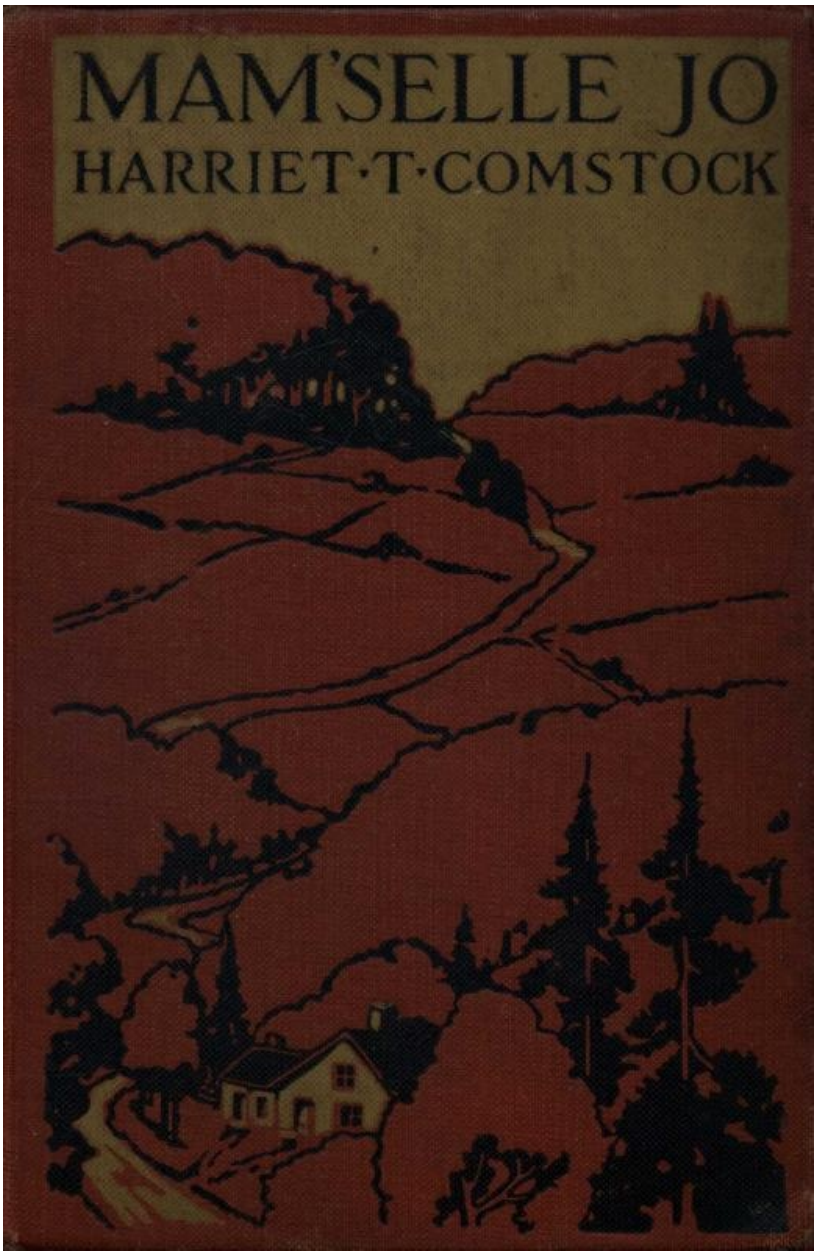
The Project Gutenberg eBook of Mam'selle Jo, by Harriet T. Comstock

Title: Mam'selle Jo

Creator: Harriet T. Comstock
Illustrator: E. F. Ward

Release date: July 4, 2015 [EBook #49361]

Language: English



Cover art

"Jo Morey was forty and as dark as a midwinter day deprived of the sanctifying warmth of the sun. She was formed for service, not charm."

"Jo Morey was forty and as dark as a midwinter day deprived of the sanctifying warmth of the sun. She was formed for service, not charm."

MAM'SELLE JO

BY
HARRIET T. COMSTOCK

Illustrated
By
E. F. Ward

TORONTO
THE MUSSON BOOK CO.
LIMITED
1918

PRINTED IN GARDEN CITY, N. Y., U. S. A.

DEDICATION

Beside each cradle—so an old legend runs—Fate stands and with just scale weighs the sunshine and shadow to which every life is entitled. But if Dame Fate is in a kindly mood 'tis said she throws in a bit of extra brightness for the pure joy of giving.

BARBARA WILSON COMSTOCK
you are
"THE EXTRA BIT"
To you I dedicate this book

HARRIET T. COMSTOCK.

Flatbush—Brooklyn, N. Y.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

LIST OF CHARACTERS

This is a story of a woman who having no beauty of face or form was deprived for a time of the beautiful things of life.

Then she prayed to the God of men and He gave her material success. Having this she raised her eyes from the earth which had been her battlefield and made a vow that she would take what was possible from the odds and ends of happiness and weave what she could into love and service.

Through this she won a reward far beyond her wildest dreams and found peace and joy.

"You are a strange man"—she said to him who discovered her.

"You are a very strange woman, Mam'selle"—he returned.

Besides these two there are:

Captain Longville—and his wife Marcel.

Pierre Gavot—and his wife Margot who found life paid because of her boy Tom.

Old Father Mantelle—more friend than priest who helped them all.

But Dan Kelly—of Dan's Place—better known as The Atmosphere—made life difficult for them all.

Then after a time the Lindsays of the Walled House drew things together and opened a new vista. Here we find:

Man-Andy; called by some, The Final Test, or Old Testy.

James Norval—who had some talent and an occasional flash of genius.

Katherine Norval, his wife, who from the highest motives nearly drove him to hell.

There are Sister Angela with the convenient memory and Little Sister Mary with the Lost Look.

Mary Maiden who happened into the story for a second only.

And lastly: Tom Gavot who dreamed of roads, played with roads, made roads, and at last found The Right Road which led him to the top, from that high point he saw—who can tell what?

And—Donelle who early prayed that she might be part of life and vowed that she was willing to suffer and pay. Life took her at her word, and used her.

MAM'SELLE JO

CHAPTER I
MAM'SELLE JO IS SET FREE

One late afternoon in September Jo Morey—she was better known in the village of Point of Pines as Mam'selle Jo—stood on the tiny lawn lying between her trim white house and the broad highway, lifted her eyes from the earth, that had long been her battlefield, and murmured aloud as lonely people often do,

"Mine! Mine! Mine!"

She did not say this arrogantly, but, rather, reverently. It was like a prayer of appreciation to the only God she recognized; a just God who had crowned her efforts with success. Not to a loving God could Mam'selle pray, for love had been denied her; not to a beautiful God, for Jo had yet to find beauty in her hard and narrow life; but to the Power that had vindicated Itself she was ready to do homage.

"Mine! Mine! Mine!"

Jo was forty and as dark as a midwinter day deprived of the sanctifying warmth of the sun. She was short and muscular, formed for service, not charm. Her mouth was the mouth of a woman who had never known rightful self-expression; her nose showed character, but was too strong for beauty; heavy brows shaded her eyes, shielding them from the idly-curious, but when those eyes were lifted one saw that they had been in God's keeping and preserved for happier outlooks. They were wonderful eyes. Soft brown with the sheen of horsechestnut.

Mam'selle's attire was as unique as she was herself. It consisted, for the most part, of garments which had once belonged to her father who had departed this life fifteen years before, rich in debts and a bad reputation; bequeathing to his older daughter his cast-off wardrobe and the care of an imbecile sister.

Jo now plunged her hands in the pockets of the rough coat; she planted her feet more firmly in the heavy boots much too large for her and, in tossing her head backward, displaced the old, battered felt hat that covered the lustrous braids of her thick, shining hair.

Standing so, bare headed, wide eyed, and shabby, Jo was a dramatic figure of victory. She looked at the neatly painted house, the hill rising behind it crowned with a splendid forest rich in autumn tints. Then her gaze drifted across the road to the fine pastures which had yielded a rare harvest; to the outhouses and barns that sheltered the wealth chat had been lately garnered. The neighing of Molly, the strong little horse; the rustling of cows, chickens, and the grunting of pigs were like sounds of music to her attentive ears. Then back to the house roved the keen but tender eyes, and rested upon the massive wood pile that flanked the north side of the house beginning at the kitchen door and ending, only, within a few feet of the highway.

This trusty guardian standing between Jo and the long, cold winter that lurked not far off, filled her with supreme content. Full well she knew that starting with the first log, lying close to her door, she might safely count upon comfort and warmth until late spring without demolishing the fine outline of the sturdy wall at the road-end!

That day Jo had paid the last dollar she owed to any man. She had two thousand dollars still to her credit; she was a free woman at last! Free after fifteen years of such toil and privation as few women had ever known.

She was free—and——

Just then Mam'selle knew the twinge of sadness that is the penalty of achievement. Heretofore there had been purpose, necessity, and obligation but now? Why, there was nothing; really nothing. She need not labour early and late; there was no demand upon her. For a moment her breath came quick and hard; her eyes dimmed and vaguely she realized that the struggle had held a glory that victory lacked.

Fifteen years ago she had stood as she was standing now, but had looked upon a far different scene. Then the house was falling to decay, and was but a sad shelter for the poor sister who lay muttering unintelligible words all day long while she played with bits of bright coloured rags. The barns and outhouses were empty and forlorn, the harvest a failure; the wood pile dangerously small.

Jo had but just returned from her father's funeral and she was wondering, helplessly, what

she could do next in order to keep the wretched home, and procure food and clothing for Cecile and herself. She was thankful, even then, that her father was dead; glad that her poor mother, who had given up the struggle years before, did not complicate the barren present—it would be easier to attack the problem single handed.

And as she stood bewildered, but undaunted, Captain Longville came up the highway and paused near the ramshackle gate. Longville was the power in Point of Pines with whom all reckoned, first or last. He was of French descent, clever, lazy, and cruel but with an outward courtesy that defied the usual methods of retaliation. He had money and capacity for gaining more and more. He managed to obtain information and secrets that added to his control of people. He was a silent, forceful creature who never expended more than was necessary in money, time, or words to reach his goal—but he always had a definite goal in view.

"Good day, Mam'selle," he called to Jo in his perfect English which had merely a trace of accent, "it was a fine funeral and I never saw the father look better nor more as he should. He and you did yourselves proud." Longville's manner and choice of words were as composite as were his neighbours; Point of Pines was conglomerate, the homing place of many from many lands for generations past.

"I did my best for him," Jo responded, "and it's all paid for, Captain."

The dark eyes were turned upon the visitor proudly but helplessly.

"Paid, eh?" questioned Longville. This aspect of affairs surprised and disturbed him. "Paid, eh?"

"Yes, I saved. I knew what was coming."

"Well, now, Mam'selle, I have an offer to make. While your father lived I lent, and lent often, laying a debt on my own land in order to save his, but pay day has come. This is all—mine! But I'm no hard and fast master, specially to women, and in turning things about in my mind I have come to this conclusion. Back of my house is a small cabin, I offer it to you and Cecile. Bring what you choose from here and make the place homelike and, for the help you give Madame when the States' folks summer with us, we'll give you your clothing and keep. What do you say, eh?"

For full a minute Jo said nothing. She was a woman whose roots struck deep in every direction, and she recoiled at the idea of change. Then something happened to her. Without thought or conscious volition she began to speak.

"I—I want the chance, Captain Longville, only the chance."

"The chance, eh? What chance, Mam'selle?"

"The chance to—to get it back!" The screened eyes seemed to gather all the old, familiar wretchedness into their own misery.

Longville laughed, not brutally, but this was too much, coming as it did from Morey's daughter.

"Why, Mam'selle," he said, "the interest hasn't been paid in years."

"The interest—and how much is that?" murmured Jo.

"Oh, a matter of a couple of hundreds." This was flung out off-handedly.

"But if—if I could pay that and promise to keep it up, would you give me the chance? My money is as good as another's and the first time I fail, Captain, I'll fetch Cecile over to the cabin and sell myself to you."

This was not a gracious way to put it and it made Longville scowl, still it amused him mightily. There was a bit of the sport in him, too, and the words, wild and improbable as they were, set in motion various ideas.

If Jo could save from the wreck of things in the past enough money to pay for the funeral might she not, the sly minx, have saved more? Stolen was what Longville really thought. Ready money, as much as he could lay hands on, was the dearest thing in life to him and the fun of having any one scrimping and delving to procure it for him was a joy not to be lightly thrown away. And might he not accomplish all he had in mind by giving Jo her chance? He did not want the land and the ramshackle house, except for what they would bring in cash; and if Mam'selle must slave to earn, might she not be willing to slave in his kitchen as well as in another's? To be sure he would have, under this new dispensation, to pay her, or credit her, with a certain amount—but he could make it desirably small and should she rebel he would threaten her, in a kindly way, with disinclination to carry on further business relations with her.

So Longville pursed up his thin lips and considered.

"But the money, the interest money, Mam'selle, the chance depends upon that."

Jo turned and walked to the house. Presently she came back with a cracked teapot in her hands.

"In this," she said slowly as if repeating words suggested to her, "there are two hundred and forty-two dollars and seventy-nine cents, Captain. All through the years I have saved and saved. I've sold my linens and woollens to the city folks—I've lied—but now it will buy the chance."

A slow anger grew in Longville's eyes.

"And you did this, while owing everything to me?" he asked.

"It was father who owed you; your money went for drink, for anything and everything but safety for Cecile and me. The work of my own hands—is mine!"

"Not so say our good laws!" sneered Longville, "and now I could take it all from you and turn you out on the world."

"And will—you?" Jo asked.

She was a miserable figure standing there with her outstretched hands holding the cracked teapot.

Longville considered further. He longed to stand well in the community when it did not cost him too much. Without going into details he could so arrange this business with Jo Morey that he might shine forth radiantly—and he did not always radiate by any means.

"No!" he said presently; "I'm going to give you your chance, Mam'selle, that is, if you give me all your money."

"You said—two hundred!"

"*About*, Mam'selle, *about*. That was my word."

"But winter is near and there is Cecile. Captain, will you leave me a bit to begin on?"

"Well, now, let us see. How about our building up your wood pile; starting you in with potatoes, pork, and the like and leaving say twenty-five dollars in the teapot? How about that, eh?"

"Will you write it down and sign?" Jo was quivering.

"You're sharp, devilishly sharp, Mam'selle. How about being good friends instead of hard drivers of bargains?"

"You must write it out and sign, Captain. We'll be better friends for that."

Again Longville considered.

The arrangement would be brief at best, he concluded.

"I'll sign!" he finally agreed, "but, Mam'selle, it's like a play between you and me."

"It's no play, Captain, as you will see."

And so it had begun, that grim struggle which lasted fifteen long years with never a failure to meet the interest; and, in due time, the payments on the original loan were undertaken. Early and late Jo slaved, denying herself all but the barest necessities, but she managed to give poor Cecile better fare.

During the second year of Jo's struggle, two staggering things had occurred that threatened, for a time, to defeat her. She had known but little brightness in her dun-coloured girlhood, but that little had been connected with Henry Langley the best, by far, of the young men of the place. He was an American who had come from the States to Canada, as many others had, believing his chance on the land to be better than at home. He was an educated man with ambitions for a future of independence and a free life. He bought a small farm for himself and built a rude but comfortable cabin upon it. When he was not working out of doors he was studying within and his only extravagances were books and a violin.

Jo Morey had always attracted him; her mind, her courage, her defiance of conditions, called forth all that was fine in him. Without fully understanding he recognized in her the qualities that, added to his own, would secure the success he craved. So he taught her, read with her, and made her think. He was not calculating and selfish, the crude foundation was but the safety upon which he built a romance that was as simple and pure as any he had ever known. The plain, brave girl with her quiet humour and delicate ideals appealed mightily to him. His emotions were in abeyance to his good common sense, so he and Jo had planned for a future—never very definite, but always sincere.

After the death of Morey, Jo, according to her bargain with Longville, went to help in the care of the summer boarders who, that year, filled Madame Longville's house to overflowing and brought in a harvest that the Captain, not his womankind, gathered. That was the summer when poor Jo, over-worked, worried at leaving Cecile alone for so many weary hours, grew grim and unlovely and found little time or inclination to play the happy part with Langley that had been the joy and salvation of their lives. And just then a girl from the States appeared—a delicate, pretty thing ordered to the river-pines to regain her health. She belonged to the class of women who know no terminals in their lives, but accept everything as an open passage to the broad sea of

their desires. She was obliged to work for her existence and the effort had all but cost her her life; she must get someone, therefore, to undertake the business for the future. Her resources were apparently limited, while the immediate necessity was pressing. Since nothing was to her finite and binding, she looked upon Henry Langley and beheld in him a possibility; a stepping stone. She promptly began her attack, by way of poor Jo, who, she keenly realized, was her safest and surest course to Langley's citadel. She made almost frantic efforts to include the tired drudge in the summer frivolities; her sweet compassion and delicate prettiness were in terrific contrast to Jo's shabbiness and lack of charm. While Langley tried to be just and loyal he could but acknowledge that Jo's blunt refusals to accept, what of course she could not accept, were often brutal and coarse. Then, as his senses began to blind him, he became stupidly critical, groping and bungling. He could not see, beneath Jo's fierce retorts to his very reasonable demands, the scorching hurt and ever-growing recognition of defeat.

