming back again, but would go right on to Marlboro from Charlotteville. I smiled squarely at Mollie as if I didn't care a particle, but I can't describe how I felt. I knew then that I had really been hoping that something would happen in three weeks to make our quarrel up. In a small place like Atwater people in the same set can't help meeting. But Walter had gone and I should never see him again, and what was worse I knew he didn't care or he wouldn't have gone.

I bore it in silence for three weeks, but I will shudder to the end of my life when I remember those three weeks. Night before last Sara came up to my room where I was lying on my bed with my face in the pillow. I wasn't crying—I couldn't cry. There was just a dreadful dull ache in everything. Sara sat down on the rocker in front of the window and the sunset light came in behind her and made a sort of nimbus round her head, like a motherly saint's in a cathedral.

"Beatrice," she said gently, "I want to know what the trouble is. You can't hide it from me that something is wrong. I've noticed it for some time. You don't eat anything and you cry all night—oh, yes, I know you do. What is it, dear?"

"Oh, Sara!"

I just gave a little cry, slipped from the bed to the floor, laid my head in her lap, and told her everything. It was such a relief, and such a relief to feel those good motherly arms around me and to realize that here was a love that would never fail me no matter what I did or how foolish I was. Sara heard me out and then she said, without a word of reproach or contempt, "It will all come out

right yet, dear. Write to Walter and tell him you are sorry."

"Sara, I never could! He doesn't love me any longer—he said he hoped he'd never see me again."

"Didn't you say the same to him, child? He meant it as little as you did. Don't let your foolish pride keep you miserable."

"If Walter won't come back to me without my asking him he'll never come, Sara," I said stubbornly.

Sara didn't scold or coax any more. She patted my head and kissed me and made me bathe my face and go to bed. Then she tucked me in just as she used to do when I was a little girl.

"Now, don't cry, dear," she said, "it will come right yet."

Somehow, I began to hope it would when Sara thought so, and anyhow it was such a comfort to have talked it all over with her. I slept better than I had for a long time, and it was seven o'clock yesterday morning when I woke to find that it was a dull grey day outside and that Sara was standing by my bed with her hat and jacket on.

"I'm going down to Junction Falls on the 7:30 train to see Mr. Conway about coming to fix the back kitchen floor," she said, "and I have some other business that may keep me for some time, so don't be anxious if I'm not back till late. Give the bread a good kneading in an hour's time and be careful not to bake it too much."

That was a dismal day. It began to rain soon after Sara left and it just poured. I never saw a soul all day except the milkman, and I was really frantic by night. I never was so glad of anything as when I heard Sara's step on the verandah. I flew to the front door to let her in—and there was Walter all dripping wet—and his arms were about me and I was crying on the shoulder of his mackintosh.

I only guessed then what I knew later on. Sara had heard from Mrs. Shirley that Walter was going to Marlboro that day without coming back to Atwater. Sara knew that he must change trains at Junction Falls and she went there to meet him. She didn't know what train he would come on so she went to meet the earliest and had to wait till the last, hanging around the dirty little station at the Falls all day while it poured rain, and she hadn't a thing to eat except some fancy biscuits she had bought on the train. But Walter came at last on the 7:50 train and there was Sara to pounce on him. He told me afterwards that no angel could have been so beautiful a vision to him as Sara was, standing there on the wet platform with her tweed skirt held up and a streaming umbrella over her head, telling him he must come back to Atwater because Beatrice

wanted him to.

But just at the moment of his coming I didn't care how he had come or who had brought him. I just realized that he was there and that was enough. Sara came in behind him. Walter's wet arms were about me and I was standing there with my thin-slippered feet in a little pool of water that dripped from his umbrella. But Sara never said a word about colds and dampness. She just smiled, went on into the sitting-room, and shut the door. Sara understood.

The Unforgotten One

It was Christmas Eve, but there was no frost, or snow, or sparkle. It was a green Christmas, and the night was mild and dim, with hazy starlight. A little wind was laughing freakishly among the firs around Ingleside and rustling among the sere grasses along the garden walks. It was more like a night in early spring or late fall than in December; but it was Christmas Eve, and there was a light in every window of Ingleside, the glow breaking out through the whispering darkness like a flame-red blossom swung against the background of the evergreens; for the children were coming home for the Christmas reunion, as they always came—Fritz and Margaret and Laddie and Nora, and Robert's two boys in the place of Robert, who had died fourteen years ago—and the old house must put forth its best of light and good cheer to welcome them.

Doctor Fritz and his brood were the last to arrive, driving up to the hall door amid a chorus of welcoming barks from the old dogs and a hail of merry calls from the group in the open doorway.

"We're all here now," said the little mother, as she put her arms about the neck of her stalwart firstborn and kissed his bearded face. There were handshakings and greetings and laughter. Only Nanny, far back in the shadows of the firelit hall, swallowed a resentful sob, and wiped two bitter tears from her eyes with her little red hand.

"We're not all here," she murmured under her breath. "Miss Avis isn't here. Oh, how can they be so glad? How can they have forgotten?"

But nobody heard or heeded Nanny—she was only the little orphan "help" girl at Ingleside. They were all very good to her, and they were all very fond of her, but at the times of family reunion Nanny was unconsciously counted out. There was no bond of blood to unite her to them, and she was left on the fringe of things. Nanny never resented this—it was all a matter of course to her; but on this Christmas Eve her heart was broken because she thought that

nobody remembered Miss Avis.

After supper they all gathered around the open fireplace of the hall, hung with its berries and evergreens in honour of the morrow. It was their unwritten law to form a fireside circle on Christmas Eve and tell each other what the year had brought them of good and ill, sorrow and joy. The circle was smaller by one than it had been the year before, but none spoke of that. There was a smile on every face and happiness in every voice.

The father and mother sat in the centre, grey-haired and placid, their fine old faces written over with the history of gracious lives. Beside the mother, Doctor Fritz sat like a boy, on the floor, with his massive head, grey as his father's, on her lap, and one of his smooth, muscular hands, that were as tender as a woman's at the operating table, clasped in hers. Next to him sat sweet Nora, the twenty-year-old "baby," who taught in a city school; the rosy firelight gleamed lovingly over her girlish beauty of burnished brown hair, dreamy blue eyes, and soft, virginal curves of cheek and throat. Doctor Fritz's spare arm was about her, but Nora's own hands were clasped over her knee, and on one of them sparkled a diamond that had not been there at the last Christmas reunion. Laddie, who figured as Archibald only in the family Bible, sat close to the inglenook—a handsome young fellow with a daring brow and rollicking eyes. On the other side sat Margaret, hand in hand with her father, a woman whose gracious sweetness of nature enveloped her as a garment; and Robert's two laughing boys filled up the circle, looking so much alike that it was hard to say which was Cecil and which was Sid.

Margaret's husband and Fritz's wife were playing games with the children in the parlour, whence shrieks of merriment drifted out into the hall. Nanny might have been with them had she chosen, but she preferred to sit alone in the darkest corner of the hall and gaze with jealous, unhappy eyes at the mirthful group about the fire, listening to their story and jest and laughter with unavailing protest in her heart. Oh, how could they have forgotten so soon? It was not yet a full year since Miss Avis had gone. Last Christmas Eve she had sat there, a sweet and saintly presence, in the inglenook, more, so it had almost seemed, the centre of the home circle than the father and mother; and now the December stars were shining over her grave, and not one of that heedless group remembered her; not once was her name spoken; even her old dog had forgotten her—he sat with his nose in Margaret's lap, blinking with drowsy, aged contentment at the fire.

"Oh, I can't bear it!" whispered Nanny, under cover of the hearty laughter which greeted a story Doctor Fritz had been telling. She slipped out into the kitchen, put on her hood and cloak, and took from a box under the table a little wreath of holly. She had made it out of the bits left over from the decorations. Miss Avis had loved holly; Miss Avis had loved every green, growing thing.

As Nanny opened the kitchen door something cold touched her hand, and there stood the old dog, wagging his tail and looking up at her with wistful eyes, mutely pleading to be taken, too.

"So you do remember her, Gyppy," said Nanny, patting his head. "Come along then. We'll go together."

They slipped out into the night. It was quite dark, but it was not far to the graveyard—just out through the evergreens and along a field by-path and across the road. The old church was there, with its square tower, and the white stones gleaming all around it. Nanny went straight to a shadowy corner and knelt on the sere grasses while she placed her holly wreath on Miss Avis's grave. The tears in her eyes brimmed over.

"Oh, Miss Avis! Miss Avis!" she sobbed. "I miss you so—I miss you so! It can't ever seem like Christmas to me without you. You were always so sweet and kind to me. There ain't a day passes but I think of you and all the things you used to say to me, and I try to be good like you'd want me to be. But I hate them for forgetting you—yes, I do! I'll never forget you, darling Miss Avis! I'd rather be here alone with you in the dark than back there with them."