It was the old game played between a professional and an amateur—and the professional won!

Quite unbeknown to poor Jo, toiling in Madame Longville's kitchen, Langley quietly sold his belongings to the Captain and, taking his prize off secretly, left explanations to others.

Longville made them.

"Mam'selle," he said, standing before Jo as she bent over a steaming pan of dishes in the stifling kitchen, "we've been cheated out of a merry wedding."

"A wedding?" asked Jo listlessly, "has any one time to marry now?"

"They made time and made off with themselves as well. Langley was married last night and is on his way, heaven knows where!"

Jo raised herself and faced Longville. Her hair was hanging limply, her eyes were terror-filled.

"Langley married and gone?" she gasped. Then: "My God!"

That was all, but Longville watching her drew his own evil conclusions and laughed good-naturedly.

"It's all in the day's work, Mam'selle," he said, and wondered silently if the slave before him would be able to finish out the summer.

Jo finished out the summer efficiently and silently. In September Cecile simply stopped babbling and playing with rags and became wholly dead. After the burial Jo, with her dog at her heels, went away. No one but Longville noticed. Her work at his house was over; the last boarder had departed.

Often Jo's home was unvisited for weeks at a time, so her absence, now, caused no surprise. Two weeks elapsed, then she reappeared, draggled and worn, the dog closely following.

That was all, and the endless work of weaving and spinning was resumed. Jo invented three marvellously beautiful designs that winter.

But now, this glorious autumn day, she stood victoriously reviewing the past. Suddenly she turned. As if playing an appointed part in the grim drama, Longville again stood by the gate looking a bit keener and grayer, but little older. In his hands, signed and properly executed, were all the papers that set Jo free from him forever unless he could, by some other method, draw her within his power. That money of hers in the bank lay heavy on his sense of propriety.

"Unless she's paying and paying me," he pondered, "what need has she of money? Too much money is bad for a woman—I'll give her interest."

And just then Jo hailed him in the tone and manner of a free creature.

"Ah, Captain, it's a good day, to be sure. A good day!"

"Here are the papers!" Longville came near and held them toward her.

"Thanks, there was no hurry."

"And now," Longville leered broadly. "'Tis I as comes a-begging. How about those hundreds in the bank, Mam'selle? I will pay the same interest as others and one good turn deserves another."

But Jo shook her head.

"No. I'm done with borrowing and lending, Captain. In the future, when I part with my money, I will give it. I've never had that pleasure in my life before."

"That's a course that will end in your begging again at my door." Longville's smile had vanished.

"If so be," and Jo tossed her head, "I'll come humbly, having learned my lesson from the best of teachers."

Jo plunged her hands deeper in the pockets of her father's old coat.

"A woman and her money are soon parted," growled Longville.

"You quote wrong, Captain. It is a fool and money; a woman is not always a fool."

Longville reserved his opinion as to this but assumed his grinning, playful manner which reminded one of the antics of a wild cat.

"Ah, Mam'selle, you must buy a husband. He will manage you and your good money."

A deep flush rose to Jo's dark face; her scowling brows hid her suffering eyes.

"You think I must buy what I could not win, Captain?" she asked quietly. "God help me from falling to such folly."

The two talked a little longer, but the real meaning and purpose that had held them together during the past years was gone. They both realized this fully, for the first time, as they tried now to make talk.

They spoke of the future only to find that they had no common future. Jo retreated as Longville advanced.

They clutched at the fast receding past with the realization that it was a dead thing and eluded them already.

The present was all that was left and that was heavy with new emotions. Longville presently became aware of a desire to hurt Jo Morey, since he could no longer control her; and Jo eyed the Captain as a suddenly released animal eyes its late torturer: free, but haunted by memories that still fetter its movements. She wanted to get rid of the disturbing presence.

"Yes, Mam'selle, since you put it that way," Longville shifted from one foot to the other as he harked back to the words that he saw hurt, "you must buy a husband."

"I must go inside," Jo returned bluntly, "good afternoon, Captain." And she abruptly left him.

It was rather awkward to be left standing alone on Jo Morey's trim lawn, so Longville muttered an uncomplimentary opinion of his late victim and strode toward home.

CHAPTER II
MAM'SELLE MUST BUY A HUSBAND

Longville turned the affairs of Jo Morey over and over in his scheming mind as he walked home. He had made the suggestion as to buying a husband from a mistaken idea of pleasantry, but its effect upon Jo had caused him to take the idea seriously, first as a lash, then as purpose. By the time he reached home he had arrived at a definite conclusion, had selected Jo's future mate, and had all but settled the details.

He ate his evening meal silently, sullenly, and watched his wife contemplatively.

There were times when Longville had an uncomfortable sensation when looking at Marcel. It was similar to the sensation one has when he discovers that he has been addressing a stranger instead of the intimate he had supposed.

He was the type of man who among his own sex sneers at women because of attributes with which he endows them, but who, when alone with women, has a creeping doubt as to his boasted conclusions and seeks to right matters by bullying methods.

Marcel had been bought and absorbed by Longville when she was too young and ignorant to resist openly. What life had taught her she held in reserve. There had never been what seemed an imperative need for rebellion so Marcel had been outwardly complacent. She had fulfilled the duties, that others had declared hers, because she was not clear in her own mind as to any other course, but under her slow outward manner there were currents running from heart to brain that Longville had never discovered, though there were times, like the present, when he stepped cautiously as he advanced toward his wife with a desire for coöperation.

"Marcel," he said presently with his awkward, playful manner, "I have an idea!"

He stretched his long legs toward the stove. He had eaten to his fill and now lighted his pipe, watching his wife as she bent over the steaming pan of dishes in the sink.

Marcel did not turn; ideas were uninteresting, and Longville's generally involved her in more work and no profit.

"'Tis about Pierre, your good-for-nothing brother."

"What about him?" asked Marcel. Blood was blood after all and she resented Longville's superior tone.

"Since Margot died he has had a rough time of it," mused the Captain, "caring for the boy and shifting for himself. It has been hard for Pierre."

"You want him and Tom—here?" Marcel turned now, the greasy water dripping from her red

hands. She had small use for her brother, but her heart yearned over the motherless Tom.

"God forbid," ejaculated Longville, "but a man must pity such a life as Pierre's."

"Pierre takes his pleasures," sighed Marcel, "as all can testify."

"You mean that a man should have no pleasure?" snapped the Captain. "You women are devilish hard."

"I meant no wrong. 'Tis no business of mine."

"'Tis the business of all women to marry off the odds and ends"; and now Longville was ready. He launched out with a clear statement of Jo Morey's finances and the absolute necessity of male control of the same. Marcel listened and waited.

"Mam'selle Jo Morey must marry," Longville continued. He had his pipe lighted and between long puffs blinked luxuriously as he outlined the future. "She has too much money for a woman and—there is Pierre!"

"Mam'selle Jo and Pierre!" Almost Marcel laughed. "But Mam'selle is so homely and Pierre, being the handsome man he is, detests an ugly woman."

"What matters? Once married, the good law of the land gives the wife's money to her master. 'Tis a righteous law. And Pierre has a way with women that breaks them or kills them—generally both!"

This was meant jocosely, but Marcel gave a shudder as she bent again over the steaming suds.

"But Mam'selle with money," she murmured more to herself than to Longville. "Will Mam'selle sell herself?"

This almost staggered Longville. He took his pipe from his lips and stared at the back of the drudge near him. Then he spoke slowly, wonderingly:

"Will a woman marry? What mean you? All women will sell their souls for a man. Mam'selle, being ugly, must buy one. Besides——" And here Longville paused to impress his next words.

"Besides, you remember Langley?"

For a moment Marcel did not; so much had come and gone since Langley's time. Then she recalled the flurry his going with one of the summer people had caused, and she nodded.

"You know Langley walked and talked with Mam'selle before that red and white woman from the States caught him up in her petticoat and carried him off?"

It began to come back to Marcel now. Again she nodded indifferently.

"And some months after," Longville was whispering as if he feared the cat purring under the stove would hear, "some months later, what happened then." Marcel rummaged in her litter of bleak memories.

"Oh! Cecile died!" She brought forth triumphantly.

"Cecile died, yes! And Mam'selle went away. And what for?" The whispered words struck Marcel's dull brain like sharp strokes.

"I do not know," she faltered.

"You cannot guess—and you a woman?"

"I cannot."

"Then patch this and this together. Why does a woman go away and hide when a man has deserted her? Why?"

Marcel wiped the suds from her red, wrinkled hands. She stared at her husband like an idiot, then she sat down heavily in a chair.

"And that's why Mam'selle will buy Pierre."

For a full moment Marcel looked at her husband as if she had never seen him before, then her dreary eyes wandered to the window.

Across the road, in the growing darkness, lay three small graves in a row. Marcel was seeking them, now, seeking them with all the fierce love and loyalty that lay deep in her heart. And out of those pitiful mounds little forms, oh! such tiny forms, seemed to rise and plead for Jo Morey.

Who was it that had shared the black hours when Marcel's babies came—and went? Whose understanding and sympathy had made life possible when all else failed?

"I'll do no harm to Mam'selle Jo Morey!" The tone and words electrified Longville.

"What?" he asked roughly.

"If what you hint is true," Marcel spoke as from a great distance, her voice trailing pitifully; "I'll never use it to hurt Mam'selle, or I could not meet my God."

"You'll do what I say!"

But as he spoke Longville had a sense of doubt. For the second time that day he was

conscious of being baffled by a woman; his purposes being threatened.

"You may regret," he growled, "if you do not help along with this—this matter of Pierre. There will come a time when Pierre will lie at your door. What then, eh?"

"Is that any reason why I should throw him at the door of another woman?" Marcel's pale face twitched. "Why should a man expect any woman's door to open to him," she went on, "when he has disgraced himself all his life?"

Longville stirred restlessly. Actually he dared not strike his wife, but he had all the impulse to do so. He resorted to hoary argument.

"'Tis the unselfish, the noble woman who saves—man!" he muttered, half ashamed of his own words.

At this Marcel laughed openly. Something was rising to the surface, something that life had taught her.

"It's a poor argument to use when the unworthy one is the gainer by a woman's unselfishness," retorted Marcel. "Unless she, too, gets something out of her—her nobleness, I should think a man would hate to fling it always in her teeth."

Longville half rose; his jaw looked ugly.

"'Tis my purpose," he said slowly, harshly, "to marry Mam'selle and Pierre. I have my reasons, and if you cannot help you can keep out of the way!"

"Yes, I can do that," murmured Marcel. She had taken up her knitting and she rarely spoke while she knitted. She thought!

But if Longville's suggestion seemed to die in the mind of his own woman, it had no such fate in that of Jo Morey. When she went into her orderly house, after leaving the Captain, she put her papers on the table and stood staring ahead into space. She seemed waiting for the ugly thought he had left to follow its creator, but instead it clung to her like a stinging nettle.

"Buy a husband!" she repeated; "buy a husband."

Into poor Jo's dry and empty heart the words ate their way like a spark in the autumn's brush. The flame left a blackened trail over which she toiled drearily back, back to that one blessed taste she had had of love and happiness. Memories, long considered dead, rose from their shallow graves like spectres, claiming Mam'selle for their own at last.

She had believed herself beyond suffering. She had thought that loneliness and hard labour had secured her at least from the agony she was now enduring, but with the consciousness that she could feel as she was feeling, a sort of terror overcame her.

Her past days of toil had been blessed with nights of exhausted slumber. But with the newly-won freedom there would be hours when she must succumb to the tortures of memory. She could not go on slaving with no actual need to spur her, she must have a reason, a motive for existence. Like many another, poor Jo realized that while she had plenty to retire on, she had nothing to retire to, for in her single purpose of freeing herself from Longville, she had freed herself from all other ties.

But Jo Morey would not have been the woman she was if obstacles could down her. She turned abruptly and strode toward the barn across the road. Nick, her dog, materialized at this point. Nick had no faith in men and discreetly kept out of sight when one appeared. He was no coward, but caution was a marked characteristic in him and unless necessity called he did not care, nor deem it advisable, to display his feelings to strangers.

Jo felt for Nick an affection based upon tradition and fact. His mother had been her sole companion during the darkest period of her life and Nick was a worthy son of a faithful mother. Jo talked to the dog constantly when she was most troubled and confused. She devoutly believed she often received inspiration and solution from his strange, earnest eyes.

"Well, old chap," she said now as she felt his sturdy body press against her knee. "What do you think of that?"

Nick gave a sharp, resentful yelp.

"We want no man planting his tobacco in our front yard; do we, sir? He might even expect us to plant it!"

Jo always spoke editorially when conversing with Nick. "And fancy a man sitting by the new stove, Nick, spitting and snoring and kicking no doubt *you*, my good friend, if not me!"

Nick refused to contemplate such a monstrous absurdity. He showed his teeth in a sardonic grin and, to ease his feelings, made a dash after a giddy hen who had forgotten the way to the coop and was frantically proclaiming the fact in the gathering darkness.

"If that hussy," muttered Jo, "don't stick closer to the roost, I'll have her for dinner!" Then a light broke upon Jo's face. From trifles, often, our lives are turned into new channels. "I declare,

I'll have her anyway! I'll live from now on like folks."

States' folks, Jo had in mind, the easy-going summer type. "Chicken twice a week, hereafter, and no getting up before daybreak."

Nick had chased the doomed hen to the coop and was virtuously returning when his mistress again addressed him.

"Nick, the little red cow is about to calve. What do you think of that?"

Nick thought very little of it. The red cow was a nuisance. She calved at off times of the year and had an abnormal affection for her offspring. She would not be comforted when it was torn from her for financial reasons. She made known her objections by kicking over milk pails and making nights hideous by her wailing; then, too, she had a way of looking at one that weakened the moral fibre. Nick followed his mistress to the cow shed and stood contemplatively by while Jo smoothed the glossy head of the offending cow and murmured:

"Poor little lass, you cannot understand, but you do not want to be alone, do you?" The animal pressed close and gave a low, sweet sound of appreciation.

"All right, girl. I'll fill Nick up and take a bite, then I'll be back and bide with you."

The mild maternal eyes now rested upon Nick and his grew forgiving!

"Come, Nick!" called Jo. "We'll have to hurry. The little red cow, once she decides, does not waste time. It's a snack and dash for us, old man, until after the trouble is over. But there's no need of early bed-going to-night, Nick, and before we sleep we'll have the fire in the stove!"

So Nick followed obediently, ate voraciously but rapidly, and Jo took her snack while moving about the kitchen and planning for the celebration that was to follow the little red cow's accouchement.

It must be a desolate life indeed, a life barren of imagination, that has not had some sort of star to which the chariot of desire has been hitched. Jo Morey had a vast imagination and it had kept her safe through all the years of grind and weariness. Her star was a stove!

Back in the time when her relations with Longville were growing less strained and she could look beyond her obligations and still see—money, she had closed the fireplace in the living room and bought, on the instalment plan, a most marvellous invention of iron, nickle, and glass, with broad ovens and cavernous belly, and set it up in state.

Jo's conception of honesty would not permit her to build a fire in the monster until every cent was paid, but she had polished it, almost worshipped before it, and had silently vowed that upon the day when she was free from all debt to man she would revel in such warmth and glory as she had never known before.

"No more roasted fronts and frozen backs,"

Mam'selle had secretly sworn. "No more huddling in the kitchen and scrimping of fires. From the first frost to the first thaw I'll have two fires going. The new stove will heat the north chamber and perhaps the upper room as well. 'Tis a wondrous heater, I'm told."

But the red cow's affairs had postponed the thrilling event. Still neither Jo nor Nick ever expected perfection in fulfillment and they took the delay with patient dignity.

Later they again started for the cow shed, this time guided by a lantern, for night had fallen upon Point of Pines.

Jo took a seat upon an upturned potato basket with Nick close beside her, and so they waited. Waited until all need and danger were past; then, tenderly stroking the head of the newly-made mother, Jo spoke in the tone that few ever heard. Margot Gavot had heard it as she drifted out of life, her hungry eyes fastened on Jo and the sobbing boy—Tom. Marcel Longville had heard it as she clung to the hard, rough hand that seemed to be her only anchor when life and death battled for her and ended in taking her babies. The little red cow had heard it once before and now turned her grateful eyes to Mam'selle.

"So! So, lass," murmured Jo; "we don't understand, but we had to see it through. Brave lass, cuddle the wee thing and take your rest. So, so!"

Then back to the house went Jo and Nick, the lantern swinging between them like a captured star.

A wonderful, uplifted feeling rose in Jo Morey's heart. She was unlike her old, unheeding self, she heeded everything; she started at the slightest sound and drew her breath in sharply. She was almost afraid of the sensation that overcame her. Depression had fled; exhilaration had taken its place. A sense of freedom, of adventure, possessed her. She was ready at last to fling aside the bonds and go forth! Then Nick stopped short and strained forward as if sensing something in the dark that not even the lantern could disclose.

"So, Nick!" laughed Jo, "you feel it, too? It's all right, old man. The mystery of the shed has

upset us both. It's always the same, whether it comes to woman or creature. Something hidden makes us see it, but our eyes are blind, blind to the meaning."

Then Jo resorted to action. She carried a load of wood from the pile to the living room; with bated breath she placed it in the stove.

"Suppose it shouldn't draw?" she whispered to Nick, and struck a match. The first test proved this fear ungrounded. The draw was so terrific that it threatened to suck everything up.

In a panic Jo experimented with the dampers and soon had the matter in control. She was perspiring, and Nick was yelping and dashing about in circles, when the fire was brought to a sense of its responsibility, ceased roaring like a wild bull, and settled down into a steady, reliable body of glowing heat.

Then Jo drew a chair close, pulled up her absurd skirts, put her man-shod feet into the oven, and gave a sigh of supreme content.

Nick took the hint. Since this was not an accident but, apparently, a permanent innovation, it behooved him to adapt himself as his mistress had done. Behind the fiery monster there was a space, hot as Tophet, but commanding a good view. It might be utilized, so Nick appropriated it.

"There seems no end to what this stove can do," muttered Jo, twisting about and disdaining the smell of overheated leather and wool. "No more undressing in the kitchen and freezing in bed in the north chamber. I've never been warm in winter since I was born, but that's done with now! I shouldn't wonder if I might open the room upstairs after a bit—I shouldn't wonder!"

Then Jo caught a glimpse of her reflection in the mirror over the stove! As she looked, her excitement lessened, the depression of the afternoon overcame her. She acknowledged that she looked old and ugly. A woman first to be despised, then ridiculed, by men. "Buy a husband!" She, Jo Morey, who had once had her vision and the dreams of a woman. She, who had had so much to offer in her shabby youth, so much that was fine and noble. Intelligence that had striven with, and overcome, obstacles; a passion for service, passion and love. All, all she had had except the one, poor, pitiful thing called beauty. That might have interpreted all else to man for her and won her the sacred desires of her soul.

She had had faith until Langley betrayed it. She had scorned the doubt that, what she lacked, could deprive her of her rights.

Through a never-to-be-forgotten spring and early summer she had been as other girls. Love had stirred her senses and set its seal upon the man who shared her few free hours. He had felt the screened loveliness of the spirit and character of Jo Morey; had revelled in her appreciation and understanding. He had loved her; told her so, and planned, with her, for a future rich in all that made life worth while. That was the spring when Jo had first noticed how the sand pipers, circling against the blue sky, made a brown blur that changed its form as the birds rose higher or when they dipped again, disappearing behind the tamarack pines on the hilltop.

That was the spring when the swift, incoming tide of the St. Lawrence made music in the fragrant stillness and she and Langley had sung together in their queer halting French "A la Claire Fontaine" and had laughed their honest English laughs at their clumsy tongues struggling with the rippling words.

And then; the girl had come, and—the end!

Jo believed that something had died in her at that time, but it had only been stunned. It arose now, and in the still, hot room demanded its own!

"Fifteen years ago!" murmured Jo and looked about at the evidences of her toiling years: the quaint room and the furnishings. The floor was painted yellow and on it were islands of gay, tinted rugs all woven by her tireless hands. There were round rugs and square rugs, long ones and short ones. In the middle of the room was a large table covered by a cloth designed and wrought by the same restless hands. Neatly painted chairs were ranged around the walls, and beneath the low broad window stood a hard, unyielding couch upon which lay a thick blanket and several bright pillows stuffed with sweet-grass.

At the casement were spotless curtains, standing out stiffly like starched skirts on prim little girls, and behind them rows of tin cans in which were growing gorgeous begonias and geraniums pressed against the glistening glass, like curious children peering into the black outer world. So had Jo's inarticulate life developed and expressed itself in this home-like room, while her mind had matured and her thoughts deepened. Then her eyes travelled to the winding stairway in the farthest corner. Her gaze kept to the strip of yellow paint in the middle of the white steps. It mounted higher and higher. Above was the upper chamber, the Waiting Room!

Long years ago, while serving in Madame Longville's home, Jo had conceived an ambition that had never really left her through all the time that had intervened. Some day she would have

a boarder! Not upon such terms as the Longvilles accepted, however.

Her boarder was not merely to pay and pay in money, but he would be to her an education, a widening experience. She, alone, would reap the reward of the toil she expended upon him. And so with this in mind she had furnished the upper chamber, bit by bit, and had calculated over and again the proper sum to charge for the benefits to be derived and given.

"And now," said Jo, panting a little as if her eyes mounting the stairs had tired her. "Come summer I will get my boarder, but love of heaven! What price shall I set?"

The wind was rising and the pine trees were making that sound that always reminded Jo of poor Cecile's wordless moan.

Something seemed to press against the door. Nick started and bristled.

"Who's there?" demanded Mam'selle. There was no reply—only that tense pressure that made the panels creak.

CHAPTER III
MAM'SELLE DOES NOT BUY A HUSBAND

The tall clock in the kitchen struck eight in a sharp, affrighted way much as a chaperone might have done who wished to call her heedless charge to the demands of propriety.

Eight o'clock in Point of Pines meant, under ordinary conditions, just two things: house and bed for the respectable, Dan's Place—a reeking, dirty tavern—for the others.

And while Jo Morey's door creaked under the unseen pressure from without, Pierre Gavot and Captain Longville smoked and snoozed by the red-hot stove at Dan's, occasionally speaking on indifferent subjects.

These two men disliked and distrusted each other, but they hung together, drank together; for what reason who could tell? Gavot had eaten earlier in the day at the Longville house and during the meal the name of Jo Morey had figured rather prominently. However, Gavot had paid little heed, he had little use for women and no interest, whatever, in an ugly one. A long past French ancestry had given Gavot as it had Longville a subtle suavity of manner that somewhat cloaked his brutality, and he was an extremely handsome man of the big, dark type.

Suddenly now, in the smoky drowsiness of the tavern, Mam'selle Morey's name again was introduced.

"Mam'selle! Mam'selle!" muttered Pierre impatiently; "I tire of the mention of the black Mam'selle. Such a woman has but two uses: to serve while she can, to die when she cannot serve."

"But her service while she can serve, that has its value," Longville retorted, puffing lustily and blowing the smoke upward until it quite hid his eyes, no longer sleepy, but decidedly keen.

"The Mam'selle has money, much money," he went on, "that and her service might come in handy for you and Tom."

And now Pierre sat a little straighter in his chair.

"Me and Tom?" he repeated dazedly. "You mean that I get the Mam'selle to come to my—my cabin and work?"

Somehow this idea made Longville laugh, and the laugh brought a scowl to Pierre's face.

"Tom will be going off some day," the Captain said irrelevantly, "then what?"

"Tom will stick," Gavot broke in, "I'll see to that. Break the spirit of a woman or child and they stick."

But as he spoke Gavot's tone was not one of assurance. His boy Tom was not yet broken, even after the years of deprivation and cruelty, and lately he had shown a disposition for work, work that brought little or no return. This worried Gavot, who would not work upon any terms so long as he could survive without it.

"You can't depend upon children," Longville flung back, "a woman's safer and handier, and while the Mam'selle, having money, might not care to serve you for nothing, she might——" here the Captain left an eloquent pause while he leered at his brother-in-law seductively. Gradually the meaning of the words and the leer got into Gavot's consciousness.

"Good God!" he cried in an undertone, "you mean I should—marry the ugly Mam'selle Morey?" But even as he spoke the man gripped the idea savagely and, with a quickness that always marked the end of his muddled conclusions, he began to fix it among the possibilities of his wretched life.

"She needs a man to handle her money," Longville was running on. He saw the spark had ignited the rubbish in Gavot's mind. "And she's a powerful worker and saver. She cooks like an angel; she studies that art as another might study her Bible. She has a mind above most women, but properly handled and with reason——"

"What mean you, Longville, properly handled and with reason? Would any man marry Mam'selle?"

"A wise man might—yes," Longville was leading his brother-in-law by the most direct route, but he smiled under cover of the smoke. The Morey money in Gavot's hands meant Longville control in the near future. So the Captain smiled.

"She'd marry quick enough," he rambled on, refilling his pipe. "A man of her own is a big asset for such a woman as the Mam'selle. And then the law stands by the husband; woman's wit does not count."

Gavot was not heeding. His inflamed imagination had outstripped Longville's words. Once he had mastered the physical aspect of the matter, the rest became a dazzling lure. Never for an instant did he doubt that Jo Morey would accept him. The whole thing lay in his power if——

"She's old and ugly," he grunted half aloud.

"What care you?" reassured Longville, "ugliness does not hamper work, and her age is an advantage."

"But, what was that Langley story——?" Pierre was groping back helplessly.

Point of Pines had its moral standards for women, but it rarely gossiped; it stood by its own, on general principles, so long as its own demanded little and was content to take what was offered.

"That? Why, who cares for that after all this time?" Longville spoke benignly. "If Langley left the Mam'selle with that which no woman, without a ring, has a right to, she was keen enough to rid herself of the burden and cut her own way back to decent living. She has asked no favours, but she'd give much for a man to place her among her kind once more."

A deep silence followed, broken only by the guzzling and snoring of the other occupants of Dan's Place.

Suddenly Gavot got to his feet and reached for his hat. His inflamed face gave evidence of his true state.

"Back to Mastin's Point?" Longville asked, stretching himself and yawning.

"No, by heaven! but to Mam'selle Jo Morey's."

This almost staggered Longville. He was slower, surer than his wife's brother.

"But your togs," he gasped, "you're not a figure for courting."

"Courting?" Gavot laughed aloud. His drinking added impetus to every impulse and desire. "Does Mam'selle have to have her pill coated? Will she not swallow it without a question?"

"But 'tis late, Gavot——"

"And does the chaste Mam'selle keep to the early hours of better women?"

"But to-morrow—the next day," pleaded Longville, seeking to control the situation he had evolved. He feared he might be defeated by the force he had set in motion.

"No, by heaven, to-night!" fiercely and hoarsely muttered Gavot, "to-night or never for the brown and ugly Mam'selle Jo. To-night will make the morrows safe for me. If I stopped to consider, I could not put it through."

With that Gavot, big, handsome, and breathing hard, strode from the tavern and took to the King's Highway.

The wind rushed past him; pushed ahead; pressed at Jo's door with its warning. But she did not speak, and only when Gavot himself thumped on the panel was Jo roused from her revery and Nick from his puppy dreams.

"Who's there?" shouted Mam'selle, and clumped across the floor in her father's old boots. She slipped on one of the rugs and slid to the entrance before regaining her balance.

"It is I, Mam'selle, I, Pierre Gavot."

Jo opened the door at once.

"Well," she said with a calmness and serenity that chilled the excited man, "it's a long way from here to Mastin's and the hour's late, tell your business and get on your way, Pierre Gavot. Come in, sit by the fire. My, what a wind is stirring. Now, then—out with it!"

This crude opening to what Pierre hoped would be a dramatic scene, sweeping Jo Morey off her feet, nonplussed the would-be gallant not a little. He sat heavily down and eyed Nick uneasily. The dog was sniffing at his heels in a most suspicious fashion. Every hair of his body was on guard and his eyes were alert and forbidding.

"Well, Pierre Gavot, what is your errand?"

This did not improve matters and a shuffling motion toward Nick with a heavy boot concluded the investigation on the dog's part. Nick was convinced of the caller's disposition; he showed his teeth and growled.

"Come, come, now," laughed Mam'selle, whistling Nick to her, "you see, Pierre Gavot, I have a good care-taker. That being settled, let us proceed." Then, as Gavot still shuffled uneasily, she went on:

"Maybe it is Tom. I heard the other day that 'twas whispered among your good friends that unless you did your duty by Tom, there would be a sum raised to give the poor lad a chance—away from his loving father." Jo laughed a hard laugh. She pitied Tom Gavot with her woman-heart while she hated the man who deprived the boy of his rights.

Gavot shut his cruel lips close, but he controlled the desire to voice his real sentiments concerning the bit of gossip.

"Indeed there is no need for my neighbours showing their hate, Mam'selle. Tom's best good is what I'm seeking. He's young, young enough to be cared for and watched. I'm thinking more of Tom than of myself, and yet I ask nothing for him from you, Mam'selle Jo."

"So, Gavot! Well, then, I am in the dark. Surely you could ask nothing of me for yourself!"

Again Pierre was chilled and inclined to anger. All his fire and fury were deserting him; his intention of taking Jo by storm was disappearing; almost he suspected that she was getting control of the situation. He slyly looked at her dark, forbidding face and weighed the possibilities of the future. Jo, he realized, was secure now in her unusual independent position. Once let him, backed by the good law, which covers the just and the unjust husband with its mantle of authority, get possession of her future and her body, he'd manage—ah! would he not—to utilize the one and degrade the other!

"Mam'selle, I come to you as a lone and helpless man. Mam'selle, I must—Mam'selle, I want that you should live the rest of the time of our lives—with me!"

Jo was aroused, frightened. She turned her luminous eyes upon the man.

"You—you are asking me to marry you, Pierre Gavot?"

Gavot, believing that the meaning of his visit had at last brought her to his feet at the first direct shot, replied with a leer:

"Well, something like that, Mam'selle."

And now Jo's brows drew close; the eyes were darkened, the lips twitched ominously. As if to emphasize the moment, Nick, abristle and teeth showing, snarled gloomily as he eyed Gavot's feet.

"Something like that?" repeated Jo with a thrill in her tones. "You insult me, Gavot! Something like that. What do you mean?"

"God of mercy, Mam'selle," Gavot was genuinely alarmed, "I ask you to—be—my wife."

Jo leaned back in her chair. "I wish you'd talk less of the Almighty, Gavot. I reckon the Lord can speak for himself, if men, specially such men as you, get out of his way. It sickens me to have to find the meaning of God through—men. And you ask me to be your wife? You. And I was with Margot when she died!"

Gavot's eyes, for an instant, fell.

"Margot was out of her head," he muttered. "She talked madness."

"It was more truth than fever, Gavot. Her tongue ran loose—with truth. I know, I know."

"Well, then, Mam'selle, 'tis said a second wife reaps the harvest the first wife sowed. I have learned, Mam'selle Jo."

"Almost it is a greater insult than what I first thought!" Jo sighed sadly. "But 'tis the best you have to offer—I should not forget that—and some women would lay much stress on the chance you are offering me. One thing Margot said, Gavot, has never passed my lips until now—though often I've thought of it. When she'd emptied her poor soul of all that you had poured into it, when she had shriven herself, and was ready to meet her God, the God you had never let her find before because you got in between, she looked at Tom. The poor lad sat huddled up on the foot of the bed watching his mother going forth. 'Jo,' she whispered, 'when all's said and done, it paid because of Tom! When I tell God about Tom and what Tom meant, He'll forgive a lot else. He does with women.'"

Gavot dared not look up, and for a moment a death-like silence fell in the hot, tidy room. Jo looked about at her place of safety and freedom and wondered how she could hurry the disturbing element out.

Just then Gavot spoke. He had grasped the only straw in sight on the turgid stream.

"Mam'selle, you're not too old yet to bear a child, but you'll best waste no time." And then he smiled a loathsome smile that had its roots in all that had soiled and killed poor Margot Gavot's life. Jo recoiled as if something unclean were, indeed, near her.

"Don't," she shuddered warningly, "don't!" Then quite suddenly she turned upon the man, her eyes blazing, her mouth twisted with revolt and disdain.

"I wonder—if you could understand, if I showed you a woman's heart?" she asked with a curious break in her voice. "Long, long years I've ached to show the poor, dead thing lying here," she put her work-hardened hands across her breast, "to someone. There have been times when I have wondered if the telling might not help other women in Point of Pines; might not make men see plainer the wrong they do women; but until now there has never been any one to tell."

Expression was crying aloud, and the incongruity of the situation did not strike Jo Morey in her excitement.

"You've got to hear me out, Pierre Gavot," she went on. "You've come, God knows why, to offer me all that you have to give in exchange for—well! I'm going to give you all that I have to give you—all, all!

"There was a time, Gavot, when I longed for the thing that most women long for, the thing that made Margot take you—you! She knew her chances, poor soul, but you seemed the only way to her desires, so she took you!

"'Tis no shame to a woman to want what her nature cries out for, and the call comes when she's least able to understand and choose. Here in Point of Pines a girl has small choice. It is all well enough for them who do not know to talk of love and the rest. The burning desire in man and woman is there with or without love; it's the mercy of God when love is added. I knew what I wanted, all that counted to me must come through man, and love—my own love—sanctified everything for me. I did not understand, I did not try to, I was lifted up——"

Jo choked and Gavot twisted uneasily in his chair. This was all very boring, but he must endure it for the time being.

"I—I was willing to play the game and take my chances," Jo had got control of herself, "and I never feared, until it was forced upon me, that my ugliness stood in the way. All that I had to offer, and I had much, Gavot, much, counted as nothing with men because their eyes were held by this face of mine and could not see what lay behind.

"Perhaps that was God's way of saving me. I thought that for the first when I saw Margot dying.