Nanny sat down by the grave. The old dog lay down by her side with his forepaws on the turf and his eyes fixed on the tall white marble shaft. It was too dark for Nanny to read the inscription but she knew every word of it: "In loving remembrance of Avis Maywood, died January 20, 1902, aged 45." And underneath the lines of her own choosing:

"Say not good night, but in some brighter clime

Bid me good morning."

But they had forgotten her—oh, they had forgotten her already!

When half an hour had passed, Nanny was startled by approaching footsteps. Not wishing to be seen, she crept softly behind the headstones into the shadow of the willow on the farther side, and the old dog followed. Doctor Fritz, coming to the grave, thought himself alone with the dead. He knelt down by the headstone and pressed his face against it.

"Avis," he said gently, "dear Avis, I have come to visit your grave tonight because you seem nearer to me here than elsewhere. And I want to talk to you, Avis, as I have always talked to you every Christmastide since we were children together. I have missed you so tonight, dear friend and sympathizer—no words can tell how I have missed you—your welcoming handclasp and your sweet face in the firelight shadows. I could not bear to speak your name, the aching sense of loss was so bitter. Amid all the Christmas mirth and good fellowship I felt the sorrow of your vacant chair. Avis, I wanted to tell you

what the year had brought to me. My theory has been proved; it has made me a famous man. Last Christmas, Avis, I told you of it, and you listened and understood and believed in it. Dear Avis, once again I thank you for all you have been to me—all you are yet. I have brought you your roses; they are as white and pure and fragrant as your life."

Other footsteps came so quickly on Doctor Fritz' retreating ones that Nanny could not rise. It was Laddie this time—gay, careless, thoughtless Laddie.

"Roses? So Fritz has been here! I have brought you lilies, Avis. Oh, Avis, I miss you so! You were so jolly and good—you understood a fellow so well. I had to come here tonight to tell you how much I miss you. It doesn't seem half home without you. Avis, I'm trying to be a better chap—more the sort of man you'd have me be. I've given the old set the go-by—I'm trying to live up to your standard. It would be easier if you were here to help me. When I was a kid it was always easier to be good for awhile after I'd talked things over with you. I've got the best mother a fellow ever had, but you and I were such chums, weren't we, Avis? I thought I'd just break down in there tonight and put a damper on everything by crying like a baby. If anybody had spoken about you, I should have. Hello!"

Laddie wheeled around with a start, but it was only Robert's two boys, who came shyly up to the grave, half hanging back to find anyone else there.

"Hello, boys," said Laddie huskily. "So you've come to see her grave too?"

"Yes," said Cecil solemnly. "We—we just had to. We couldn't go to bed without coming. Oh, isn't it lonesome without Cousin Avis?"

"She was always so good to us," said Sid.

"She used to talk to us so nice," said Cecil chokily. "But she liked fun, too."

"Boys," said Laddie gravely, "never forget what Cousin Avis used to say to you. Never forget that you have got to grow up into men she'd be proud of."

They went away then, the boys and their boyish uncle; and when they had gone Nora came, stealing timidly through the shadows, starting at the rustle of the wind in the trees.

"Oh, Avis," she whispered. "I want to see you so much! I want to tell you all about it—about him. You would understand so well. He is the best and dearest lover ever a girl had. You would think so too. Oh, Avis, I miss you so much! There's a little shadow even on my happiness because I can't talk it over with you in the old way. Oh, Avis, it was dreadful to sit around the fire tonight and not see you. Perhaps you were there in spirit. I love to think you were, but

I wanted to see you. You were always there to come home to before, Avis, dear."

Sobbing, she went away; and then came Margaret, the grave, strong Margaret.

"Dear cousin, dear to me as a sister, it seemed to me that I must come to you here tonight. I cannot tell you how much I miss your wise, clear-sighted advice and judgment, your wholesome companionship. A little son was born to me this past year, Avis. How glad you would have been, for you knew, as none other did, the bitterness of my childless heart. How we would have delighted to talk over my baby together, and teach him wisely between us! Avis, Avis, your going made a blank that can never be filled for me!"

Margaret was still standing there when the old people came.

"Father! Mother! Isn't it too late and chilly for you to be here?"

"No, Margaret, no," said the mother. "I couldn't go to my bed without coming to see Avis's grave. I brought her up from a baby—her dying mother gave her to me. She was as much my own child as any of you. And oh! I miss her so. You only miss her when you come home, but I miss her all the time—every day!"

"We all miss her, Mother," said the old father, tremulously. "She was a good girl—Avis was a good girl. Good night, Avis!"

"'Say not good night, but in some brighter clime bid her good morning,'" quoted Margaret softly. "That was her own wish, you know. Let us go back now. It is getting late."

When they had gone Nanny crept out from the shadows. It had not occurred to her that perhaps she should not have listened—she had been too shy to make her presence known to those who came to Avis's grave. But her heart was full of joy.

"Oh, Miss Avis, I'm so glad, I'm so glad! They haven't forgotten you after all, Miss Avis, dear, not one of them. I'm sorry I was so cross at them; and I'm so glad they haven't forgotten you. I love them for it."

Then the old dog and Nanny went home together.

The Wooing of Bessy

When Lawrence Eastman began going to see Bessy Houghton the Lynnfield people shrugged their shoulders and said he might have picked out

somebody a little younger and prettier—but then, of course, Bessy was well off. A two-hundred-acre farm and a substantial bank account were worth going in for. Trust an Eastman for knowing upon which side his bread was buttered.

Lawrence was only twenty, and looked even younger, owing to his smooth, boyish face, curly hair, and half-girlish bloom. Bessy Houghton was in reality no more than twenty-five, but Lynnfield people had the impression that she was past thirty. She had always been older than her years—a quiet, reserved girl who dressed plainly and never went about with other young people. Her mother had died when Bessy was very young, and she had always kept house for her father. The responsibility made her grave and mature. When she was twenty her father died and Bessy was his sole heir. She kept the farm and took the reins of government in her own capable hands. She made a success of it too, which was more than many a man in Lynnfield had done.

Bessy had never had a lover. She had never seemed like other girls, and passed for an old maid when her contemporaries were in the flush of social success and bloom.

Mrs. Eastman, Lawrence's mother, was a widow with two sons. George, the older, was the mother's favourite, and the property had been willed to him by his father. To Lawrence had been left the few hundreds in the bank. He stayed at home and hired himself to George, thereby adding slowly to his small hoard. He had his eye on a farm in Lynnfield, but he was as yet a mere boy, and his plans for the future were very vague until he fell in love with Bessy Houghton.

In reality nobody was more surprised over this than Lawrence himself. It had certainly been the last thing in his thoughts on the dark, damp night when he had overtaken Bessy walking home alone from prayer meeting and had offered to drive her the rest of the way.

Bessy assented and got into his buggy. At first she was very silent, and Lawrence, who was a bashful lad at the best of times, felt tongue-tied and uncomfortable. But presently Bessy, pitying his evident embarrassment, began to talk to him. She could talk well, and Lawrence found himself entering easily into the spirit of her piquant speeches. He had an odd feeling that he had never known Bessy Houghton before; he had certainly never guessed that she could be such good company. She was very different from the other girls he knew, but he decided that he liked the difference.

"Are you going to the party at Baileys' tomorrow night?" he asked, as he helped her to alight at her door.

"I don't know," she answered. "I'm invited—but I'm all alone—and parties have never been very much in my line."

There was a wistful note in her voice, and Lawrence detecting it, said hurriedly, not giving himself time to get frightened: "Oh, you'd better go to this one. And if you like, I'll call around and take you."

He wondered if she would think him very presumptuous. He thought her voice sounded colder as she said: "I am afraid that it would be too much trouble for you."

"It wouldn't be any trouble at all," he stammered. "I'll be very pleased to take you."

In the end Bessy had consented to go, and the next evening Lawrence called for her in the rose-red autumn dusk.

Bessy was ready and waiting. She was dressed in what was for her unusual elegance, and Lawrence wondered why people called Bessy Houghton so plain. Her figure was strikingly symmetrical and softly curved. Her abundant, dark-brown hair, instead of being parted plainly and drawn back into a prim coil as usual, was dressed high on her head, and a creamy rose nestled amid the becoming puffs and waves. She wore black, as she usually did, but it was a lustrous black silk, simply and fashionably made, with frost-like frills of lace at her firm round throat and dainty wrists. Her cheeks were delicately flushed, and her wood-brown eyes were sparkling under her long lashes.

She offered him a half-opened bud for his coat and pinned it on for him. As he looked down at her he noticed what a sweet mouth she had—full and red, with a half child-like curve.

The fact that Lawrence Eastman took Bessy Houghton to the Baileys' party made quite a sensation at that festal scene. People nodded and winked and wondered. "An old maid and her money," said Milly Fiske spitefully. Milly, as was well known, had a liking for Lawrence herself.