"I had my love killed in me, but the desire was there for years and years; the longing for a home of my own and—children, children! After love was gone, after I staggered back to feeling, there were times when I would have bartered myself, as many another woman has, for the rights that *are* rights. But, since they must come by man's favour, I was denied and starved. Then the soul died within me, first with longing, then with contempt and hatred. By and by I took to praying, if one could call my state prayer. I prayed to the God of man. I demanded something—something from life, and this man's God was just. He let me succeed as men do, and this, this is the result!"

Jo flung her arms wide as if disclosing to Gavot's stupid eyes all that his greed ached to possess: her fields and barns; her house and her fat bank account. But the man dared not speak. He seemed to be confronting an awful Presence. He looked weakly at Jo Morey, estimating his chances after she had had her foolish way with him. Vaguely he knew that in the future this outburst of hers would be an added weapon in his hand; not even yet did he doubt but what he would gain his object.

"It's all wrong," Jo rushed on, seemingly forgetting her companion, "that women should have to wait for what their souls crave and die for until some man, looking at their faces, makes it possible. A pretty face is not all and everything: it should not be the only thing that counts against the rest. Why, the time came, Gavot, when a man meant nothing to me compared with—with other things."

The fire and purpose died away. The outbreak, caused by the day's experience, left Jo weak and trembling. She turned shamed and hating eyes upon Gavot. She had let loose the thought of her lonely years.

"And now you come, you!" she said, "and offer me, what?"

Pierre breathed hard, his time had come at last.

"Marriage, Mam'selle. I'm willing to risk it."

"Marriage! My God! Marriage, what does that mean to such as you, Pierre Gavot? And you think I would give up my clean, safe life for anything you have to offer? Do men think so low of

women?"

Gavot snarled at this, his lips drew back in an ugly smile.

"God made the law for man and woman, Mam'selle——"

"Stop!" Jo stood up and flung her head back. "Stop! What do such as you know of God and his law? It's your own law you've made to cover all your wickedness and selfishness and then you—you label it with God's mark. But it's not God's fault. We women must show up the fraud and learn the true from the false. Oh! I've worked it out in my mind all these years while I've toiled and thought. But, Gavot, while we've been talking something has come to me quite clear. Not meaning to, you've done me a good turn.

"There's one way I can get something of what I want, and it's taken this scene to show me the path. Come to-morrow. You shall see, all of you, that I'm not the helpless thing you think me. Thinking isn't all. When we've thought our way out, we must act. And now get along, Gavot, the Lord takes queer ways and folks to work out his plans. Good-night to you and thank you!"

Pierre found himself on his feet and headed toward the door which Jo was holding open.

Outraged and flouted, knowing no mercy or justice, he had only one thing to say:

"Curse you!" he muttered; "curse and blast you."

Then he slunk out into the wild, black night.

A woman scorned and a man rejected have much in common, and there was the explanation to the Longvilles to be faced!

CHAPTER IV
BUT MAM'SELLE MAKES A VOW

After Mam'selle was certain that Gavot was beyond seeing her next move, she flung the door wide open, letting the fresh, pure night air sweep through the hot room.

Nick sprang to his feet but, deciding that the change in temperature had nothing to do with the late guest, he sidled over to Jo who stood on the threshold and pushed his questioning nose into her hand.

"Come, old fellow," she said gently, "we do not want sleep; let us go out and have a look at the sky. It will do us both good."

Quietly they went forth into the night and stood under a clump of pine trees back of the house and near the foot of the hill.

The clouds were splendid and the wind, like a mighty sculptor, changed their form and design moment by moment. They were silver-edged clouds, for a moon was hidden somewhere among them; here and there in the rifts stars shone and the murmuring of the pines, so like Cecile's cry, touched Mam'selle strangely. It seemed to her, standing there with Nick beside her, that something of the old, happy past was being given back to her. She smiled, wanly, to be sure, and tears, softer than had blurred her eyes for many a year, wet her lashes. In a numb sort of way she tried to understand the language of the night and the hour; it was bringing her peace—after all her storms. It was like having passed from a foul spot in a dark valley, to find oneself in a clear open space with a safe path leading——? With this thought Jo drew in her breath sharply. As surely as she had ever felt it in her life, she now felt that something new and compelling was about to occur. The meaning and purpose of her life seemed about to be revealed. Jo was a mystic; a fatalist, though she was never to realize this. Standing under the wind-swept sky she opened her arms wide, ready to accept! And then it came to her in definite form, the thought that had arisen during her talk with Gavot. She had said that she could have done without man if only the rest had been vouchsafed.

Well, then, what remained? She had house and lands and money. She might be denied the travail and mystery of having a child, but there were children; forgotten, disinherited children. They were possible, and if she accepted what was hers to take, her life need not be aimless and cheerless. She might yet know, vicariously, what her poor soul had craved.

A wave of religious exaltation swept over Jo Morey. Such moments have been epoch-making since the world began. The shepherds on Judea's plains, caught in the power of this emotion, lifted their eyes and saw the guiding star that led them to the Manger and the world's salvation! Down the ages it has turned the eyes of lesser men and women to their rightful course, and it now pointed Jo Morey to her new hope!

"I will adopt a child!" she said aloud and reverently as if dedicating herself. "A man child."

And then, in imagination, she followed the star.

Over at St. Michael's-on-the-Rocks there was a Catholic institution where baby driftwood was taken in without question. St. Michael's was a harbour town boasting a summer colony. Women there, as elsewhere, paid for too much faith or unsanctified greed, and the institution was often the solution of the pitiful outcome.

Jo had repeatedly contributed to the Home. She had no affiliation with the church that supported it, but the priest of Point of Pines had gained her respect and liking, and for his sake she had secretly aided causes that he approved. Tom Gavot, for instance, and the St. Michael's institution.

"Come, Nick," she said presently, "we'll sleep on it."

All night Mam'selle tossed about on her bed trying to argue herself into common sense. When she came down from the heights her decision appeared wild and unreasonable.

What would people say?

Rarely did Jo consider this, but it caught and held her now. Her hard, detached life had set her apart from the common conditions of the women near her. She was in many ways as innocent and guileless as a child although the deepest meanings of suffering and sorrow had not been hidden from her. That any one suspected her of being what she was not, had never occurred to her. She had shrunk from everyone at the time of Langley's desertion, because she neither wanted, nor looked for, sympathy and understanding. She was grateful for the indifference that followed that period of her life, but never for a moment had she known of that which lay hidden in the silence of her people.

Poor Jo! What Point of Pines was destined to think was impossible for her to conceive, because her planning was so wide of the reality that was to ensue. Tossing and restless, Jo tried to laugh her sudden resolve to scorn, but it would not be scorned either by reason or mirth.

"Very well!" she concluded for the second time, "I'll adopt a child, a man child! No girl things for me. I could not watch them straining out for their lives with the chance of losing them. A man can get what he wants and I'll do my best, under God, to make him merciful."

Toward morning Jo slept.

The next day she cooked and planned as calmly as if she were arranging for an invited guest. All her excitement and fire were smothered, but she did not falter in her determination. She explained to Nick as she tossed scraps to him. Nick was obligingly broad in his appetite and tastes, bones and bits of dough were equally acceptable, and he patted the floor thankfully with his sturdy little tail whenever Jo remembered him.

"We'll take it as a sign, Nick," she said, "that what I'm trying to do is right if there is at St. Michael's a man-thing, handsome and under a year old. We must have him handsome, that's half of the battle, and he must be so young that he can't remember. I want to begin on him.

"Now I'll bet you, Nick, that the Home is bristling with girl children and we'll have none of them."

Nick thumpingly agreed to all this but kept his eye on a plate of cookies that Mam'selle was lavishly sugaring. Nick did not spurn scraps but, like others, he yearned for tidbits.

All day Jo worked, cooking and setting her house in order.

Late in the afternoon she contemplated cutting a door between the two north chambers, her own and the one her father had used, which had never been occupied since.

"The child will soon need a place of his own," mused Jo, already looking ahead as a real mother might have done. Suddenly she started, recalling for the first time since before Pierre Gavot's diverting call her ambition concerning a boarder.

"Well, the boarder will have to wait," she thought, "they hate babies, and boys are terribly noisy and messy. I'll take a boarder when the lad goes away to school. I'll need company then."

By nightfall the little white house was spotless and in order. The fragrance of cooking mingled with the odour of wood fire was soothing to Jo's tired nerves; it meant home and achievement.

"I'll not let on about the child," she concluded just before she went to sleep. "When the doors of St. Michael's close on a child going in or out, they close, and that is the end of it. If folks care to pry it will give them something to do and keep them alive, but it's little they'll get from the Sisters or me.

"I'm a fool, a big fool, but I can pay for my folly and that's more than many women can do."

Early on the following morning Jo set forth in her broad-bellied little cart in which were a hamper of goodies for the waifs of St. Michael's, and a smaller basket containing Jo's own midday meal. Jo, herself, sat on the shaft beside the fat Molly and bobbed along in the best of spirits.

"You're to watch the place, Nick," she commanded, "and if he returns, you know who, just save a nip of him for me, that's a good beastie."

With this possibility of adventure, Nick had to be content.

Madame Longville saw Jo pass and remarked to the Captain who was eating the pancakes his wife was making:

"There goes Mam'selle, and so early, too; somehow she doesn't look as if she had taken up with Pierre."

"How does she look?" asked the Captain with his mouth full.

"Sort of easy and cheerful."

"Fool," muttered Longville and reached for more cakes. "Is she afoot?"

"No. She's in the little cart and it's empty."

"She's going to fetch Gavot, bag and baggage." Longville felt that he had solved the problem. "It takes a woman like Mam'selle to clinch a good bargain."

Then Longville laughed and sputtered.

"It was a good turn I did for your rascal brother when I turned him on to Mam'selle," he continued. "I took the matter in my own hands."

"I'm glad you did," Marcel returned, "but all the same Jo Morey doesn't look as if she had taken up with Pierre."

The repetition irritated Longville and again he muttered "fool!" then added "damn fool" and let the matter rest.

But Jo was out of sight by that time and seemed to have the empty world to herself. And what a world it was. The wind of the past few hours had swept the sky clear of clouds and for that time of year the day was warm.

Presently Jo found herself singing: "A la Claire Fontaine" and was surprised that it caused her no heartache. So grateful was she for this, that she dismounted and stood under one of the tall crosses by the wayside and prayed in her silent, wordless fashion, recalling the years that were gone as another might count the beads of a rosary. Her state of mind was most perplexing and surprising, but it was wonderful. What did it matter, the cause that resulted in this sense of freedom, and, at the same time, of being used and controlled? Jo felt herself a part of a great and powerful plan. Surely there is no truer freedom than that. At noon the roofs of St. Michael's were in plain sight over the pastures; by the road was a delectable pine grove with an opening broad enough to drive in, so in Jo drove. She unhitched Molly and fed her, then taking her own food to a log lying in the warm sunlight, she laid out her feast and seated herself upon the fragrant pine needles. She was healthfully hungry and thirsty and, for a few minutes, ate and drank without heeding anything but her needs. Then a stirring in the bushes attracted her attention. She raised her eyes and noted that the branches of a crimson sumach near the road were moving restlessly. Thinking some hungry but shy creature of the woods was hiding, Jo kept perfectly still, holding a morsel of food out enticingly.

The branches ceased trembling, there was no sound, but suddenly Jo realized that she was looking straight into eyes that were holding hers by a strange magnetism.

"What do you want?" she asked. "Who are you?"

There was no reply from the flaming bush, only that stare of fright and alertness.

"Come here. I will not hurt you. No one shall hurt you."

Either the words, or actual necessity, compelled obedience: the branches parted and out crawled a human figure covered by a coarse horse blanket over the dingy uniform of St. Michael's.

For a moment Jo was not sure whether the stranger were a boy or girl, for a rough boyish cap rested on the head, but when the form rose stiffly, tremblingly she saw it was that of a girl. She was pale and thin, with long braids of hair known as tow-colour, a faintly freckled face, and marvellous eyes. 'Twas the eyes that had caught and held Jo from the start, yellow eyes they were and black fringed. They were like pools in a wintry landscape; pools in which the sunlight was reflected.

"I—I am starving to death," said the girl advancing cautiously, slowly.

"Sit down and eat, then," commanded Jo, and her throat contracted as it always did when she witnessed suffering. "After you've had enough, tell me about yourself."

For a few minutes it seemed as if there were not enough food to satisfy the hungry child. She ate, not greedily or disgustingly, but tragically. At last, after a gulp of milk, she leaned back against a tree and gave Jo a grateful, pitiful smile.

"And now," said Jo, "where did you come from?"

"Over there," a denuded chicken bone pointed toward the Home.

"You live there?"

"I used to. I ran away last night. I've run away many times. They always caught me before."

The words were spoken in good, plain English. For this Jo was thankful. French, or the composite, always hampered her.

"Where were you last night?" she asked.

"Here in the woods."

Remembering the manner of night it was, Jo shivered and her face hardened.

"Were they cruel to you over there?" she said gruffly.

"Do you mean, did they beat me? No, they didn't beat my body, but they beat something else, something inside of me, all out of shape. They tried to make me into something I am not, something I do not want to be. They, they flattened me out. They were always teaching me, teaching me."

There was a comical fierceness in the words. Jo Morey recognized the spirit back of it and set her jaw.

"I never saw you at the Home," she said; "I've often been there."

"They only show the good ones—the ones they can be sure of. I took care of the babies when I wasn't being punished, locked up, you know. You see, I learned and could teach."

"They locked you up?" Mam'selle and the child were being drawn close by ties that neither understood.

"Yes, to keep me from running away. You're not going to tell them about me, are you?"

The wonderful eyes seemed searching Jo's very soul.

"No. But where are you going?"

"I'm, I'm looking for someone." As she spoke the light vanished from the yellow eyes, a blankness spread over the pale, thin face.

"Looking for whom?"

"I do not know."

"What is your name?" Jo was struck by the change in the girl, she had become listless, dull.

"I do not know. Over there they call me Marie, but that isn't my name."

"I can't let you go off alone by yourself," Jo was talking more to herself than to the girl.

"Then, what are you going to do with me? Please try to help me. You see I was very sick once and I—I cannot remember what happened before that, but it keeps coming closer and closer and pressing harder and harder—here." The girl put her hand to her head. "Once in awhile I catch little bits and then I hold them close and keep them. If I could be let alone I think soon I would remember."

The pleading eyes filled with tears, the lips trembled.

Now the obvious thing to do, Jo knew very well: she ought to bundle the girl into the cart and drive as fast as possible to the Home. But Mam'selle Jo knew that she was not going to do the obvious thing, and before she had time to plan another course she saw two black-robed figures coming across the pasture opposite. The girl saw them, too, and rushed to Jo. She clung to her fiercely and implored:

"God in heaven, save me! If they get me, I will kill myself."

The appeal turned Jo to stone.

"Get in the cart," she commanded, "and cover up in the straw."

The two Sisters from the Home were in the road as Jo bent to gather up the debris of the meal.

"Ah, 'tis the Mam'selle Morey," said the older Sister. "You were coming to St. Michael's perhaps, with your goodly gifts?" The words were spoken in pure French.

"I was coming, Sister—to—to adopt a child!"

The blunt statement, in bungling words, made both Sisters stare.

"'Tis like your good heart to think of this thing, Mam'selle Morey. Another day we will consider it."

"Why not to-day, Sister? My time is never empty. I want a boy, very young and—and good to look at."

"Oh, but Mam'selle Morey, one does not adopt a child as one does a stray cat. Another day, Mam'selle, and we will consider gladly, but to-day——"

"What of to-day, Sister?"

"Well, one of our little flock has strayed, a child sadly lacking but dearly loved; we must find her."

"She has been gone long?" Jo was moving to the cart with her basket and bottles.

"She has just been missed. We will soon find her."

Jo's hand, searching the straw, was patting the cold one that trembled beneath her touch. "May I give you a lift along the road?" she asked grimly, the humour of the thing striking her while she reassured the hidden girl by a whispered word.

"Thanks, no, Mam'selle. We will not keep to the roads. The lost one loved the woods. She'd seek them."

Jo waited until the Sisters had departed, her hand never having left the trembling one beneath hers.

"You are going to—to take me with you?" The words came muffled, from the straw.

"Yes."

"And where?"

"To Point of Pines."

"What a lovely name. And you, what may I call you?"

"Jo, Mam'selle Jo."

"Mam'selle Jo. That is pretty, too, like Point of Pines. How kind you are and good. I did not know any one could be so good."

"Lie down now, child, and sleep."

Jo was hitching Molly to the cart; her hands fumbled and there was a deep fire in her dark eyes.

"We're going home," she said presently, but the girl was already asleep.

Through the autumn sunset and under the clear stars the little cart bobbed along to Point of Pines. The stirring in the straw, the touch, now and then, of a small, groping hand were all that disturbed Jo's troubled thoughts. When she reached her darkened house, Nick met her at the gate. Very solemnly Jo dismounted and took the dog's head in her hands.

"Nick," she explained, "Nick, it's a girl, and an ugly one at that. She's old enough to remember, too, but she don't—she don't, Nick. God help me! I'm a fool, but I could do nothing else."