Lawrence began to "go with" Bessy Houghton regularly after that. In his single-mindedness he never feared that Bessy would misjudge his motives or imagine him to be prompted by mercenary designs. He never thought of her riches himself, and it never occurred to him that she would suppose he did.

He soon realized that he loved her, and he ventured to hope timidly that she loved him in return. She was always rather reserved, but the few favours that meant nothing from other girls meant a great deal from Bessy. The evenings he spent with her in her pretty sitting-room, their moonlight drives over long, satin-smooth stretches of snowy roads, and their walks home from church and prayer meeting under the winter stars, were all so many moments of supreme happiness to Lawrence.

Matters had gone thus far before Mrs. Eastman got her eyes opened. At

Mrs. Tom Bailey's quilting party an officious gossip took care to inform her that Lawrence was supposed to be crazy over Bessy Houghton, who was, of course, encouraging him simply for the sake of having someone to beau her round, and who would certainly throw him over in the end since she knew perfectly well that it was her money he was after.

Mrs. Eastman was a proud woman and a determined one. She had always disliked Bessy Houghton, and she went home from the quilting resolved to put an instant stop to "all such nonsense" on her son's part.

"Where is Lawrie?" she asked abruptly; as she entered the small kitchen where George Eastman was lounging by the fire.

"Out in the stable grooming up Lady Grey," responded her older son sulkily. "I suppose he's gadding off to see Bessy Houghton again, the young fool that he is! Why don't you put a stop to it?"

"I am going to put a stop to it," said Mrs. Eastman grimly. "I'd have done it before if I'd known. You should have told me of it if you knew. I'm going out to see Lawrence right now."

George Eastman muttered something inaudible as the door closed behind her. He was a short, thickset man, not in the least like Lawrence, who was ten years his junior. Two years previously he had made a furtive attempt to pay court to Bessy Houghton for the sake of her wealth, and her decided repulse of his advances was a remembrance that made him grit his teeth yet. He had hated her bitterly ever since.

Lawrence was brushing his pet mare's coat until it shone like satin, and whistling "Annie Laurie" until the rafters rang. Bessy had sung it for him the night before. He could see her plainly still as she had looked then, in her gown of vivid red—a colour peculiarly becoming to her—with her favourite laces at wrist and throat and a white rose in her hair, which was dressed in the high, becoming knot she had always worn since the night he had shyly told her he liked it so.

She had played and sung many of the sweet old Scotch ballads for him, and when she had gone to the door with him he had taken both her hands in his and, emboldened by the look in her brown eyes, he had stooped and kissed her. Then he had stepped back, filled with dismay at his own audacity. But Bessy had said no word of rebuke, and only blushed hotly crimson. She must care for him, he thought happily, or else she would have been angry.

When his mother came in at the stable door her face was hard and uncompromising.

"Lawrie," she said sharply, "where are you going again tonight? You were

out last night."

"Well, Mother, I promise you I wasn't in any bad company. Come now, don't quiz a fellow too close."

"You are going to dangle after Bessy Houghton again. It's time you were told what a fool you were making of yourself. She's old enough to be your mother. The whole settlement is laughing at you."

Lawrence looked as if his mother had struck him a blow in the face. A dull, purplish flush crept over his brow.

"This is some of George's work," he broke out fiercely. "He's been setting you on me, has he? Yes, he's jealous—he wanted Bessy himself, but she would not look at him. He thinks nobody knows it, but I do. Bessy marry him? It's very likely!"

"Lawrie Eastman, you are daft. George hasn't said anything to me. You surely don't imagine Bessy Houghton would marry you. And if she would, she is too old for you. Now, don't you hang around her any longer."

"I will," said Lawrence flatly. "I don't care what anybody says. You needn't worry over me. I can take care of myself."

Mrs. Eastman looked blankly at her son. He had never defied or disobeyed her in his life before. She had supposed her word would be law. Rebellion was something she had not dreamed of. Her lips tightened ominously and her eyes narrowed.

"You're a bigger fool than I took you for," she said in a voice that trembled with anger. "Bessy Houghton laughs at you everywhere. She knows you're just after her money, and she makes fun—"

"Prove it," interrupted Lawrence undauntedly, "I'm not going to put any faith in Lynnfield gossip. Prove it if you can."

"I can prove it. Maggie Hatfield told me what Bessy Houghton said to her about you. She said you were a lovesick fool, and she only went with you for a little amusement, and that if you thought you had nothing to do but marry her and hang up your hat there you'd find yourself vastly mistaken."

Possibly in her calmer moments Mrs. Eastman might have shrunk from such a deliberate falsehood, although it was said of her in Lynnfield that she was not one to stick at a lie when the truth would not serve her purpose. Moreover, she felt quite sure that Lawrence would never ask Maggie Hatfield anything about it.

Lawrence turned white to the lips, "Is that true, Mother?" he asked huskily.

"I've warned you," replied his mother, not choosing to repeat her statement.

"If you go after Bessy any more you can take the consequences."

She drew her shawl about her pale, malicious face and left him with a parting glance of contempt.

"I guess that'll settle him," she thought grimly. "Bessy Houghton turned up her nose at George, but she shan't make a fool of Lawrence too."

Alone in the stable Lawrence stood staring out at the dull red ball of the winter sun with unseeing eyes. He had implicit faith in his mother, and the stab had gone straight to his heart. Bessy Houghton listened in vain that night for his well-known footfall on the verandah.

The next night Lawrence went home with Milly Fiske from prayer meeting, taking her out from a crowd of other girls under Bessy Houghton's very eyes as she came down the steps of the little church.

Bessy walked home alone. The light burned low in her sitting-room, and in the mirror over the mantel she saw her own pale face, with its tragic, pain-stricken eyes. Annie Hillis, her "help," was out. She was alone in the big house with her misery and despair.

She went dizzily upstairs to her own room and flung herself on the bed in the chill moonlight.

"It is all over," she said dully. All night she lay there, fighting with her pain. In the wan, grey morning she looked at her mirrored self with pitying scorn—at the pallid face, the lifeless features, the dispirited eyes with their bluish circles.

"What a fool I have been to imagine he could care for me!" she said bitterly. "He has only been amusing himself with my folly. And to think that I let him kiss me the other night!"

She thought of that kiss with a pitiful shame. She hated herself for the weakness that could not check her tears. Her lonely life had been brightened by the companionship of her young lover. The youth and girlhood of which fate had cheated her had come to her with love; the future had looked rosy with promise; now it had darkened with dourness and greyness.

Maggie Hatfield came that day to sew. Bessy had intended to have a dark-blue silk made up and an evening waist of pale pink cashmere. She had expected to wear the latter at a party which was to come off a fortnight later, and she had got it to please Lawrence, because he had told her that pink was his favourite colour. She would have neither it nor the silk made up now. She put them both away and instead brought out an ugly pattern of snuff-brown stuff, bought years before and never used.

"But where is your lovely pink, Bessy?" asked the dressmaker. "Aren't you

going to have it for the party?"

"No, I'm not going to have it made up at all," said Bessy listlessly. "It's too gay for me. I was foolish to think it would ever suit me. This brown will do for a spring suit. It doesn't make much difference what I wear."

Maggie Hatfield, who had not been at prayer meeting the night beforehand knew nothing of what had occurred, looked at her curiously, wondering what Lawrence Eastman could see in her to be as crazy about her as some people said he was. Bessy was looking her oldest and plainest just then, with her hair combed severely back from her pale, dispirited face.

"It must be her money he is after," thought the dressmaker. "She looks over thirty, and she can't pretend to be pretty. I believe she thinks a lot of him, though."

For the most part, Lynnfield people believed that Bessy had thrown Lawrence over. This opinion was borne out by his woebegone appearance. He was thin and pale; his face had lost its youthful curves and looked hard and mature. He was moody and taciturn and his speech and manner were marked by a new cynicism.

In April a well-to-do storekeeper from an adjacent village began to court Bessy Houghton. He was over fifty, and had never been a handsome man in his best days, but Lynnfield oracles opined that Bessy would take him. She couldn't expect to do any better, they said, and she was looking terribly old and dowdy all at once.

In June Maggie Hatfield went to the Eastmans' to sew. The first bit of news she imparted to Mrs. Eastman was that Bessy Houghton had refused Jabez Lea —at least, he didn't come to see her any more.

Mrs. Eastman twitched her thread viciously. "Bessy Houghton was born an old maid," she said sharply. "She thinks nobody is good enough for her, that is what's the matter. Lawrence got some silly boy-notion into his head last winter, but I soon put a stop to that."

"I always had an idea that Bessy thought a good deal of Lawrence," said Maggie. "She has never been the same since he left off going with her. I was up there the morning after that prayer-meeting night people talked so much of, and she looked positively dreadful, as if she hadn't slept a wink the whole night."

"Nonsense!" said Mrs. Eastman decisively. "She would never think of taking a boy like him when she'd turned up her nose at better men. And I didn't want her for a daughter-in-law anyhow. I can't bear her. So I put my foot down in time. Lawrence sulked for a spell, of course—boy-fashion—and he's been

as fractious as a spoiled baby ever since."

"Well, I dare say you're right," assented the dressmaker. "But I must say I had always imagined that Bessy had a great notion of Lawrence. Of course, she's so quiet it is hard to tell. She never says a word about herself."

There was an unsuspected listener to this conversation. Lawrence had come in from the field for a drink, and was standing in the open kitchen doorway, within easy earshot of the women's shrill tones.

He had never doubted his mother's word at any time in his life, but now he knew beyond doubt that there had been crooked work somewhere. He shrank from believing his mother untrue, yet where else could the crookedness come in?

When Mrs. Eastman had gone to the kitchen to prepare dinner, Maggie Hatfield was startled by the appearance of Lawrence at the low open window of the sitting-room.

"Mercy me, how you scared me!" she exclaimed nervously.

"Maggie," said Lawrence seriously, "I want to ask you a question. Did Bessy Houghton ever say anything to you about me or did you ever say that she did? Give me a straight answer."

The dressmaker peered at him curiously.

"No. Bessy never so much as mentioned your name to me," she said, "and I never heard that she did to anyone else. Why?"

"Thank you. That was all I wanted to know," said Lawrence, ignoring her question, and disappearing as suddenly as he had come.

That evening at moonrise he passed through the kitchen dressed in his Sunday best. His mother met him at the door.

"Where are you going?" she asked querulously.

Lawrence looked her squarely in the face with accusing eyes, before which her own quailed.

"I'm going to see Bessy Houghton, Mother," he said sternly, "and to ask her pardon for believing the lie that has kept us apart so long."

Mrs. Eastman flushed crimson and opened her lips to speak. But something in Lawrence's grave, white face silenced her. She turned away without a word, knowing in her secret soul that her youngest-born was lost to her forever.

Lawrence found Bessy in the orchard under apple trees that were pyramids of pearly bloom. She looked at him through the twilight with reproach and aloofness in her eyes. But he put out his hands and caught her reluctant ones in

a masterful grasp.

"Listen to me, Bessy. Don't condemn me before you've heard me. I've been to blame for believing falsehoods about you, but I believe them no longer, and I've come to ask you to forgive me."

He told his story simply and straightforwardly. In strict justice he could not keep his mother's name out of it, but he merely said she had been mistaken. Perhaps Bessy understood none the less. She knew what Mrs. Eastman's reputation in Lynnfield was.

"You might have had a little more faith in me," she cried reproachfully.

"I know—I know. But I was beside myself with pain and wretchedness. Oh, Bessy, won't you forgive me? I love you so! If you send me away I'll go to the dogs. Forgive me, Bessy."

And she, being a woman, did forgive him.

"I've loved you from the first, Lawrence," she said, yielding to his kiss.

Their Girl Josie

When Paul Morgan, a rising young lawyer with justifiable political aspirations, married Elinor Ashton, leading woman at the Green Square Theatre, his old schoolmates and neighbours back in Spring Valley held up their hands in horror, and his father and mother up in the weather-grey Morgan homestead were crushed in the depths of humiliation. They had been too proud of Paul ... their only son and such a clever fellow ... and this was their punishment! He had married an actress! To Cyrus and Deborah Morgan, brought up and nourished all their lives on the strictest and straightest of old-fashioned beliefs both as regards this world and that which is to come, this was a tragedy.

They could not be brought to see it in any other light. As their neighbours said, "Cy Morgan never hilt up his head again after Paul married the play-acting woman." But perhaps it was less his humiliation than his sorrow which bowed down his erect form and sprinkled grey in his thick black hair that fifty years had hitherto spared. For Paul, forgetting the sacrifices his mother and father had made for him, had bitterly resented the letter of protest his father had written concerning his marriage. He wrote one angry, unfilial letter back and then came silence. Between grief and shame Cyrus and Deborah Morgan grew old rapidly in the year that followed.

At the end of that time Elinor Morgan, the mother of an hour, died; three

months later Paul Morgan was killed in a railroad collision. After the funeral Cyrus Morgan brought home to his wife their son's little daughter, Joscelyn Morgan.

Her aunt, Annice Ashton, had wanted the baby. Cyrus Morgan had been almost rude in his refusal. His son's daughter should never be brought up by an actress; it was bad enough that her mother had been one and had doubtless transmitted the taint to her child. But in Spring Valley, if anywhere, it might be eradicated.

At first neither Cyrus nor Deborah cared much for Joscelyn. They resented her parentage, her strange, un-Morgan-like name, and the pronounced resemblance she bore to the dark-haired, dark-eyed mother they had never seen. All the Morgans had been fair. If Joscelyn had had Paul's blue eyes and golden curls her grandfather and grandmother would have loved her sooner.

But the love came ... it had to. No living mortal could have resisted Joscelyn. She was the most winsome and lovable little mite of babyhood that ever toddled. Her big dark eyes overflowed with laughter before she could speak, her puckered red mouth broke constantly into dimples and cooing sounds. She had ways that no orthodox Spring Valley baby ever thought of having. Every smile was a caress, every gurgle of attempted speech a song. Her grandparents came to worship her and were stricter than ever with her by reason of their love. Because she was so dear to them she must be saved from her mother's blood.

Joscelyn shot up through a roly-poly childhood into slim, bewitching girlhood in a chill repressive atmosphere. Cyrus and Deborah were nothing if not thorough. The name of Joscelyn's mother was never mentioned to her; she was never called anything but Josie, which sounded more "Christian-like" than Joscelyn; and all the flowering out of her alien beauty was repressed as far as might be in the plainest and dullest of dresses and the primmest arrangement possible to riotous ripe-brown curls.

The girl was never allowed to visit her Aunt Annice, although frequently invited. Miss Ashton, however, wrote to her occasionally, and every Christmas sent a box of presents which even Cyrus and Deborah Morgan could not forbid her to accept, although they looked with disapproving eyes and ominously set lips at the dainty, frivolous trifles the actress woman sent. They would have liked to cast those painted fans and lace frills and beflounced lingerie into the fire as if they had been infected rags from a pest-house.

The path thus set for Joscelyn's dancing feet to walk in was indeed sedate and narrow. She was seldom allowed to mingle with the young people of even quiet, harmless Spring Valley; she was never allowed to attend local concerts, much less take part in them; she was forbidden to read novels, and Cyrus

Morgan burned an old copy of Shakespeare which Paul had given him years ago and which he had himself read and treasured, lest its perusal should awaken unlawful instincts in Joscelyn's heart. The girl's passion for reading was so marked that her grandparents felt that it was their duty to repress it as far as lay in their power.

But Joscelyn's vitality was such that all her bonds and bands served but little to check or retard the growth of her rich nature. Do what they might they could not make a Morgan of her. Her every step was a dance, her every word and gesture full of a grace and virility that filled the old folks with uneasy wonder. She seemed to them charged with dangerous tendencies all the more potent from repression. She was sweet-tempered and sunny, truthful and modest, but she was as little like the trim, simple Spring Valley girls as a crimson rose is like a field daisy, and her unlikeness bore heavily on her grandparents.

Yet they loved her and were proud of her. "Our girl Josie," as they called her, was more to them than they would have admitted even to themselves, and in the main they were satisfied with her, although the grandmother grumbled because Josie did not take kindly to patchwork and rug-making and the grandfather would fain have toned down that exuberance of beauty and vivacity into the meeker pattern of maidenhood he had been accustomed to.

When Joscelyn was seventeen Deborah Morgan noticed a change in her. The girl became quieter and more brooding, falling at times into strange, idle reveries, with her hands clasped over her knee and her big eyes fixed unseeingly on space; or she would creep away for solitary rambles in the beech wood, going away droopingly and returning with dusky glowing cheeks and a nameless radiance, as of some newly discovered power, shining through every muscle and motion. Mrs. Morgan thought the child needed a tonic and gave her sulphur and molasses.

One day the revelation came. Cyrus and Deborah had driven across the valley to visit their married daughter. Not finding her at home they returned. Mrs. Morgan went into the house while her husband went to the stable. Joscelyn was not in the kitchen, but the grandmother heard the sound of voices and laughter in the sitting room across the hall.

"What company has Josie got?" she wondered, as she opened the hall door and paused for a moment on the threshold to listen. As she listened her old face grew grey and pinched; she turned noiselessly and left the house, and flew to her husband as one distracted.

"Cyrus, Josie is play-acting in the room ... laughing and reciting and going on. I heard her. Oh, I've always feared it would break out in her and it has! Come you and listen to her."

The old couple crept through the kitchen and across the hall to the open parlour door as if they were stalking a thief. Joscelyn's laugh rang out as they did so ... a mocking, triumphant peal. Cyrus and Deborah shivered as if they had heard sacrilege.