CHAPTER V
ENTER DONELLE

Many times during the next few weeks Jo Morey repeated that "I could do nothing else." It was like a defense of her action to all the opposing forces.

Poor Jo! She, who had stood before Longville a free woman but a short time ago; she who had flouted Gavot and sworn to have something of her own out of life in spite of man, was now held in the clutch of Fate.

The girl she had brought into her home was raving with fever and tossing restlessly on Jo's own bed in the little north chamber. No one ever sent for a doctor in Point of Pines until the need of one was practically past. Every woman was trained to care for the sick, and Mam'selle Jo was a master of the art, so she watched and cared for the sufferer, mechanically dazed by conditions and reiterating that she could have done nothing else.

The sweet autumn weather had changed suddenly, and winter came howling over the hills sheathed in icy rain that lashed the trees and houses and flooded the roads. No one came to disturb Jo Morey, and her secret was safe for the time being. But the long, dark, storm-racked nights; the dull days filled with anxiety and hard work, wore upon Jo. Constant journeys to the wood pile were necessary in order to keep the fires to their full duty; food had to be provided and the animals cared for.

Nick grew sedate and nervous; he followed his mistress closely and often sat by the bed upon which lay the stranger who had caused all the disturbance.

And so the storm raged, and in the loneliness poor Jo, like Nick, developed nerves.

She moved about, looking over her shoulder affrightedly if she heard an unusual sound. She forced herself to eat and when she could, she slept, lying beside the sick girl, her hand upon the hot body. At such times the flesh looses its hold upon the spirit and strange things happen. At such times, since the world began, miracles have occurred, and Jo became convinced, presently, that she had been led to do what she had done, by a Power over which she had no control and which she had no longer any desire to defy. She submitted; ceased to rebel; did not even

reiterate that she could have done nothing else.

At first she listened to the sick girl's ravings, hoping she might learn something of the past, but as no names or places entered into the confused words she lost interest. Nevertheless, the words sank into her subconsciousness and made an impression. The fevered brain was groping back past the St. Michael days, groping in strange, distant places, but never finding anything definite. There seemed to be long, tiresome journeys, there were pathetic appeals to stop and rest. More than once the hoarse, weak voice cried: "They'll believe me if I tell. I saw how it was. Let me tell, they'll believe me."

But when Jo questioned as to this the burning eyes only stared and the lips closed. At other times the girl grew strangely still and her face softened.

"The white high-top is all pink," she once whispered looking toward the north window against which the sheet of icy rain was dashing; "it is morning!"

Jo grew superstitious; she felt haunted and afraid for the first time in her life and finally she decided to call in Marcel Longville and let her share the secret vigil.

The night of the day she decided upon this, something remarkable happened. Toward evening the rain ceased and the wind took to sobbing remorsefully in long, wearied gasps. The girl in the north chamber lay resting with lowered temperature and steadier pulse. "The crisis is past," murmured Jo, and when all was made comfortable, she went to the living room, put her feet in the oven, and looked at her weary, haggard face in the glass. The reflection did not move her, she was too utterly worn out, but she did think of the morrow and the coming of Marcel.

"Now that there is no need," she muttered, "I must have someone. I'm all but done for. I cannot think straight, and there has got to be some straight thinking from now on."

She was still looking at her plain face in the glass when she heard the clock in the kitchen strike ten and heard the even breathing of the girl in her north chamber. She was still looking in the glass, still hearing—what? Why, footsteps coming up the little white-shell path! Familiar steps they were, but coming from, oh! such a distance, and out of the many years! They caused no surprise nor alarm, however, and Jo smiled. She saw, quite distinctly, the face in the glass smiling, and now it was no longer old and haggard, and it seemed right that those steps should be near. Jo's smile broadened.

The steps came close; they were at the door. There was a quick, sharp knock as if the comer were hurrying gladly. Mam'selle sprang up and—found herself standing in the middle of the room, the fire all but burned out, the lamp sputtering!

"I've been dreaming!" murmured Jo, pushing her hair back from her face.

"Nick!"

Mam'selle was fully roused by now and her eyes were riveted upon her dog. He stood near the door all a-bristle, as if awaiting the entrance of one he knew and loved. Then he whined and capered about for all the world as if he were fawning at the feet of someone.

"Nick, come here!"

But Nick paid no heed.

"None of that, sir!"

The cold sweat stood on Jo Morey's face. "None of that!" Then, with a gasp, "You, too, heard the steps, the steps that have no right here. Nick!"

And now the dog turned and came abjectly toward his mistress. He looked foolish and apologetic.

"We're both going mad!" muttered Jo, but bent to soothe poor Nick before she turned to the north chamber.

Under the spell of her dream she trembled, and was filled with apprehension. How quiet the sick room was! The candle sputtering in its holder made flashes of light and cast queer shadows. The girl was not sleeping, her eyes were wide open, her hands groping feebly.

"Father," she moaned as Jo bent over her, "father, where are you? I'll remember, father. The name—Mam'selle Jo Morey, and she will understand!"

Then—all was still, deadly, terribly still. During the past weeks of strain and watching a door had been gradually opening into a darkened room, but now a sudden light was flashed and Jo saw and understood!

Undoubting, stunned, but keenly alive, she believed she was looking upon Henry Langley's child and felt that she had always known! It was most natural, Langley had been coming home to her: because he could trust her; knew that she would understand. Understand—what? But did that matter? Something had happened, Jo meant to find all that out later. Now she must act, and act quickly. The crisis had not passed; it was here. Jo set to work and for hours she fought death

off by primitive but effective means. She knew the danger; counted the chances and strained every nerve to her task. When morning came she saw she had saved the girl and she dropped by the bedside, faint and listless, but lifting up her soul, where another woman would have prayed, to the Power that she acknowledged and trusted.

Mam'selle did not send for Marcel Longville, she was given strength to go on alone for a little longer. The sick girl rallied with wonderful response to Jo's care which now had a new meaning. She was docile, sweet, and pathetically grateful, but she did not want Jo long out of her sight.

"It is queer, Mam'selle," she sometimes said, "but when you go out of the door it seems as if something, a feeling, got me. And when you come in again, it goes."

"What kind of a feeling, child?"

"I do not know, but I am afraid of it and *It* is afraid of you. You're like a light, making the darkness go. When I was sickest, sometimes I felt I was lost in the blackness. Then I touched your hand, and I found my way back."

After awhile the "Mam'selle" was shortened to "Mam'sle," then, and quite unconsciously, to Mamsey. To that the girl clung always. And Jo, for no reason but a quaint whim, disdained the Marie by which the girl had been known and called her Donelle after poor Mrs. Morey who had died at Cecile's birth.

The winter after the ice storm settled down seriously. It had no more tantrums, but grew still and white and lonely. The snow was deep and glistening, the sky blue and cloudless and the pines cracked in the cold like the rifles of hunters in the woods. Donelle crept, a little, pale ghost, from the north chamber to the sunny living room. By putting her hand on Nick's head she walked more steadily and laughed at the progress she made. Jo tucked her up on the hard couch under the glowing begonias and geraniums.

"Good Mamsey! It's like coming back from a far, far place," whispered the girl. As strength returned Donelle grew often strangely thoughtful.

"I thought," she confided one night to Jo, "that when I was left alone I could remember, but I cannot."

Then Jo took things in her own hands. She was always one to muster all the help in sight, and not be too particular. She was developing a deep passion for the girl she had rescued; she meant to see the thing through and *well* through. As soon as she could she meant to go to St. Michael's and learn all that the Sisters knew of the girl's past. She felt she had a power over them that might wring the truth from their frozen silence. Then she meant to use her last dollar in procuring the proper medical skill for the girl. There was a big doctor every summer at St. Michael's Hotel; until summer Jo must do her best.

As her nerves grew calm and steady the experiences of the night of Donelle's crisis lost their hold.

"She heard my name at the Home," Jo argued, "and I myself spoke it when she was the most frightened and on the verge of fever. In the muddle and confusion of delirium it came to the surface with the rest of the floating bits. That's all."

Still there was a lurking familiarity about the girl that haunted Jo's most prosaic hours. It lay about the girl's mouth, the way she had of looking at Jo as if puzzled, and then a slow smile breaking. Langley had that same trick, back in the spring and summer of the past. He would take a long look, then smile contentedly as if an answer to a longing had come. But something else caught and held Jo Morey's attention as she watched the girl. That charm of manner, that poise and ease; how like they were to—but Jo dared not mention the name, for the hurt had broken out afresh after all the years!

"But such things do not happen in real life," she argued in her sane, honest mind. "She wouldn't have been hiding in those bushes just when I stopped to eat! I'm getting wild to fancy such things, wild!"

So Jo turned from the impossible and attacked the possible, but as often happens in life, she confused the two.

"See here, child," she said one day when Donelle was brooding and sad, "You've been very sick and you're weak yet, but while you were at the worst you remembered, and it will all come back again soon."

The girl brightened at once.

"What did I remember, Mamsey?" she asked.

Jo, weaving a new design, puckered her brow. "Oh, you told of travels with your father," then with inspiration, "they must have been in far-off places, for you spoke about high-tops white with snow and the sun making them pink. They must have been handsome."

Donelle's eyes widened and grew strained.

"Yes," she said dreamily; "they must have been handsome. But my father, Mamsey, what about my father?"

"Well, child, he died." Jo made the plunge and looked for the results.

"Yes, I think I knew he was dead. Did you know my father, Mamsey?"

Again Jo plunged.

"Yes, child, long ago. He must have been bringing you to me when something happened. Then you were ill and the Sisters took you——"

"But why did they not bring me to you?" Donelle was clinging to every word.

"I think they did not know. You forgot what had happened. Your father was dead——"

"Yes, I see. But always I was trying to get away. Many times I did get out of the gates, but always they found me until the time when I found you. Things happen very queer sometimes."

Then, quickly changing the subject;

"Mamsey, did you know my mother, too?"

"Yes, child." And now poor, honest, simple Jo Morey bent her head over the loom.

"Was she a good—mother?"

For the life of her Jo could not answer. The wide sunny eyes of the girl were upon her, the awful keenness of an awakening mind was searching her face and what lay behind her troubled eyes.

The moment of silence made the next harder; conclusions had been reached by the girl. She came toward Jo, stood before her, and laid her hands upon her shoulders,

"Mamsey," she faltered; "we will not talk about my mother if it hurts you." The quick gratitude and sympathy almost frightened Jo.

And they did not for many a year after that speak of Donelle's mother.

"But, child," Jo pleaded, "just do not push yourself, it will all come back to you some day. You must trust me as your father did. And another thing, Donelle, you are to live with me now, and—and it was your father's wish, it is best that you take my name. And you must not let on about—about—the Home at St. Michael's."

Donelle shivered.

"I will not!" she said. "Do they know where I am?"

"No. But when you are able to be left, I am going to tell them!" This came firmly. "They will be glad enough to forget you and leave the rest to me. They have great powers of forgetting and remembering, when it pays. But they are through with you, child, forever."

"Oh! Mamsey, thank God!"

Donelle folded her thin arms across her breast and swayed to and fro. This gesture of hers was characteristic. When she was glad she moved back and forth; when she was troubled she moved from side to side, holding her slim body close.

"I will mind nothing Mamsey, now. I will begin with you!"

"And I," murmured Jo gruffly, "I will begin with you, Donelle. You and I, you and I."

But of course the outside world soon had to be considered. People came to Jo Morey's door on one errand or another, but they got no further.

"I cannot make Mam'selle out," Marcel Longville confided to the Captain, "she has always been quick to answer a call when sickness was the reason. Now here is poor Tom laid up with a throat so bad that I know not what to do and when I went she opened her door but halfway and said, 'send for a doctor!'" Longville grunted. He had his suspicions about Mam'selle and Gavot, but he could get nothing definite from Pierre and surely there was nothing hopeful about Jo Morey's attitude.

"I'll call myself," he decided. But to his twice-repeated knocks he got no response; then he kicked on the door. At this Jo opened a window, risking the life and health of her begonias and geraniums by so doing.

"Well?" was all she said, but her plain, haggard face startled the Captain. He had formulated no special errand; he had trusted to developments, and this unlooked-for welcome to his advances threw him back upon a flimsy report of Tom Gavot's sore throat.

"I'm sorry, Captain," Jo said, "but I'm not able to do anything to help. There's no reason why you shouldn't get a doctor. If it's a case of money, I'll pay the bill for the sake of the poor boy and his dead mother."

"Mam'selle, you're not yourself," Longville retorted.

"I'm just myself," Jo flung back. "I've just found myself. But I'm going off for a few days, Captain, so good-bye."

Longville retreated from the house in a sadly befuddled state. Surely something serious was the matter with Jo Morey. She looked ill and acted queer, almost suspiciously queer. And she was going away! No one went away from Point of Pines unless dire necessity drove them. Why should people ever go away from anywhere unless forced?

Then Longville's thoughts drifted back to the time when Mam'selle had gone away before and came back so bedraggled and spent.

It was all very odd and unsettling.

"Surely Mam'selle needs watching," mumbled Longville and he decided to watch.

Night favoured his schemes. He forsook the tavern and made stealthy trips to the little white house, only to be greeted by blank darkness, except for a dim gleam at the edges of the curtain at the window of the small north chamber.

"Mam'selle has not yet gone," concluded Longville, but that was little comfort. Then one night he got bolder and crept close to the rear and listened under the chamber window.

Jo was talking to—— At that instant the kitchen door was flung open and out dashed Nick.

"At him!" commanded Mam'selle, standing in the panel of light, laughing diabolically, "It's a skunk, no doubt; drive him off, Nick; don't touch him!"

Longville escaped, how, he could not tell, for Nick sniffed at his retreating heels well down the highway.

Three or four nights after, Longville, discreetly keeping to the road, where he had a perfect right to be, paused before the white house again. It was a dark night, with occasional flashes of moonlight as the wind scattered the clouds.

Presently the house door opened and Mam'selle came out with Nick close beside her. They stood quite still on the little lawn, their faces turned upward. And just then Longville could have sworn he heard a sob, a deep, smothered sob, and Nick certainly whined piteously. Then the two went back into the house and Longville, with a nervous start, turned and faced—Gavot!

"What do you make of it?" whispered Pierre.

"Make of what?" demanded Longville.

"Oh, I've done some watching myself," Gavot replied, "I've watched you *and* her! A man doesn't keep to the night when the tavern has a warm place for him. I've kept you company, Longville, when you didn't know it."

"Well, then, what's the meaning that you make out, Pierre?"

"The Mam'selle Morey is up to—to tricks," Gavot nodded knowingly, "and she's not going to escape me."

"'Tis not the first caper she has cut," Longville snorted, "and she will well need an eye kept on her."

Then the two went amicably arm in arm to Dan's Place.

"Four eyes, brother Longville," said Gavot who always grew nauseously familiar when he dared. "Four eyes on Mam'selle and four *such* eyes!"

CHAPTER VI

MAM'SELLE HEARS PART OF THE TRUTH

Jo Morey came out of her house quite boldly and locked the door!

She had left Nick inside, a most unusual proceeding. Then she harnessed Molly to the caliche, also an unusual proceeding, for the picturesque carriage was reserved for the use of summer visitors and brought a good price when driven by one of the young French-Canadians from the settlement a few miles away. Openly, indeed encouraging nods and conversation, Jo started toward St. Michael's in her Sunday best and nicely poised on the high seat.

"Good morning, Captain," she greeted as she passed Longville on the road; "I'm off at last, you see! So you can take a rest from watching."

"When do you return, Mam'selle?" asked the Captain, quite taken aback by the sight.

"That depends," and Jo smiled, another rare proceeding, surely; "the roads are none too good and time is my own these days."

Then she bobbed along, the high feather on her absurd hat waving defiance.

But Jo was quite another person to young Tom Gavot whom she met a mile farther on. The boy was a handsome, shabby fellow and at present his throat was bound close in a band of red flannel. His clothing was thin and ragged and his bare hands rested upon the handle of a shovel

which he held. He leaned slightly on it, as he paused to greet Mam'selle Morey.

"Tom, you've been sick," said Jo, stopping short and leaning toward him. "I hated not to come to you—but I couldn't."

"'Tis all right, now, Mam'selle. I went to the curé when my throat was the worst and the good Father took me in and sent for the doctor."

"I'll remember that, Tom, when the curé asks for help this winter. And, Tom, how goes life?"

The boy's clear, dark eyes looked troubled. "I want to get away, Mam'selle Jo. I can never make anything of myself here. Sometimes," the boy smiled grimly, "sometimes I find myself—longing to forget everything in——"

"No, Tom, not the tavern! Remember what I've always told you, boy, of the night your mother went. She said you paid for all she had suffered! Tom, when you get down and things look black, just remember and keep on being worth what she went through. It was worse than anything you'll ever be called upon to bear."

The boy's eyes dimmed.

"I'm holding close," he said grimly. "Holding close to—I don't know what."

"That's it, Tom, we don't know what; but it's something, isn't it?"

"Yes, Mam'selle."

"Now listen, Tom. How old are you? Let me see——"

"Sixteen, Mam'selle."