Joscelyn had put on a trailing, clinging black skirt which her aunt had sent her a year ago and which she had never been permitted to wear. It transformed her into a woman. She had cast aside her waist of dark plum-coloured homespun and wrapped a silken shawl about herself until only her beautiful arms and shoulders were left bare. Her hair, glossy and brown, with burnished red lights where the rays of the dull autumn sun struck on it through the window, was heaped high on her head and held in place by a fillet of pearl beads. Her cheeks were crimson, her whole body from head to foot instinct and alive with a beauty that to Cyrus and Deborah, as they stood mute with horror in the open doorway, seemed akin to some devilish enchantment.

Joscelyn, rapt away from her surroundings, did not perceive her grandparents. Her face was turned from them and she was addressing an unseen auditor in passionate denunciation. She spoke, moved, posed, gesticulated, with an inborn genius shining through every motion and tone like an illuminating lamp.

"Josie, what are you doing?"

It was Cyrus who spoke, advancing into the room like a stern, hard impersonation of judgment. Joscelyn's outstretched arm fell to her side and she turned sharply around; fear came into her face and the light went out of it. A moment before she had been a woman, splendid, unafraid; now she was again the schoolgirl, too confused and shamed to speak.

"What are you doing, Josie?" asked her grandfather again, "dressed up in that indecent manner and talking and twisting to yourself?"

Joscelyn's face, that had grown pale, flamed scarlet again. She lifted her head proudly.

"I was trying Aunt Annice's part in her new play," she answered. "I have not been doing anything wrong, Grandfather."

"Wrong! It's your mother's blood coming out in you, girl, in spite of all our care! Where did you get that play?"

"Aunt Annice sent it to me," answered Joscelyn, casting a quick glance at the book on the table. Then, when her grandfather picked it up gingerly, as if he feared contamination, she added quickly, "Oh, give it to me, please, Grandfather. Don't take it away."

"I am going to burn it," said Cyrus Morgan sternly.

"Oh, don't, Grandfather," cried Joscelyn, with a sob in her voice. "Don't burn it, please. I ... I ... won't practise out of it any more. I'm sorry I've displeased you. Please give me my book."

"No," was the stern reply. "Go to your room, girl, and take off that rig. There is to be no more play-acting in my house, remember that."

He flung the book into the fire that was burning in the grate. For the first time in her life Joscelyn flamed out into passionate defiance.

"You are cruel and unjust, Grandfather. I have done no wrong ... it is not doing wrong to develop the one gift I have. It's the only thing I can do ... and I am going to do it. My mother was an actress and a good woman. So is Aunt Annice. So I mean to be."

"Oh, Josie, Josie," said her grandmother in a scared voice. Her grandfather only repeated sternly, "Go, take that rig off, girl, and let us hear no more of this."

Joscelyn went but she left consternation behind her. Cyrus and Deborah could not have been more shocked if they had discovered the girl robbing her grandfather's desk. They talked the matter over bitterly at the kitchen hearth that night.

"We haven't been strict enough with the girl, Mother," said Cyrus angrily. "We'll have to be stricter if we don't want to have her disgracing us. Did you hear how she defied me? 'So I mean to be,' she says. Mother, we'll have trouble with that girl yet."

"Don't be too harsh with her, Pa ... it'll maybe only drive her to worse," sobbed Deborah.

"I ain't going to be harsh. What I do is for her own good, you know that, Mother. Josie is as dear to me as she is to you, but we've got to be stricter with her."

They were. From that day Josie was watched and distrusted. She was never permitted to be alone. There were no more solitary walks. She felt herself under the surveillance of cold, unsympathetic eyes every moment and her very soul writhed. Joscelyn Morgan, the high-spirited daughter of high-spirited parents, could not long submit to such treatment. It might have passed with a child; to a woman, thrilling with life and conscious power to her very fingertips, it was galling beyond measure. Joscelyn rebelled, but she did nothing secretly ... that was not her nature. She wrote to her Aunt Annice, and when she received her reply she went straight and fearlessly to her grandparents with it.

"Grandfather, this letter is from my aunt. She wishes me to go and live

with her and prepare for the stage. I told her I wished to do so. I am going."

Cyrus and Deborah looked at her in mute dismay.

"I know you despise the profession of an actress," the girl went on with heightened colour. "I am sorry you think so about it because it is the only one open to me. I must go ... I must."

"Yes, you must," said Cyrus cruelly. "It's in your blood ... your bad blood, girl."

"My blood isn't bad," cried Joscelyn proudly. "My mother was a sweet, true, good woman. You are unjust, Grandfather. But I don't want you to be angry with me. I love you both and I am very grateful indeed for all your kindness to me. I wish that you could understand what...."

"We understand enough," interrupted Cyrus harshly. "This is all I have to say. Go to your play-acting aunt if you want to. Your grandmother and me won't hinder you. But you'll come back here no more. We'll have nothing further to do with you. You can choose your own way and walk in it."

With this dictum Joscelyn went from Spring Valley. She clung to Deborah and wept at parting, but Cyrus did not even say goodbye to her. On the morning of her departure he went away on business and did not return until evening.

Joscelyn went on the stage. Her aunt's influence and her mother's fame helped her much. She missed the hard experiences that come to the unassisted beginner. But her own genius must have won in any case. She had all her mother's gifts, deepened by her inheritance of Morgan intensity and sincerity ... much, too, of the Morgan firmness of will. When Joscelyn Morgan was twenty-two she was famous over two continents.

When Cyrus Morgan returned home on the evening after his granddaughter's departure he told his wife that she was never to mention the girl's name in his hearing again. Deborah obeyed. She thought her husband was right, albeit she might in her own heart deplore the necessity of such a decree. Joscelyn had disgraced them; could that be forgiven?

Nevertheless both the old people missed her terribly. The house seemed to have lost its soul with that vivid, ripely tinted young life. They got their married daughter's oldest girl, Pauline, to come and stay with them. Pauline was a quiet, docile maiden, industrious and commonplace—just such a girl as they had vainly striven to make of Joscelyn, to whom Pauline had always been held up as a model. Yet neither Cyrus nor Deborah took to her, and they let her go unregretfully when they found that she wished to return home.

"She hasn't any of Josie's gimp," was old Cyrus's unspoken fault. Deborah

spoke, but all she said was, "Polly's a good girl, Father, only she hasn't any snap."

Joscelyn wrote to Deborah occasionally, telling her freely of her plans and doings. If it hurt the girl that no notice was ever taken of her letters she still wrote them. Deborah read the letters grimly and then left them in Cyrus's way. Cyrus would not read them at first; later on he read them stealthily when Deborah was out of the house.

When Joscelyn began to succeed she sent to the old farmhouse papers and magazines containing her photographs and criticisms of her plays and acting. Deborah cut them out and kept them in her upper bureau drawer with Joscelyn's letters. Once she overlooked one and Cyrus found it when he was kindling the fire. He got the scissors and cut it out carefully. A month later Deborah discovered it between the leaves of the family Bible.

But Joscelyn's name was never mentioned between them, and when other people asked them concerning her their replies were cold and ungracious. In a way they had relented towards her, but their shame of her remained. They could never forget that she was an actress.

Once, six years after Joscelyn had left Spring Valley, Cyrus, who was reading a paper by the table, got up with an angry exclamation and stuffed it into the stove, thumping the lid on over it with grim malignity.

"That fool dunno what he's talking about," was all he would say. Deborah had her share of curiosity. The paper was the National Gazette and she knew that their next-door neighbour, James Pennan, took it. She went over that evening and borrowed it, saying that their own had been burned before she had had time to read the serial in it. With one exception she read all its columns carefully without finding anything to explain her husband's anger. Then she doubtfully plunged into the exception ... a column of "Stage Notes." Halfway down she came upon an adverse criticism of Joscelyn Morgan and her new play. It was malicious and vituperative. Deborah Morgan's old eyes sparkled dangerously as she read it.

"I guess somebody is pretty jealous of Josie," she muttered. "I don't wonder Pa was riled up. But I guess she can hold her own. She's a Morgan."

No long time after this Cyrus took a notion he'd like a trip to the city. He'd like to see the Horse Fair and look up Cousin Hiram Morgan's folks.

"Hiram and me used to be great chums, Mother. And we're getting kind of mossy, I guess, never stirring out of Spring Valley. Let's go and dissipate for a week—what say?"

Deborah agreed readily, albeit of late years she had been much averse to

going far from home and had never at any time been very fond of Cousin Hiram's wife. Cyrus was as pleased as a child over their trip. On the second day of their sojourn in the city he slipped away when Deborah had gone shopping with Mrs. Hiram and hurried through the streets to the Green Square Theatre with a hang-dog look. He bought a ticket apologetically and sneaked in to his seat. It was a matinee performance, and Joscelyn Morgan was starring in her famous new play.

Cyrus waited for the curtain to rise, feeling as if every one of his Spring Valley neighbours must know where he was and revile him for it. If Deborah were ever to find out ... but Deborah must never find out! For the first time in their married life the old man deliberately plotted to deceive his old wife. He must see his girl Josie just once; it was a terrible thing that she was an actress, but she was a successful one, nobody could deny that, except fools who yapped in the National Gazette.

The curtain went up and Cyrus rubbed his eyes. He had certainly braced his nerves to behold some mystery of iniquity; instead he saw an old kitchen so like his own at home that it bewildered him; and there, sitting by the cheery wood stove, in homespun gown, with primly braided hair, was Joscelyn—his girl Josie, as he had seen her a thousand times by his own ingle-side. The building rang with applause; one old man pulled out a red bandanna and wiped tears of joy and pride from his eyes. She hadn't changed—Josie hadn't changed. Play-acting hadn't spoiled her—couldn't spoil her. Wasn't she Paul's daughter! And all this applause was for her—for Josie.

Joscelyn's new play was a homely, pleasant production with rollicking comedy and heart-moving pathos skilfully commingled. Joscelyn pervaded it all with a convincing simplicity that was really the triumph of art. Cyrus Morgan listened and exulted in her; at every burst of applause his eyes gleamed with pride. He wanted to go on the stage and box the ears of the villain who plotted against her; he wanted to shake hands with the good woman who stood by her; he wanted to pay off the mortgage and make Josie happy. He wiped tears from his eyes in the third act when Josie was turned out of doors and, when the fourth left her a happy, blushing bride, hand in hand with her farmer lover, he could have wept again for joy.

Cyrus Morgan went out into the daylight feeling as if he had awakened from a dream. At the outer door he came upon Mrs. Hiram and Deborah. Deborah's face was stained with tears, and she caught at his hand.

"Oh, Pa, wasn't it splendid—wasn't our girl Josie splendid! I'm so proud of her. Oh, I was bound to hear her. I was afraid you'd be mad, so I didn't let on and when I saw you in the seat down there I couldn't believe my eyes. Oh, I've just been crying the whole time. Wasn't it splendid! Wasn't our girl Josie

splendid?"

The crowd around looked at the old pair with amused, indulgent curiosity, but they were quite oblivious to their surroundings, even to Mrs. Hiram's anxiety to decoy them away. Cyrus Morgan cleared his throat and said, "It was great, Mother, great. She took the shine off the other play-actors all right. I knew that National Gazette man didn't know what he was talking about. Mother, let us go and see Josie right off. She's stopping with her aunt at the Maberly Hotel—I saw it in the paper this morning. I'm going to tell her she was right and we were wrong. Josie's beat them all, and I'm going to tell her so!"

When Jack and Jill Took a Hand

Jack's Side of It

Jill says I have to begin this story because it was me—I mean it was I—who made all the trouble in the first place. That is so like Jill. She is such a good hand at forgetting. Why, it was she who suggested the plot to me. I should never have thought of it myself—not that Jill is any smarter than I am, either, but girls are such creatures for planning up mischief and leading other folks into it and then laying the blame on them when things go wrong. How could I tell Dick would act so like a mule? I thought grown-up folks had more sense. Aunt Tommy was down on me for weeks, while she thought Jill a regular heroine. But there! Girls don't know anything about being fair, and I am determined I will never have anything more to do with them and their love affairs as long as I live. Jill says I will change my mind when I grow up, but I won't.

Still, Jill is a pretty good sort of girl. I have to scold her sometimes, but if any other chap tried to I would punch his head for him.

I suppose it is time I explained who Dick and Aunt Tommy are. Dick is our minister. He hasn't been it very long. He only came a year ago. I shall never forget how surprised Jill and I were that first Sunday we went to church and saw him. We had always thought that ministers had to be old. All the ministers we knew were. Mr. Grinnell, the one before Dick came, must have been as old as Methuselah. But Dick was young—and good-looking. Jill said she thought it a positive sin for a minister to be so good-looking, it didn't seem Christian; but that was just because all the ministers we knew happened to be homely so that it didn't appear natural.

Dick was tall and pale and looked as if he had heaps of brains. He had

thick curly brown hair and big dark blue eyes—Jill said his eyes were like an archangel's, but how could she tell? She never saw an archangel. I liked his nose. It was so straight and finished-looking. Mr. Grinnell had the worst-looking nose you ever saw. Jill and I used to make poetry about it in church to keep from falling asleep when he preached such awful long sermons.

Dick preached great sermons. They were so nice and short. It was such fun to hear him thump the pulpit when he got excited; and when he got more excited still he would lean over the pulpit, his face all white, and talk so low and solemn that it would just send the most gorgeous thrills through you.

Dick came to Owlwood—that's our place; I hate these explanations—quite a lot, even before Aunt Tommy came. He and Father were chums; they had been in college together and Father said Dick was the best football player he ever knew. Jill and I soon got acquainted with him and this was another uncanny thing. We had never thought it possible to get acquainted with a minister. Jill said she didn't think it proper for a real live minister to be so chummy. But then Jill was a little jealous because Dick and I, being both men; were better friends than he and she could be. He taught me to skate that winter and fence with canes and do long division. I could never understand long division before Dick came, although I was away on in fractions.

Jill has just been in and says I ought to explain that Dick's name wasn't Dick. I do wish Jill would mind her own business. Of course it wasn't. His real name was the Reverend Stephen Richmond, but Jill and I always called him Dick behind his back; it seemed so jolly and venturesome, somehow, to speak of a minister like that. Only we had to be careful not to let Father and Mother hear us. Mother wouldn't even let Father call Dick "Stephen"; she said it would set a bad example of familiarity to the children. Mother is an old darling. She won't believe we're half as bad as we are.

Well, early in May comes Aunt Tommy. I must explain who Aunt Tommy is or Jill will be at me again. She is Father's youngest sister and her real name is Bertha Gordon, but Father has always called her Tommy and she likes it.

Jill and I had never seen Aunt Tommy before, but we took to her from the start because she was so pretty and because she talked to us just as if we were grown up. She called Jill Elizabeth, and Jill would adore a Hottentot who called her Elizabeth.

Aunt Tommy is the prettiest girl I ever saw. If Jill is half as good-looking when she gets to be twenty—she's only ten now, same age as I am, we're twins—I shall be proud of her for a sister.

Aunt Tommy is all white and dimpled. She has curly red hair and big jolly brown eyes and scrumptious freckles. I do like freckles in a girl, although Jill

goes wild if she thinks she has one on her nose. When we talked of writing this story Jill said I wasn't to say that Aunt Tommy had freckles because it wouldn't sound romantic. But I don't care. She has freckles and I think they are all right.

We went to church with Aunt Tommy the first Sunday after she came, one on each side of her. Aunt Tommy is the only girl in the world I'd walk hand in hand with before people. She looked fine that day. She had on a gorgeous dress, all frills and ruffles, and a big white floppy hat. I was proud of her for an aunt, I can tell you, and I was anxious for Dick to see her. When he came up to speak to me and Jill after church came out I said, "Aunt Tommy, this is Mr. Richmond," just like the grown-up people say. Aunt Tommy and Dick shook hands and Dick got as red as anything. It was funny to see him.

The very next evening he came down to Owlwood. We hadn't expected him until Tuesday, for he never came Monday night before. That is Father's night for going to a lodge meeting. Mother was away this time too. I met Dick on the porch and took him into the parlour, thinking what a bully talk we could have all alone together, without Jill bothering around. But in a minute Aunt Tommy came in and she and Dick began to talk, and I just couldn't get a word in edgewise. I got so disgusted I started out, but I don't believe they ever noticed I was gone. I liked Aunt Tommy very well, but I didn't think she had any business to monopolize Dick like that when he and I were such old chums.

Outside I came across Jill. She was sitting all alone in the dark, curled up on the edge of the verandah just where she could see into the parlour through the big glass door. I sat down beside her, for I wanted sympathy.

"Dick's in there talking to Aunt Tommy," I said. "I don't see what makes him want to talk to her."

"What a goose you are!" said Jill in that aggravatingly patronizing way of hers. "Why, Dick has fallen in love with Aunt Tommy!"

Honest, I jumped. I never was so surprised.

"How do you know?" I asked.

"Because I do," said Jill. "I knew it yesterday at church and I think it is so romantic."

"I don't see how you can tell," I said—and I didn't.

"You'll understand better when you get older," said Jill. Sometimes Jill talks as if she were a hundred years older than I am, instead of being a twin. And really, sometimes I think she is older.

"I didn't think ministers ever fell in love," I protested.

"Some do," said Jill sagely. "Mr. Grinnell wouldn't ever, I suppose. But Dick is different. I'd like him for a husband myself. But he'd be too old for me by the time I grew up, so I suppose I'll have to let Aunt Tommy have him. It will be all in the family anyhow—that is one comfort. I think Aunt Tommy ought to have me for a flower girl and I'll wear pink silk clouded over with white chiffon and carry a big bouquet of roses."

"Jill, you take my breath away," I said, and she did. My imagination couldn't travel as fast as that. But after I had thought the idea over a bit I liked it. It was a good deal like a book; and, besides, a minister is a respectable thing to have in a family.