"To be sure. And you study hard at the school, the curé has told me. And you mend the roads in the summer with the men?"

"Yes, Mam'selle," Tom grinned, "and get a bit of money and hide it well. There's nearly twenty dollars now."

"Good! Well, Tom, this winter, study as you never have before and next summer, if the men come, work and save. You shall go away some day, that I swear. I'll promise that, but it must be a secret. You shall have your chance."

"Mam'selle!" Tom instinctively took off his hat and stood beside Jo like a ragged and forlorn knight.

"You've got to pay for all your mother suffered!" Jo's lips quivered. "It's the least you can do."

Then with a nod and a cheery farewell, Jo bobbed along while Tom Gavot returned to his self-imposed task of filling in the ruts on the road. Occasionally a traveller tossed him a coin, and the work kept him occupied, but best of all it assumed the dignity of a job and made him capable of helping intelligently when the real workers came in the late spring.

Just after midday Jo Morey drew up before the Home of St. Michael's-on-the-Rocks. She was very quiet, very dignified and firm, but her heart was pounding distractedly against her stiffly boned waist. She was to learn, at last, all there was to learn about the girl who, at that moment, was locked in the white house behind drawn shades, with instructions to remain hidden until Jo's return.

There was little doubt now in Mam'selle's mind but that the fantastic conclusions she had drawn during the strenuous hours of illness were mere figments and not to be relied upon. They could all be easily explained, no doubt.

Poor Jo!

But, no matter what she was to hear, and undoubtedly it would be most prosaic, she meant to keep the girl even if she had to threaten in order to do so! She, plain, unlovable Jo Morey, had developed a sudden and violent fancy for the girl she had rescued. Jo was almost ashamed of her emotions, but she could not, inwardly, control them. Outwardly, she might scowl and glower, but her heart beat quick at the touch of the girl's hands, her colour rose at the tones of the low voice; some women are thus moved by little children. Jo, repressed and suppressed, was like a delicate instrument upon which her own starved maternal instinct now played riotously.

She was led to the bare little reception room of the Home and left to her own devices while a small maid scurried away to summon the Sister in charge.

Alone, Jo sat on the edge of a hard chair and tried to believe that she was prepared for anything—or nothing, but all the time she was getting more and more agitated. When things were at the tensest she always looked the sternest, so when Sister Angela entered the room, she was rather taken aback by the face Mam'selle turned toward her soft greeting. Sister Angela was the older of the two nuns who had questioned Jo while the lost girl lay hidden under the straw in the cart that first day.

"Ah, it's Mam'selle Morey! A good day to you, Mam'selle."

"Have you found that girl yet?" bluntly spoke Jo.

The manner and question took the Sister off her guard.

"Oh! the girl! I remember, Mam'selle. We met you while we were looking for her. The child is quite safe, thank you. We have long wanted to find a good home for her."

"So you found her?"

Mam'selle was struggling with the fragments of French at her command and making poor work with them. The Sister pretended not to understand.

"The girl," Jo was losing what little control she had, "is over at my house; she's been terribly ill."

Sister Angela's face grew ashy and she drew her chair close. "And now?" she whispered.

"She's going to get well." Jo settled back.

"And—and she has talked? She had an illness here once, the physician told us another shock might restore her memory. That sometimes does happen. Mam'selle, the girl has remembered and—talked?"

"She's talked, yes!" Jo was groping along. "I want her story, Sister."

"What is there to tell, Mam'selle?" Sister Angela took a chance. "We always give the sinning mothers an hour in which to consider whether they will keep their children or not. We try to make them see their duty, if they will not, we assume it. And the past is dead. You know our way here, we do the best we can for the children. 'Tis wiser to forget—much."

"Sister Angela, I said the girl talked and she remembered!"

Under Jo's lowering brows the dark eyes gleamed.

"Then, Mam'selle, if the girl remembered and talked surely you can see why it was best to hush her story?"

The colour again receded from Sister Angela's face. She did not look guilty, but she looked anxious.

She had circulated a report that the missing girl was on probation in a good home; she had carried on a still hunt untiringly; and now if Mam'selle Jo Morey could be prevailed upon to adopt the girl, how perfectly everything would work out. And there was to be a meeting of the managers in a week!

"Sister, I mean to take this girl if it can be done legally and quietly, but I will not unless I hear all I can from you, all there is to know."

"Very well, Mam'selle, we only have the girl's good at heart, I assure you. Our Sister Mary was the one who brought the girl to us four years ago. I will send her to you. As to the legal steps, they are practical and easy, and when one of our fold goes to another, that is the end! We have educated this girl carefully; she is well trained. We had always her interest at heart. And now I will send Sister Mary."

Left alone again, Jo clasped her hands close and stiffened as for an ordeal.

The door opened and closed. A very pale little Sister took a chair near Mam'selle and, holding to her crucifix as to an anchor, she said gently:

"I am to tell you of the little girl, Marie. 'Tis not much of a story. We know very little, but the little were best forgot; it is not a pretty story.

"Four years ago word came from a tavern back in the hills that a man and child were very ill there and I went over to nurse them. The girl had fallen and hurt her head. She was quite out of her mind and I decided to bring her here; the doctor said she could be moved. The man, he was the father of the child, was dying. I sent for a priest and waited until the priest came.

"The man was a bit delirious and talked wildly, but at every question he hushed suddenly as if he were mortally afraid of something.

"He said he wanted no priest, insisted that he was able to start on. He was taking the child to someone who, he kept repeating, would believe him and understand.

"When I asked him what there was to believe and to whom he was taking the child, he looked at me strangely and laughed! He died before the priest came. I brought the girl away and somehow the report got around that she, too, had died, and we thought it best to let the matter rest there.

"A year later two men came to hear what we had to tell about the man who had died; he was wanted for—murder!"

To Morey sprang to her feet.

"Not—that!" she panted. Then quickly regaining her self-control, "I see now why you felt you must keep the story secret," she continued, and sank back limply in her chair.

"Exactly," nodded Sister Mary, then glanced about the room and lowered her voice.

"I told the men about the father's death—and—I said the girl had died later. Mam'selle, I took

that course because one of the men, he said he had known the dead man, wanted the girl, and I could not trust the man; his eyes were bad. I feared for the child. 'Twas better that she stayed where she was, shielded, cared for. I had grown to be fond of her. I taught her carefully, she was a great help with the younger children. I hoped she would come into the Sisterhood, but perhaps it is best she should have a safe home."

"Is that all? Did those men tell you nothing of the past?" Jo's words came like hard, quick strokes.

The waxen face of Sister Mary did not change expression. She had left life's sordid problems so far behind that they were mere words to her.

"Oh! they had their story," she said. "The dead man had shot his wife because he discovered that she had a lover. He shot her in the presence of the little girl and the lover. Mam'selle, I believe the man with the officer was the lover. He wanted the child for reasons of his own; that was why I said—she was dead.

"That's all, Mam'selle."

Jo Morey felt a strange sympathy with the pale little Sister and a deep gratitude.

"You're a good woman!" she said to Sister Mary.

"I did my best for the girl," the Sister went on, still holding to her crucifix, "she never recovered her memory for that, God be praised! But she had a bright mind and I trained that carefully. She knows much from books; all that I could get for her. She never took kindly to—religion, and that is why Sister Angela was thinking of finding a home for her; the girl was not happy here, but we did our best."

"I am sure you did, Sister!" Jo looked grateful. "I understand. But those men, did they not mention the name of the man they sought?"

Sister Mary drew her brows together. "The name? Yes, but it has escaped me. It was an English name if I recall rightly, something like—Long—no—yes—it was Longley or Longdon, something sounding like that."

Never in her life had Jo fainted, but she feared she was going to do so now. The bare little room was effaced as though a huge, icy blackness engulfed it. In the darkness a clock on a shelf ticked madly, dashingly, like blow upon blow on iron.

"Here is a glass of water, Mam'selle, you are ill."

Sister Mary pressed the glass to Jo's lips and she drank it to the last drop.

"I have nursed this girl through a long sickness," she explained. "I am tired. But I will keep her. Tell Sister Angela to make arrangements and let me know."

"Very well, Mam'selle. And the girl, Marie; she remembers, Sister Angela says. 'Tis a miracle. I shall miss her, but God has been kind to her."

"She will remember only what I tell her, from now on!" Jo set her teeth over her tingling tongue. "And now, I must go."

Mam'selle almost expected to find it dark when she went out from the dim room, but it was broad daylight, and when she looked at the clock in the church tower she saw that she had been but an hour inside.

In all the years of her life she had never experienced half so much as she had during the space of time with the two Sisters. She was conscious of trying to keep what she had heard in the Home, out of her mind; she was afraid to face it in the open. There were children playing about; a Sister or two looked at her curiously; she must be alone before she dared take her terrible knowledge into consideration. Gravely she went to the caleche, stiffly she took the reins and clicked to Molly. A mile from St. Michael's, much to Molly's disgust, they turned from the main road and struck into a wood trail where the snowy slush made travel difficult. Jo did not go far, she merely wanted to hide from any chance passerby. Then she let the reins drop in her lap and staring straight ahead—thought!

It was growing cold, that dead cold that comes when the mercury is dropping. But Jo was back in the summer time of her life, she was studying Langley, and the woman who had lured him, with the mature power that suffering years had later evolved in Jo herself. By some psychic force she seemed able to follow them far, far. So far she went in imagination that she saw the "white high-tops" changing from shade to shade. Jo, who had never been fifty miles from her birthplace, went far in that hour!

She understood Langley as she never had before. She suffered with him, no longer because of him. The dreadful scene in the lonely wood-cabin; the stranger man who had told his story! And against that story who could prevail? But would Langley have been coming to her with his child had he been guilty of the crime with which he was charged? And Donelle's words: "They will

believe me. Let me tell, I saw how it was."

Mam'selle, stiff with cold, smiled with rare radiance as one might who, considering her dishonoured dead, knows in her heart that he is innocent.

"If the child ever remembers, then I can speak," thought poor Jo. "I believe the man who came to the Home is the guilty one. He wanted the girl, wanted to hush her story. He must think her dead, dead, unless she can prove—the truth."

The black tragedy into which poor Mam'selle had been plunged quickened every sense. Her one determination was to hide Langley's child, not only for her own safety, but in order that the horrible story of the crime might be stilled. Langley was dead, he must rest in peace. But that man might be alive; the merest suspicion of Donelle's existence would bring about the greatest disaster. He might claim the girl, by pretending relationship, and then go to any lengths to insure her silence. No; come what might, all must be hidden.

It was dark when Mam'selle Jo reached Point of Pines. She took Molly to the stable and fed her, then silently made her way to the little house. Not a gleam of light shone from the windows; all was quiet and safe.

But was it? As Jo reached the lowest step of the porch she saw a black figure crouching under the living-room window. So absorbed was the watcher that he had not heard Jo's approach; neither did he notice when, on tiptoes, she mounted and stood behind him, the better to see what might be the object of his spying.

The shade of the broad window was lowered, but the bottom rested on the pots of flowers, and there was a space through which one might look into the room. The fire was burning brightly and its radiance clearly showed Donelle on the couch by the window, fast asleep, Nick crouching beside her, his eyes glaring at the intruder outside and his teeth showing!

"Well, Captain!"

Longville jumped up as if he had been shot. For an instant Jo had the master position, but only for an instant; then Longville spoke.

"So that's what you have been hiding!" he said.

"And this is the way you take to find out?" Jo looked dangerous. She was thinking quickly. She had meant to guard the future by safe courses, but she had little choice now. Only one thing was clear, she must save the secret she had just learned. In reaching this conclusion Jo did not consider how badly she was plunging into dangerous depths. For herself she gave no thought, her innocence and ignorance made her blind; she stood before her persecutor and answered blankly like one who must reply, and does not count the cost.

"Whose girl is that?"

"Mine."

"Yours and Langley's, by God! And you have the shamelessness to stand there and tell me so to my face. So that's what you went away for, the summer Langley turned you adrift. All these years you've kept your disgrace hidden—where?"

Horrified, Jo staggered back and confronted Longville with desperate eyes. She had meant to tell him that she had adopted the girl; had even felt she might go so far as to mention the Home, but now! What was she to do? This mean and suspicious mind had fastened on an explanation of the child's presence in her house that had not even occurred to her. No matter what she said she doubted if Longville would believe her. She stood in the dark, face to face with the Captain, while her mind battled with the question. "Shall I say the child is my own?" thought Jo. "That will stop all further questions, no one need ever know about the murder, and Donelle can be kept safe from the hateful suspicion that I——" she could not even say the horrible thing to herself.

"Answer me!" Longville, feeling that his victim feared, flung all disguise aside.

Still she stared and debated with herself. She knew that if she said that she had adopted Donelle, Longville would not believe her mere statement; she would have to bare this whole awful story to this scandal-monger; the man would expect proofs, he would ferret out the last detail. Everyone in the village would know it next day, the child would be questioned, her house would be the centre of the curious.

The other horn of the dilemma would be safer for the child; they would be let alone, she could live the evil name down. Sometime the truth would come out.

Jo had decided. She faced Longville, her head up, her jaws clamped, silent.

"Answer me—you—harlot!"

The word stung Jo Morey and she sprang forward. Longville thought she was going to strike him and like the coward he was, he dodged.

"You dare not speak for yourself," he snarled.

Then Jo laughed. The sound frightened her. She did not feel like laughing, heaven knew; but the relief of it steadied her. Then, as one does who sees a struggle is useless, she let herself go.

"Oh! yes; I can speak for myself, Captain. The girl is mine. Where I've kept her is my business, and you and I have finished business together. That—that brother-in-law of yours came after my money; was willing to marry me for it, and flung some hateful words in my face. But he set me thinking. Why should a woman do without a child because a man will have none of her, or only that which he wants? If I could not have my own in man's way, I take it in my own. I have my child, and now—what will you do? If you make my life and hers a hell here I have money and can go elsewhere. Go so far that your black words will not be heard. On the other hand, if you mind your business and leave me and mine alone, we'll stay. And now get off my property."

Longville was so utterly dumbfounded that he slunk from the porch and was in the road before he regained his self-control. Then he started back, but Jo had gone inside, locked the door noisily, and was pulling the shade down to its extreme limit!

CHAPTER VII
MARCEL TAKES HER STAND BY JO

Apparently Longville decided to mind his business, but that, he declared did not exclude Mam'selle's. Greed, curiosity, and indecision caused him to refrain from persecution. Indeed the psychology of the situation was peculiar. For the first time in her life Jo Morey became interesting. A woman with a past may, or may not be happy, but she certainly affords speculation and conjecture. Point of Pines, when it had considered Jo before, felt an amused sort of pity for her and, since she asked nothing of it, left her completely alone. But now, at this late day, she sailed into the open in such an unlooked-for manner that she inspired awe rather than the contempt or outraged scorn of Point of Pines. Without stir or fuss she simply annexed the child, and went the even gait that she had heretofore gone alone.

She was a mystery, and the men, generally in the fragrant atmosphere of Dan's Place, discussed her smartness and independence with resentment, and a—smothered—admiration! The women, especially those with whom Jo had shared hours of pain and sorrow, wondered where she had been when her own hour overtook her; whose hands had helped her who never refused help to others. And who had kept Jo's child? That question stirred in Dan's Place and in the houses roundabout.

"Perhaps some hill woman has kept the child," whispered the women over their work; but to hunt among the hills would be futile. Besides, Mam'selle's money had undoubtedly closed any lips which might be able to furnish facts.

It was a thrilling situation. One not to be despised by the lonely hamlet. Some were for, some against, Mam'selle Morey; but no one wanted, or dared, to ignore her utterly. Marcel Longville issued forth from the cloud of indecision, girded on her armour, and struck a blow for Jo Morey.

In order to make known her position, she wrapped herself in a shawl one day, and boldly walked to Jo's house in the middle of the afternoon, when several men, her husband among them, were sitting about the stove in the tavern, their faces turned to the highway.

"A woman like Mam'selle Morey can corrupt a town unless—" It was Gavot who spoke, and he sniffed disagreeably, looking down the road. Longville was watching his wife pass; he grew hot with anger, but made no reply.

"Marcel can cut her up with her tongue. It takes a woman to slash a woman," Pierre continued.

The proprietor, Dan Kelly, came to the fore. He rarely took part in conversation. He was like a big, silent, congenial Atmosphere. He pervaded his Place, but did not often materialize in conversation. Now he spoke.

"Queer, ain't it," he drawled, "how we just naturally hate to get our women mixed up? Lord knows we must have both kinds—we've fixed things that way—but when they edge toward each other we get damned religious and moral, don't we? Why?"

The words rolled around the stifling room like a bomb. Every man dodged, not knowing whether the thing was aimed at him or not, and everyone was afraid it might explode.

"Why?" continued Dan.

Then, getting no verbal answer, he went to the chair behind the bar, his throne, and became once more an Atmosphere.

But by that time Marcel was sitting in a rocker in the middle of Jo Morey's cheerful living room, watching Donelle asleep upon the couch. Jo was at her loom and both women whispered as they talked.

"I had to come, Mam'selle," said Marcel, "not because you need me or because I want to act a part, making myself better or different; it isn't that. I just want to stand a bit closer because I feel you are a good woman. I've always felt that, and my opinion hasn't changed, only I want you to know."