"We must help them all we can," said Jill.

"What can we do?" I asked.

"We must praise Dick to Aunt Tommy and Aunt Tommy to Dick and we must keep out of the way—we mustn't ever hang around when they want to be alone," said Jill.

"I don't want to give up being chums with Dick," I grumbled.

"We must be self-sacrificing," said Jill. And that sounded so fine it reconciled me to the attempt.

We sat there and watched Dick and Aunt Tommy for an hour. I thought they were awfully prim and stiff. If I'd been Dick I'd have gone over and hugged her. I said so to Jill and Jill was shocked. She said it wouldn't be proper when they weren't even engaged.

When Dick went away Aunt Tommy came out to the verandah and discovered us. She sat down between us and put her arms about us. Aunt Tommy has such cute ways.

"I like your minister very much," she said.

"He's bully," I said.

"He's as handsome as a prince," Jill said.

"He preaches splendid sermons—he makes people sit up in church, I can tell you," I said.

"He has a heavenly tenor voice," Jill said.

"He's got a magnificent muscle," I said.

"He has the most poetical eyes," Jill said.

"He swims like a duck," I said.

"He looks just like a Greek god," Jill said.

I'm sure Jill couldn't have known what a Greek god looked like, but I suppose she got the comparison out of some novel. Jill is always reading novels. She borrows them from the cook.

Aunt Tommy laughed and said, "You darlings."

For the next three months Jill and I were wild. It was just like reading a serial story to watch Dick and Aunt Tommy. One day when Dick came Aunt Tommy wasn't quite ready to come down, so Jill and I went in to the parlour to help things along. We knew we hadn't much time, so we began right off.

"Aunt Tommy is the jolliest girl I know," I said.

"She is as beautiful as a dream," Jill said.

"She can play games as good as a boy," I said.

"She does the most elegant fancy work," Jill said.

"She never gets mad," I said.

"She plays and sings divinely," Jill said.

"She can cook awfully good things," I said, for I was beginning to run short of compliments. Jill was horrified; she said afterwards that it wasn't a bit romantic. But I don't care—I believe Dick liked it, for he smiled with his eyes I just as he always does when he's pleased. Girls don't understand everything.

But at the end of three months we began to get anxious. Things were going so slow. Dick and Aunt Tommy didn't seem a bit further ahead than at first. Jill said it was because Aunt Tommy didn't encourage Dick enough.

"I do wish we could hurry them up a little," she said. "At this rate they will never be married this year and by next I'll be too big to be a flower girl. I'm stretching out horribly as it is. Mother has had to let down my frocks again."

"I wish they would get engaged and have done with it," I said. "My mind would be at rest then. It's all Dick's fault. Why doesn't he ask Aunt Tommy to marry him? What's making him so slow about it? If I wanted a girl to marry me—but I wouldn't ever—I'd tell her so right spang off."

"I suppose ministers have to be more dignified," said Jill, "but three months ought to be enough time for anyone. And Aunt Tommy is only going to be here another month. If Dick could be made a little jealous it would hurry him up. And he could be made jealous if you had any spunk about you."

"I guess I've got more spunk than you have," I said.

"The trouble with Dick is this," said Jill. "There is nobody else coming to see Aunt Tommy and he thinks he is sure of her. If you could tell him something different it would stir him up."

"Are you sure it would?" I asked.

"It always does in novels," said Jill. And that settled it, of course.

Jill and I fixed up what I was to say and Jill made me say it over and over again to be sure I had it right. I told her—sarcastically—that she'd better say it herself and then it would be done properly. Jill said she would if it were Aunt Tommy, but when it was Dick it was better for a man to do it. So of course I agreed.

I didn't know when I would have a chance to stir Dick up, but Providence—so Jill said—favoured us. Aunt Tommy didn't expect Dick down the next night, so she and Father and Mother all went away somewhere. Dick came after all, and Jill sent me into the parlour to tell him. He was standing before the mantel looking at Aunt Tommy's picture. There was such an adoring look in his eyes. I could see it quite plain in the mirror before him. I practised that look a lot before my own glass after that—because I thought it might come in handy some time, you know—but I guess I couldn't have got it just right because when I tried it on Jill she asked me if I had a pain.

"Well, Jack, old man," said Dick, sitting down on the sofa. I sat down before him.

"Aunt Tommy is out," I said, to get the worst over. "I guess you like Aunt Tommy pretty well, don't you, Mr. Richmond?"

"Yes," said Dick softly.

"So do other men," I said—mysterious, as Jill had ordered me.

Dick thumped one of the sofa pillows.

"Yes, I suppose so," he said.

"There's a man in New York who just worships Aunt Tommy," I said. "He writes her most every day and sends her books and music and elegant presents. I guess she's pretty fond of him too. She keeps his photograph on her bedroom table and I've seen her kissing it."

I stopped there, not because I had said all I had to say, but because Dick's face scared me—honest, it did. It had all gone white, like it does in the pulpit sometimes when he is tremendously in earnest, only ten times worse. But all he said was,

"Is your Aunt Bertha engaged to this—this man?"

"Not exactly engaged," I said, "but I guess anybody else who wants to marry her will have to reckon with him."

Dick got up.

"I think I won't wait this evening," he said.

"I wish you'd stay and have a talk with me," I said. "I haven't had a talk with you for ages and I have a million things to tell you."

Dick smiled as if it hurt him to smile.

"I can't tonight, Jacky. Some other time we'll have a good powwow, old chap."

He took his hat and went out. Then Jill came flying in to hear all about it. I told her as well as I could, but she wasn't satisfied. If Dick took it so quietly, she declared, I couldn't have made it strong enough.

"If you had seen Dick's face," I said, "you would have thought I made it plenty strong. And I'd like to know what Aunt Tommy will say to all this when she finds out."

"Well, you didn't tell a thing but what was true," said Jill.

The next evening was Dick's regular night for coming, but he didn't come, although Jill and I went down the lane a dozen times to watch for him. The night after that was prayer-meeting night. Dick had always walked home with Aunt Tommy and us, but that night he didn't. He only just bowed and smiled as he passed us in the porch. Aunt Tommy hardly spoke all the way home, only just held tight to Jill's and my hands. But after we got home she seemed in great spirits and laughed and chatted with Father and Mother.

"What does this mean?" asked Jill, grabbing me in the hall on our way to bed.

"You'd better get another novel from the cook and find out," I said grouchily. I was disgusted with things in general and Dick in particular.

The three weeks that followed were awful. Dick never came near Owlwood. Jill and I fought every day, we were so cross and disappointed. Nothing had come out right, and Jill blamed it all on me. She said I must have made it too strong. There was no fun in anything, not even in going to church. Dick hardly thumped the pulpit at all and when he did it was only a measly little thump. But Aunt Tommy didn't seem to worry any. She sang and laughed and joked from morning to night.

"She doesn't mind Dick's making an ass of himself, anyway, that's one consolation," I said to Jill.

"She is breaking her heart about it," said Jill, "and that's your consolation!"

"I don't believe it," I said. "What makes you think so?"

"She cries every night," said Jill. "I can tell by the look of her eyes in the

morning."

"She doesn't look half as woebegone over it as you do," I said.

"If I had her reason for looking woebegone I wouldn't look it either," said Jill.

I asked her to explain her meaning, but she only said that little boys couldn't understand those things.

Things went on like this for another week. Then they reached—so Jill says—a climax. If Jill knows what that means I don't. But Pinky Carewe was the climax. Pinky's name is James, but Jill and I always called him Pinky because we couldn't bear him. He took to calling at Owlwood and one evening he took Aunt Tommy out driving. Then Jill came to me.

"Something has got to be done," she said resolutely. "I am not going to have Pinky Carewe for an Uncle Tommy and that is all there is about it. You must go straight to Dick and tell him the truth about the New York man."

I looked at Jill to see if she were in earnest. When I saw that she was I said, "I wouldn't take all the gems of Golconda and go and tell Dick that I'd been hoaxing him. You can do it yourself, Jill Gordon."

"You didn't tell him anything that wasn't true," said Jill.

"I don't know how a minister might look upon it," I said. "Anyway, I won't go."

"Then I suppose I've got to," said Jill very dolefully.

"Yes, you'll have to," I said.

And this finishes my part of the story, and Jill is going to tell the rest. But you needn't believe everything she says about me in it.

Jill's Side of It

Jacky has made a fearful muddle of his part, but I suppose I shall just have to let it go. You couldn't expect much better of a boy. But I am determined to re-describe Aunt Tommy, for the way Jacky has done it is just disgraceful. I know exactly how to do it, the way it is always done in stories.