Jo tried not to smile; she felt she was taking of Marcel's best under false pretences. Had she been what they all thought, this neighbourly act would have bowed her with gratitude. As it was she felt a deeper sympathy for Marcel than she had ever felt, and she yearned to confide in her—but she dared not.

"Nights I get to thinking," Marcel droned on while Jo's busy fingers flew at her task, "how it was with you when she came," Marcel nodded toward the couch.

And now Jo's face twitched. How little any one guessed, or could guess, how it had been with her at the time when another woman gave birth to the girl.

"I got through somehow," she replied vaguely.

"We never get to a wall without finding an opening to crawl through, Marcel. It may be a pretty tight squeeze, but we get through."

"God knows those times are hard for a woman, Mam'selle."

"They are, bitter hard."

"And men folks don't take them into account."

"How can they, Marcel? It wouldn't be reasonable to expect it."

"It's queer, Mam'selle, how this—this thing that makes women willing to go through it, goes on and on. It means one thing to a woman; another to a man, but it seems to pay, though the Lord knows why, or how."

Jo was thinking of the subtle something that she, poor Tom Gavot, Marcel, and all the rest clung to. The thing that none of them understood.

"I'm glad you've got her!" Marcel suddenly broke in fiercely, again nodding toward the sleeping girl. "It just proves that you, Mam'selle, had the woman's reason, not the man's. That makes the difference. A woman cannot, a decent woman I mean, forgive a woman for acting like a man; casting off her young and all that, but she can understand—this! And isn't she fine and rare, Mam'selle. It's another queer thing, how many a child that comes in the straight and narrow way isn't half what it should be. Sometimes they just haven't spirit enough to stay, mine didn't, and then such children as—as yours, Mam'selle, seem to have God's blessing shining all over them."

So firmly and simply had Marcel accepted what, in reality, did not exist that poor Jo felt the uselessness of confession drawing closer and closer about her. For some days past she had been considering Marcel as a recipient for the truth, for Jo hated to accept, without some protest, the belief that she felt was spreading among her silent people. It might ease her own conscience to confide in Marcel; it might be a bit of proof in the future, but unless she told all the truth she could hardly hope to impress even the kindly Marcel, for she saw that the shabby, down-trodden woman was accepting her as the most vital and absorbing thing that had ever happened in her life. Jo, in her real self, had never inspired Marcel. Jo, in her present guise, not only claimed interest, but aroused purpose. She brought to life the struggling nobility that was inherent in Marcel but which life had never before utilized.

"I'm going to stand by her," Marcel nodded toward the couch, "by her and you—so help me God!"

Jo went to the quivering woman and laid her hand on the thin, drooping shoulder. She was mutely thanking Marcel in the name of all women who sadly needed such support.

"I'd rather have been a—a bad woman," Marcel quivered, using the term almost reverently, "and have had such as this to comfort me, than be the thing men think I ought to be, and have ——" She did not finish, but Jo knew she meant those piteous little graves on the hillside.

"It don't pay to be good, Mam'selle!"

"Yes; it does, Marcel, it does." Jo's voice shook. "It pays to do your best with the things that *are*, as you see them. It's when we try to do what others think is good, others who haven't our problems, that we get lost. We women folks have got to blaze our own way and stick to it. No man, or man's God, is ever going to side-track me. And, Marcel, I thank you for what you came to do for me. There may be a time coming when you can serve me, and I'm sure you will. But if ever I did you a good turn, you've more than paid me back to-day."

Long after Marcel had gone to her cheerless home Jo Morey thought and thought, and as her heart grew soft her head grew hard. While her lips trembled her eyes glowed with fire, and from that moment she was able, in a strange, perplexed way, to project herself into the position that was falsely forced upon her. As she accepted it, Langley's wife was largely eliminated. It was Jo, herself, who had followed Langley to the far places; it was she who had borne and reared his child out of her great love. It was she, Jo Morey, who had stood by him, shielded him to the end, and was now determined to fill his place and her own toward the girl!—and to keep the secret! Langley had loved fine things, books, music. Jo recalled how he could fiddle and whistle, why, he could imitate any bird that sang in the summer woods. Well, somehow Donelle should have those things! Jo went later to the attic, and brought down books, long-hidden books, among them one Langley had given her because he loved some verses in it. Donelle should have learning, too. Jo meant to consult the priest about that. In short, the girl should have her chance. Poor Jo; even then she did not take into consideration the harm she was unconsciously doing the girl. She felt all-powerful. Her starved and yearning affection went out to Donelle and met no obstacle, for the girl, her health regained, was the sunniest, most grateful creature that one could imagine. No need to warn her to silence concerning St. Michael's, that experience was apparently as if it never had been.

The legal steps had been taken, and Jo was in complete control. The gates of St. Michael's were closed forever upon the girl known as Marie. She now faced the world, though she did not know it, as Mam'selle's illegitimate child.

Sometimes this fact frightened Jo, but she knew her people fairly well. The ugly belief about herself had been so silently borne that she trusted that when Donelle went among them her advent would not loose tongues. For the rest; she meant constantly to guard the girl, meant, in time, to send her away to school. Jo dreamed long dreams and, mentally keen and wise, was stupid in her ignorance of the more sordid aspects of life.

"If they'll only keep still!" she fervently hoped. And she based her present life on that.

In the meantime Donelle, in a marvellous fashion, had appropriated everything about her, Jo included. Nick was the girl's abject slave. Sometimes he'd turn his eyes on his mistress remorsefully, as he edged toward Donelle; his affections were sorely torn. The animals all learned to watch for Donelle, Molly, the horse, was foolishly sentimental. The house rang with girlish laughter and song. In the once-still rooms a constant chatter went on whenever Jo and the girl were together. Donelle, especially, had much to say and she said it in a strange, original way that set Jo thinking on many new lines.

How was she to keep this girl from knowing the truth, once she mingled with others? And how was she to keep her apart? Donelle had a passion for friendliness. To Jo, who had lived her life alone, the girl's constant desire for conversation and companionship was little less than appalling. Then, too, Donelle was a startling combination of precociousness and childishness. Her mind had been well-trained; early she had been utilized in teaching the younger children of the Home. She had absorbed all the books at her command; her imagination was ungoverned, and some of the Sisters had shared confidences with her that had added fuel to the inquisitive, bright mind.

There were times when Jo Morey felt absurdly young compared with Donelle, young and crude. Then suddenly the light would fade from the girl's face, something, probably her incapacity to go back of her life in the Home, would make her helpless, weak, and appealing.

So far, the little white house, Jo, and the animals, supplied Donelle's every need, but Mam'selle sensed complications for the future. She watched and listened while Donelle read and then enlarged romantically upon what she read; she felt lost already in the face of the problem.

"Mamsey," Donelle suddenly exclaimed one night, "I want you to take off those horrid old man-things. Let us burn them."

Jo was rigged out in her father's ancient garments; she had been to the outhouses working long and hard.

"What's the matter with them?" she asked half-guiltily.

"They're ugly and they're smelly." This was true. "Besides, they hide you and most folks wouldn't find you. They go with your scrouchy frown," here Donelle mimicked Jo's most forbidding manner, "and your tight mouth. Why, Mamsey, it took, even me, a long while to find you behind these things. I had to keep remembering how you looked while I was so sick in the long, dark nights; how you looked when you kept—It—away."

The vague look crept to Donelle's eyes, she rarely beat against the wall that hid her past. For that, Jo was hourly thankful.

"But of course now I can always find you, Mamsey. I just say to the thing you put up in front of you, 'Get out of the way' and then I see you, my kind, my dear, faithful, blessed Mamsey, shining!"

Poor Jo as a shining object was rather absurd; but the colour rose to her dark face, as it might have at the tones of a lover.

"You're a beautiful Mamsey when you don't hide. I suppose my father could find you, and that's why he wanted to bring me to you. Mamsey, did you love my father?"

Poor Jo, standing by the stove, her ugly garments steaming and hot, looked at the girl as a frightened culprit might; then she saw that the question was put from the most primitive viewpoint and so she said:

"Yes, I loved him."

"Of course. Well, now, Mamsey, will you let me burn those ugly old, smelly clothes?"

"No; but I'll put them in the attic, child."

"That's a good Mamsey. And the scowl and the tight mouth, will you put them in the attic, too?"

Jo grinned. The relaxation was something more complete than a smile.

"You're daft," was all she said, but her deep, splendid eyes met the clear, golden ones with pathetic surrender.

And then, later on toward spring, when Jo was revelling in the richness of her life and putting away the thoughts that disturbed her concerning Donelle's future, several things occurred that focussed her upon definite action.

She and the girl were sitting in the living room one evening while a soft, penetrating rain pattered against the windows.

"That rain," Jo remarked, her knitting needles clicking, "will get to the heart of things, and make them think of growing." Donelle looked up from her book. Her eyes were full of warmth and sunlight.

"You say beautiful things sometimes, Mamsey." Then quite irrelevantly, "Why doesn't any one ever come here? I should think everyone would be here all the time, other places are so ugly and other people so—so—well, so snoozy."

What Jo had feared rose to the surface. She stopped knitting and gazed helplessly at Donelle.

"At first," the girl went on musingly, "I thought there were no folks; it was so empty outdoors. Then I saw people once in a while crawling along. Why do they crawl, Mamsey? You and I don't. And then I ran around a bit, when no one was looking, and there are some horrid places, one place where only men go. It is nasty, dirty, and bad. It sort of makes all the houses seem smudgy. There was a big man at the door, and he saw me and he said, 'So you're Mam'selle Jo Morey's girl!'" just like that. And with this Donelle impersonated Dan Kelly so that his merest acquaintance would have recognized him. "And I made a very nice bow," to Jo's blank horror, Donelle showed how she had done it, "and I said 'I am, sir; and who are you?' And he put his hand in his pockets, so! and he said, 'I'm Dan, Dan Kelly, and any time you want a little chat, come to the side door. Mrs. Kelly and I will make you welcome.' And—what is the matter, Mamsey?"

For Jo's knitting had fallen to the floor, and her face was haggard.

"You—you must never go near that place again," she gasped.

"I never will, Mamsey, for the smell kept coming back to me for days and days. And the man's eyes—I saw them in my sleep, they were dirty eyes!"

"My God!" moaned Jo, but Donelle was off on another trail.

"But Mamsey, why don't we have folks in our lives. Is it because it is winter, and the roads bad?"

"Yes——" this was said doubtfully; but something had to be said.

"Well, I'm glad of that, for I love people. I even liked some of the Sisters. There was one who made me guess whenever I saw her, it was Sister Mary, she was little and pretty and had a sorry face as if she was lost and couldn't find the way out. Almost I wanted to ask her to run away with me every time I tried to do it myself. And the babies were so jolly, Mamsey. I used to play that I could make nice, happy little lives for them. There was one," Donelle's eyes dimmed, "Patsy I called her, her name was Patricia—such a big, hard name for such a cunning little tot. I fixed up a perfectly dear life for Patsy, but poor Patsy didn't seem to want any kind of a life. She'd rather lie in my arms and rock. I used to sing to her. Then she died!"

The tragedy touched Jo strangely. She had heard little of the details of Donelle's institution life; but those details, few as they were, had been vital and impressive.

"Yes, Patsy died. I missed her terribly. Oh! Mamsey, I couldn't do without folks. Why, I want

to tell you something; you like to have me tell you everything, don't you, Mamsey?"

"Yes; yes." Jo took up her knitting, dropped two stitches, made an impatient remark under her breath, and caught them up. "If you didn't tell me everything I'd feel pretty bad," she went on lamely.

"Well, it's this way, Mamsey. I don't cry any more because I can't remember. I begin with you and me. You see what I don't remember is like the preface in a book; I never read it and it doesn't matter, anyway. So we begin—you and I, and everyone is supposed to know about us without telling; and the things that happened before are just helps to get us into the first chapter. Then, after that, folks come along and we don't ask them any questions, they just get mixed up with our story and on we all go until that stupid old word End, brings us up with a jolt. Mamsey, dear, I want to get all tangled with stories and stories and people and people; I want to be part of it. I'm willing to pay, you have to, all the books show that. I'll suffer and struggle along, and fall and get up again, but I must be part of it all."

Jo had drawn a full needle out, leaving all the helpless stitches gaping. "Lord!" she murmured under her breath, and at the moment decided to go to Father Mantelle on the morrow and get what help she could.

Aloud she said, quite calmly, very tenderly for her, poor soul:

"I wish you'd take that old book," it was the one Langley had given her; there was no name or date in it, "and read me some of those verses that sort of make you feel good, good and—sleepy."

"I just love this," Donelle said, quick to fall into Jo's mood:

> The scarlet of the maples can shake me like a cry
> Of bugles going by.
> And my lonely spirit thrills
> To the frosty asters like smoke upon the hills.

"Why, you don't like the words? Your eyes are wet, Mamsey!"

"I'm tired, my eyes ache with the knitting and weaving. The winter always gets me." Jo was gathering up her work. "We must go to bed, child. I'm glad spring is coming and we can work in the open."

But Donelle was singing, to a tune of her own, other lines of the interrupted poem:

> And my heart is like a rhyme
> With the yellow and the purple keeping time.

CHAPTER VIII
THE PRIEST AND THE ROAD MENDER

The following day was warm. Jo went to the upper pasture early in the day to make plans for the spring sowing. It was a day full of promise; winter seemed almost a memory.

Donelle had been left to finish the work about the house. It should have taken her until Jo returned, but things flew through the girl's hands, she was so eager to get out of doors. She sang and gavotted with Nick who, by the way, had sneaked into hiding rather than make a choice as to whether he should follow Jo or remain with Donelle. When he came forth all responsibility was ended. He remained with Donelle!

"Nick," she said presently, "how would you like to take a walk?"

A frantic thump gave proof of Nick's feelings.

"All right, come on! We've got to find folks if folks won't find us, Nick. I'm pretty nearly starved to death for folks!"

Donelle made a wide sweep back of Dan's Place. Jo's words were in her mind, but more, the memory of Dan's "dirty eyes" warned her. She took to the woods on the river side, and was soon fascinated by the necessity of jumping from rock to rock in order to escape the mushy, mossy earth. Nick was frantic with delight. Jo never would jump or nose around among the trees where such delectable scents lurked.

Finally the two emerged on the highway a mile beyond the little cluster of houses which was

Point of Pines, and nothing was in sight but a lonely, boyish figure apparently carrying mud from one place on the road and depositing it in another.

"That's an awfully funny thing to do," Donelle mused. "Maybe he's a moon calf."

Donelle had seen Marcel and Longville, had even talked with Marcel and liked her. She had heard Jo speak of others, the Gavots among them, but they were mere names to which, occasionally, Jo had added an illuminating description.

"That low-down beast, Gavot," Mam'selle had picturesquely said to Marcel once when not noticing Donelle's presence, "ought to have Tom taken from him. That boy will be driven to Dan's, if we don't look out. We ought to raise money and give the boy a start."

"I shouldn't wonder," mused Donelle, now, standing in the road and eyeing the only other figure on the landscape, "I shouldn't wonder if that was Gavot's Tom. I'll just see!" So she walked on sedately and came upon her quarry unexpectedly.

"I believe," she said, showing her teeth in a friendly smile, "I believe you must be Tom Gavot."

The boy turned abruptly, spilling as he did so the shovelful of soft earth he was carrying.

"And—you—are Mam'selle's girl!"

Tom was very handsome with a frank, appealing look that seemed to deprecate the rags and sordidness that hampered his appearance.

"Yes. What are you doing?"

"Mending the roads. And you?"

"Taking a walk on the road you mend."

They both laughed at this, Tom flinging his head back, Donelle folding her arms over her slim body.

"How did you know me?" asked Tom.

"Why—why, I heard Mamsey talk about your father."

Tom's face clouded. His father, like his rags, hampered his very thoughts.

"How did you know me?" Donelle was growing shy.

"I think maybe you won't like it if I tell you."

Tom felt very old compared to this girl in her short skirts and long, light braids. He had never felt young in his life, but he had inherited that ease and grace of manner which his father abused so.

"I should just love to hear," Donelle was fingering Nick's ears nervously.

"Well, then, I spied on you. All winter, I spied. I heard them talking about you, and I had to see for myself. I always have to know things for myself."

"So do I. But after you spied," Donelle laughed, her yellow eyes shining, "what did you think?"

"Oh! I don't know." Tom shifted his position. "I thought you were all right."

They both laughed again at that.

"Are you mostly on the roads?" Donelle asked presently. Nick was growing restless under her hands.

"Yes, when I'm not somewhere else. I fish some, and Father Mantelle teaches me and I read a lot, but I'm on the road a good deal."

"I think," Donelle beamed, "I think your Father Mantelle is going to teach me. I heard Mamsey talking about it. Does he keep school?"

"No. He's the curé. He teaches only a few. He knows everything in the world. He once lived in Quebec. He's old so they sent him here."

"Well!" Donelle suddenly turned. "I'm going now, but I shall often walk on the road." She flung this back mischievously. At a distance her shyness disappeared.