Aunt Tommy is divinely beautiful. Her magnificent wealth of burnished auburn hair flows back in amethystine waves from her sun-kissed brow. Her eyes are gloriously dark and deep, like midnight lakes mirroring the stars of heaven; her features are like sculptured marble and her mouth is like a trembling, curving Cupid's bow (this is a classical allusion) luscious and glowing as a dewy rose. Her creamy skin is as fair and flawless as the inner petals of a white lily. (She may have a weeny teeny freckle or two in summer,

but you'd never notice.) Her slender form is matchless in its symmetry and her voice is like the ripple of a woodland brook.

There, I'm sure that's ever so much better than Jacky's description, and now I can proceed with a clear conscience.

Well, I didn't like the idea of going and explaining to Dick very much, but it had to be done unless I wanted to run the risk of having Pinky Carewe in the family. So I went the next morning.

I put on my very prettiest pink organdie dress and did my hair the new way, which is very becoming to me. When you are going to have an important interview with a man it is always well to look your very best. I put on my big hat with the wreath of pink roses that Aunt Tommy had brought me from New York and took my spandy ruffled parasol.

"With your shield or upon it, Jill," said Jacky when I started. (This is another classical allusion.)

I went straight up the hill and down the road to the manse where Dick lived with his old housekeeper, Mrs. Dodge. She came to the door when I knocked and I said, very politely, "Can I see the Reverend Stephen Richmond, if you please?"

Mrs. Dodge went upstairs and came right back saying would I please go up to the study. Up I went, my heart in my mouth, I can tell you, and there was Dick among his books, looking so pale and sorrowful and interesting, for all the world like Lord Algernon Francis in the splendid serial in the paper cook took. There was a Madonna on his desk that looked just like Aunt Tommy.

"Good evening, Miss Elizabeth," said Dick, just as if I were grown up, you know. "Won't you sit down? Try that green velvet chair. I am sure it was created for a pink dress and unfortunately neither Mrs. Dodge nor I possess one. How are all your people?"

"We are all pretty well; thank you," I said, "except Aunt Tommy. She—" I was going to say, "She cries every night after she goes to bed," but I remembered just in time that if I were in Aunt Tommy's place I wouldn't want a man to know I cried about him even if I did. So I said instead "—she has got a cold."

"Ah, indeed, I am sorry to hear it," said Dick, politely but coldly, as if it were part of his duty as a minister to be sorry for anybody who had a cold, but as if, apart from that, it was not a concern of his if Aunt Tommy had galloping consumption.

"And Jack and I are terribly harrowed up in our minds," I went on. "That is what I've come up to see you about."

"Well, tell me all about it," said Dick.

"I'm afraid to," I said. "I know you'll be cross even if you are a minister. It's about what Jack told you about that man in New York and Aunt Tommy."

Dick turned as red as fire.

"I'd rather not discuss your Aunt Bertha's affairs," he said stiffly.

"You must hear this," I cried, feeling thankful that Jacky hadn't come after all, for he'd never have got any further ahead after that snub. "It's all a mistake. There is a man in New York and he just worships Aunt Tommy and she just adores him. But he's seventy years old and he's her Uncle Matthew who brought her up ever since her father died and you've heard her talking about him a hundred times. That's all, cross my heart solemn and true."

You never saw anything like Dick's face when I stopped. It looked just like a sunrise. But he said slowly, "Why did Jacky tell me such a—tell me it in such a way?"

"We wanted to make you jealous," I said. "I put Jacky up to it."

"I didn't think it was in either of you to do such a thing," said Dick reproachfully.

"Oh, Dick," I cried—fancy my calling him Dick right to his face! Jacky will never believe I really did it. He says I would never have dared. But it wasn't daring at all, it was just forgetting. "Oh, Dick, we didn't mean any harm. We thought you weren't getting on fast enough and we wanted to stir you up like they do in books. We thought if we made you jealous it would work all right. We didn't mean any harm. Oh, please forgive us!"

I was just ready to cry. But that dear Dick leaned over the table and patted my hand.

"There, there, it's all right. I understand and of course I forgive you. Don't cry, sweetheart."

The way Dick said "sweetheart" was perfectly lovely. I envied Aunt Tommy, and I wanted to keep on crying so that he would go on comforting me.

"And you'll come back to see Aunt Tommy again?" I said.

Dick's face clouded over; he got up and walked around the room several times before he said a word. Then he came and sat down beside me and explained it all to me, just as if I were grown up.

"Sweetheart, we'll talk this all out. You see, it is this way. Your Aunt Bertha is the sweetest woman in the world. But I'm only a poor minister and I

have no right to ask her to share my life of hard work and self-denial. And even if I dared I know she wouldn't do it. She doesn't care anything for me except as a friend. I never meant to tell her I cared for her but I couldn't help going to Owlwood, even though I knew it was a weakness on my part. So now that I'm out of the habit of going I think it would be wisest to stay out. It hurts dreadfully, but it would hurt worse after a while. Don't you agree with me, Miss Elizabeth?"

I thought hard and fast. If I were in Aunt Tommy's place I mightn't want a man to know I cried about him, but I was quite sure I'd rather have him know than have him stay away because he didn't know. So I spoke right up.

"No, I don't, Mr. Richmond; Aunt Tommy does care—you just ask her. She cries every blessed night because you never come to Owlwood."

"Oh, Elizabeth!" said Dick.

He got up and stalked about the room again.

"You'll come back?" I said.

"Yes," he answered.

I drew a long breath. It was such a responsibility off my mind.

"Then you'd better come down with me right off," I said, "for Pinky Carewe had her out driving last night and I want a stop put to that as soon as possible. Even if he is rich he's a perfect pig."

Dick got his hat and came. We walked up the road in lovely creamy yellow twilight and I was, oh, so happy.

"Isn't it just like a novel?" I said.

"I am afraid, Elizabeth," said Dick preachily, "that you read too many novels, and not the right kind, either. Some of these days I am going to ask you to promise me that you will read no more books except those your mother and I pick out for you."

You don't know how squelched I felt. And I knew I would have to promise, too, for Dick can make me do anything he likes.

When we got to Owlwood I left Dick in the parlour and flew up to Aunt Tommy's room. I found her all scrunched up on her bed in the dark with her face in the pillows.

"Aunt Tommy, Dick is down in the parlour and he wants to see you," I said.

Didn't Aunt Tommy fly up, though!

"Oh, Jill—but I'm not fit to be seen—tell him I'll be down in a few minutes."

I knew Aunt Tommy wanted to fix her hair and dab rose-water on her eyes, so I trotted meekly down and told Dick. Then I flew out to Jacky and dragged him around to the glass door. It was all hung over with vines and a wee bit ajar so that we could see and hear everything that went on.

Jacky said it was only sneaks that listened—but he didn't say it until next day. At the time he listened just as hard as I did. I didn't care if it was mean. I just had to listen. I was perfectly wild to hear how a man would propose and how a girl would accept and it was too good a chance to lose.

Presently in sweeps Aunt Tommy, in an elegant dress, not a hair out of place. She looked perfectly sweet, only her nose was a little red. Dick looked at her for just a moment, then he stepped forward and took her right into his arms.

Aunt Tommy drew back her head for just a second as if she were going to crush him in the dust, and then she just all kind of crumpled up and her face went down on his shoulder.

"Oh—Bertha—I—love—you—I—love you," he said, just like that, all quick and jerky.

"You—you have taken a queer way of showing it," said Aunt Tommy, all muffled.

"I—I—was led to believe that there was another man—whom you cared for—and I thought you were only trifling with me. So I sulked like a jealous fool. Bertha, darling, you do love me a little, don't you?"

Aunt Tommy lifted her head and stuck up her mouth and he kissed her. And there it was, all over, and they were engaged as quick as that, mind you. He didn't even go down on his knees. There was nothing romantic about it and I was never so disgusted in my life. When I grow up and anybody proposes to me he will have to be a good deal more flowery and eloquent than that, I can tell you, if he wants me to listen to him.

I left Jacky peeking still and I went to bed. After a long time Aunt Tommy came up to my room and sat down on my bed in the moonlight.

"You dear blessed Elizabeth!" she said.

"It's all right then, is it?" I asked.

"Yes, it is all right, thanks to you, dearie. We are to be married in October and somebody must be my little flower girl."

"I think Dick will make a splendid husband," I said. "But Aunt Tommy,

you mustn't be too hard on Jacky. He only wanted to help things along, and it was I who put him up it in the first place."

"You have atoned by going and confessing," said Aunt Tommy with a hug, "Jacky had no business to put that off on you. I'll forgive him, of course, but I'll punish him by not letting him know that I will for a little while. Then I'll ask him to be a page at my wedding."

Well, the wedding came off last week. It was a perfectly gorgeous affair. Aunt Tommy's dress was a dream—and so was mine, all pink silk and chiffon and carnations. Jacky made a magnificent page too, in a suit of white velvet. The wedding cake was four stories high, and Dick looked perfectly handsome. He kissed me too, right after he kissed Aunt Tommy.

So everything turned out all right, and I believe Dick would never have dared to speak up if we hadn't helped things along. But Jacky and I have decided that we will never meddle in an affair of the kind again. It is too hard on the nerves.