A few days later she met Tom again, this time she was more at her ease. They were young, lonely, and the spring helped thaw the superficial crust of convention.

It was after they had seen each other several times that Tom confided to Donelle his feeling about roads.

"They're like friends," he said, blushing and laughing.

"A road doesn't mean anything to me," Donelle replied, "but something to walk or ride on, something that gets you somewhere."

"Yes, it does get you somewhere, but you don't always have to ride or walk on it. If you think about it, it gets you somewhere," said Tom.

Donelle paused to whistle Nick back, the dog was after something in the bushes.

"You're very queer," she said at last eyeing Tom furtively. "Now I think about dogs and cats and birds as real, but I never thought about a road being real."

Donelle was looking at the ground as if it were something alive upon which she had stepped

inadvertently.

"Tell me more about roads," she said.

"There isn't much, I've never told any one before—they would laugh."

"I will not laugh." And indeed Donelle was very serious.

"It began when I was a little chap. I didn't have much to play with and a boy has to have something. I used to wonder where the road went and when I was only five I got to the top of the hill and looked beyond. My father walloped me for running away. I wasn't really running away, but of course he wouldn't have understood, and my mother was frightened. I didn't go again for a long time. I was always a bit of a coward and I remembered the whipping."

"I don't believe you are a coward, Tom Gavot."

"I am, a little. You see, I hate to be hurt, I sort of—dread it, but once I make the start, I forget and go on like everyone else."

"I think that's being braver than most people. If you are afraid and still do things, that's not cowardly." Donelle spoke loyally and Tom gave her a long side glance of gratitude.

The spring was in Tom's blood, this lately-come friend was developing him rapidly.

"Well, anyway, by the time I was seven I managed the hill again. From that time on I went every day. I think there must be a dent in a rock where I used to sit, playing with the road."

"Playing with the road! Playing with the road!" Donelle repeated. "Oh! but you are queer. What did you play, Tom Gavot?"

"Oh! I sent people up and down it. The people I did not like I sent down and never let them come back."

"That is perfectly lovely. Go on, Tom."

"And then I made up my mind that when I was big enough I'd run away with my mother. I always meant to explain to her about the road, but I didn't. Sometimes I fancied that people would come over the road bringing to me the things I wanted."

"What things, Tom?"

"Oh! all sorts of things that boys want and don't get. After I grew older and Father Mantelle began to teach me, I still felt as if the road was a friend, but I did not play with it any more. Then one summer some surveyors and engineers came and one man, he was a great sort, let me talk to him and he made me think about roads in quite another way. I tell you, my road had got pretty rutty, so I began filling in the holes. It was the only decent thing I could do when I'd used it so; and besides it kept me near the men and they helped me to know things that I really wanted."

"What, Tom Gavot?"

"Why, I want to learn how to make roads. When I can, I am going away and I'm not coming back until I can do more than fill in holes."

"I shall miss you dreadfully when you go!" said Donelle. It all seemed imminent and real to her now. "Of course you must go, but—well, the road will be pretty lonely until you come back." Then the girl looked up.

"I sort of feel," she said whimsically, "that I ought to be the right kind—of a girl to walk on your road, Tom Gavot."

"Well, you are."

"No, I haven't told Mamsey that I know you. I've come with Nick when Mamsey was off on the farm. She thinks I'm spinning or weaving, but I hurry through and get out. I've hoped that someone would tell her, but they haven't."

"Would she mind if she knew?" asked Tom, and his dark face reddened.

"I don't know, but I think I must *think* she would or I would have told. She and I talk of everything right out; everything but you."

For a moment the two walked on in silence. Then Tom spoke.

"You'd better tell her," he said. Then with a brave attempt at cheerfulness: "When I come back, Donelle, all the world can see us walking on the road and it won't matter."

"I'm going to tell Mamsey to-day," murmured Donelle. Somehow she felt as if she had wronged Tom. "This very day."

Gavot looked into her face. He suddenly felt old and detached as if he had got a long way ahead of her on the road.

"Your eyes are a strange colour," he said, "they look as if there was a light behind them shining through."

They both laughed at that, and then Donelle whistled Nick to her and turned.

"I'm going to tell Mamsey," she said, "good bye."

Tom looked after her and his eyes grew hard and lonely.

"Good-bye," he repeated. "Good-bye," but the girl was out of sight.

That afternoon she told Jo, but she advanced toward her confession by so indirect a route that she mislead Mam'selle.

"I wish you'd tell me about Tom Gavot," she said.

"Why? What does Tom matter? Poor lad, he's got a beast of a father."

"Was his mother a beast?"

"No. She was a sad, hunted soul."

"It is too bad she died, if she had waited Tom would have taken her on his road."

Jo looked up from her sewing.

"What are you talking about?" she asked.

"Tom Gavot. He used to play with the road and now he mends it. Some day he's going to make roads. They'll be splendid roads, I'm sure, and——"

"What do you know of Tom Gavot, Donelle?"

Jo started as she had when Donelle had told her of Dan Kelly.

"Mamsey, don't be angry, I know I should have told you. I don't know why I didn't, but while you were away I hurried and got through my work and then I was so lonely. I went out on the road—Nick and I, and I found Tom Gavot."

"You've seen him—often?"

And now Jo's eyes were stern and frightened.

"Why, yes, I suppose so. I didn't count. It seems as if I had always known him. He's wonderful. Besides knowing about roads, he knows books, all kinds. Father Mantelle teaches him. I'd like to go, too, and learn from Father Mantelle."

"Well, you'll not study with Tom Gavot!" Jo was perplexed. She decided to go the very next day to the priest.

"Why not, Mamsey?"

"One sort of learning for girls; another for boys." Jo snapped her thread.

"I wonder why, Mamsey! They both travel the same road."

The word made Jo nervous.

"No, they do not!" she said sharply.

"Well, I shall. You can choose your road, can't you, Mamsey? I mean the sort of things you learn?"

"No."

"It's all wrong then."

"Stop asking stupid questions, child, about things you do not know," Jo broke in.

"But that's why I ask questions, because I don't know. Are they stupid?"

"Yes, very. Now come, Donelle, and help me get supper."

It was mid-afternoon of the next day when Jo started for Father Mantelle's. Her errand was a very simple one: she wanted the old man to teach Donelle. Not while he was instructing Tom Gavot, however!

As she walked along the muddy road, picking her way as she could, Jo was thinking of how much or how little she should tell of her relations with Donelle. She had grown to accept what she felt people believed and it no longer caused her indignation; there were graver problems. But the incident that Donelle had related of her conversation with Dan Kelly had thoroughly aroused her. Her consciousness of injustice could not save her from the shock of the brutal meaning of Dan's attitude.

"They'll get to think the girl's common property if I don't set her above their reach," muttered Jo, and then wondered whether it would be safer to lay the truth bare to Father Mantelle. Would it be safer for Donelle to come forth in her true character, as the daughter of a supposed murderer, or to remain as she was, the supposed love-child of a deserted woman? For herself Jo Morey took little heed; the self-respect that had always upheld her came to her support now. Had Donelle been hers, she believed her inheritance would have been better than that which was rightfully hers from her real mother.

"A minister's words can't make or mar these things," she muttered, "and since my blood doesn't flow in the girl's veins, my common sense can save her, God helping me!"

As she plodded on poor Jo thought of Langley himself. She had never believed the accusation brought against him. She could not, but what proof had she to support her belief? And somewhere, in the world, possibly, that man was still alive who had brought forth the charge. Might he not at this late day materialize and menace Donelle were she, Jo, to let the full light of truth on her?

What reason was there for that strange man to want to get possession of Langley's child? Was he afraid of her? Did he want to silence her, or—and here poor Jo stopped in the road and breathed hard—had he believed that Donelle was his?

For a moment Jo grew dizzy. Suppose he did think so. How could she prove the contrary? Would her insistence as to resemblance or her innate belief in her love going true, weigh against any proof which that unknown man might have?

Less and less did Jo believe that Donelle would ever recall the past. And if she did, what would it avail?

"I think I will have to let the poor child stagger along with me tacked to her past," she concluded, "her chances for safety are better, though she may never know it. I may be able to keep her from hearing, people do forget, and my money and her learning may help." Jo sighed and trudged on.

The relations between Father Mantelle and Mam'selle were very peculiar. The old priest admired her intelligence and was amused by her keen wit and independence. He simply could not account for her and that added to his interest. He had not been in Point of Pines long, he rarely left it, and never had company unless a passing father stopped for refreshment or a report. In short, Mantelle was as much a mystery as Mam'selle, and for that very reason they unconsciously respected each other.

They never discussed religion, but Mantelle's attitude toward Jo had been always one of esteem and neighbourliness.

"In loneliness the poor soul has worked out her own redemption," Mantelle had decided. At first he had pondered upon Mam'selle's loneliness, but had never questioned it, having much sympathy for any one who, for any reason, could not mingle freely with his fellows.

When Jo entered the priest's house his servant, an old Indian woman, showed her to a rear room in which she had never been before.

It surprised Jo by its comfort and even luxury. Books lined the walls, rugs covered the rude board flooring; there were comfortable chairs, broad tables, and a clear fire burning on the spotless hearth.

The old man sat before the fire, and as he looked up and saw Jo his delicate face flushed. Something in his manner caught her attention at once. Subtle as it was, she was keenly sensitive of it.

"He's heard!" thought Jo, and stiffened.

Father Mantelle had heard and he thought, he certainly hoped, that the erring daughter had come to confess. It was not in the church, but that did not matter; more was dragged out of heavily-burdened souls in that comfortable room than was ever got in the small church on the hill.

The priest meant to be very kind, very tolerant; he knew the world outside Point of Pines and was extremely human when men and women deserved his kindness. But until they were brought to the proper state of mind, mercy must be withheld, and this disclosure of Jo's past had shaken him tremendously. Certainly whatever he had thought about her, he had not thought this! He felt that he, in his office and character, had been grossly deceived. He had been permitted to associate on equal terms with a woman outside the pale. It was outrageous.

Something intangible, but strangely like Dan Kelly's manner toward Donelle, marked Mantelle's attitude at the present moment. A half-concealed familiarity, an assumption of authority.

"Well, well, you have come, daughter," he said, and pointed Jo to the chair across the hearth. He thought Jo had been driven to him in her extremity, he had never addressed her as "daughter" before.

"Father," Jo began bluntly, "I've come to ask your help with this young girl I've adopted."

The priest thought Mam'selle hard. Indeed Longville had told him, in strict privacy, that she was hard and defiant. For the good of her own soul and the soul of other women likely to defy the laws of God and man, she must be brought to a repentant state. Now that he understood conditions, Mantelle was prepared to reduce Jo to that desirable state. He smiled kindly, blandly; he was a bit daunted but he realized that, erring as Mam'selle was, she was no ordinary woman.

He kindly led her on.

"Though you have seen your duty late, daughter," he said gently, "there is still time to strive for the child's best good."

Then Jo told him quite concisely of her desires for Donelle.

"I want to have her learn all that you can teach her, Father," she said, "and after that—well, I

have no plans, but my money and life will be devoted to the girl."

There was a suspicion of defiance and bitterness in Mam'selle's tone.

Now Mantelle had only seen Jo's adopted daughter at a distance. Having no authority over the parish of St. Michael's he had not connected the girl's past with the institution there. He had asked Longville whence Mam'selle Morey had brought the girl, but as Longville did not know, he had let the matter drop as non-essential, but it puzzled him.

"You think it wise to keep the child in Point of Pines?" he asked. "You think it for her good, after all these years, to—to bring the unfortunate past to the—the surface?"

"Yes," Jo answered and her lips drew close. She was thinking of Dan Kelly, but she believed Father Mantelle and she could outwit him.

"My daughter, do you think this would be fair to the girl?"

"Why not?"

"Is it right, or just, that she should suffer for the wrong of a—another?"

"No, it is not right." Jo said this as a general truth.

"But you think your money can buy favour? Mam'selle, you are wrong. There are some things money, not even years of blameless life, can buy.

"Your people, I am sure, have treated you kindly, compassionately, and they will continue to do so, if you show the proper spirit. But you must not, daughter, think that gold can wipe away the result of defiance to the laws of God and man. You must be repentant, prove that you have the best interests of this girl at heart, and then, then only can the future be secure."

The thin, delicate face was pale and stern, the deep eyes burned. Not only the sanctity of Mantelle's authority, but his position among men was being questioned by the woman before him. And Jo was defiant, there was no doubt about that.

"Your kind heart, daughter, has betrayed you into error. Before bringing this child here you should have consulted me. Much might have been saved for us all."

"What would you have advised?" Mam'selle dropped her eyes and the forbidding brows seemed to hide every kindly expression of her face.

"I should have strongly advised against letting the innocent suffer for the guilty!" Mantelle's voice was stern.

"Yes, but she had to have a home; care, the best possible."

"To give that, daughter, is not in your power. In violating the most sacred emotions of life, in spurning the very safeguards of society, you put yourself outside the pale, as far as the child's best good is concerned. Women should fully understand this before they take the fatal step. The price must be paid! If, by assuming your duty at this late day you could condone the past, I would help you, but I cannot advise keeping this girl here. For her truest good, she should be saved, where only such unfortunates can be saved."

"And that is?" Mam'selle's voice was slow and even.

"In the bosom of the church, daughter. Send the child to St. Michael's; let them train her there for a life of devotion and service in a field where temptation, inherited weakness——"

Mantelle got no further for Jo—laughed!

The priest rose in his chair, white with anger.

"You laugh?" he said as if his hearing had betrayed him.

"Forgive me, Father, but it struck me as being rather hard on the girl that, for a wrong she never committed, she should be condemned to—to exile; not even given a chance of her own."

"You stole that from her, daughter!"

"I? Why, how could I? And is the Church able to accept whatever service, my—this young girl might give, while the world is unable to do so?"

"It can."

Then Mam'selle stood up. Her patient, work-worn hands were folded before her, she raised her deep, sad eyes.

"Father," she said calmly, "you feel that you have a right to assume this attitude toward me, without even hearing my side? My life, as you know it, has done nothing to save me from this—this mistake of yours. You have taken my money, what help I could give, and I believed that you were my friend."

"I am; your real and only friend." Mantelle was deceived by the tone and words.

"You have shown me that a man cannot be a friend to a woman! He cannot give her justice."

"You are not speaking to a man, daughter!"

The desire to laugh again consumed Jo, but she mastered it.

"In that capacity alone did I regard you, Father Mantelle, and you have failed me. For the

rest, I let no one stand between my conscience and my God! No. If I ask help again it will be from a woman; she at least can understand."

"A woman is hardest upon women in such cases as yours, Mam'selle!"

Jo was thankful that at last the priest had dropped the objectionable "daughter."

"She will be the first who will turn against you."

"And was it a woman who came to you, Father, with my—my trouble?"

Mantelle's face flushed and Jo shook her head sadly.

"I see it was not. So the first and second who have turned against me have been men. Good day, Father, and"—Mam'selle stopped at the door—"if you ever need help in giving that poor Tom Gavot his chance, I stand ready to do what I have always promised to do, and I do it for the sake of his mother."

Condemnation and contempt rang in Jo's voice. It was her last arrow and it sank home.

The priest was practical and having done his Christian duty he could afford to be human.

"It speaks well for your good sense, Mam'selle," he said; "that you do not utterly shut yourself away from your people." Then Mantelle paused, "Mam'selle!" he said.

"Yes, Father." Jo turned and lifted her deep eyes to his face.

"I wonder if you *have* something to tell me that I should know in justice to you?"

"You should have thought of that first, Father. It is too late now."

"We may"—the man's recent manner fell from him like an unnecessary garment—"be friends, still?"

Again Jo laughed. She felt that she had by some kindly power regained something of her lost position with this lonely old man. Since he could not understand her, save her, he was willing to accept her.

"Father, I have too few friends to cast them off heedlessly."

And then she went out, more of a mystery than ever to Mantelle.

CHAPTER IX
WOMAN AND WOMAN

It was early June when Mam'selle heard that the Walled House, the country place of some rich people from the States, was to be opened.

It had been closed for many years, but recently the master had died and his wife, with a staff of servants and an old, blind, white-haired man, had returned.

The moment Jo heard that, her spirits rose. Here was a most unlooked-for opportunity for advice and, perhaps, assistance.

The Lindsays of the Walled House had always mingled freely with their neighbours; Mr. Lindsay was a Canadian. Jo, in her earlier days, had often served them; had sold her linens and wools to them at, what seemed to her, fabulous prices. Mrs. Lindsay, having taken a fancy to Mam'selle, often tried to annex her to her establishment, but to that the independent Jo would not consent.

"Well, Mam'selle," Alice Lindsay had said during the last interview they had had, "if I ever can help you, please let me."

"I'll go to her now!" decided Mam'selle.

A week later, dressed in her absurd best, she made the journey in her caliche. Her days of sitting on the shaft by Molly, her economies in clothes, were over, she was living up to her ambitions for Donelle and her defiance of Point of Pines' morality. Outwardly, Jo was fairly awe-inspiring and even Dan Kelly was impressed; inwardly, Jo was a good deal chastened by her visit to Father Mantelle.

There were doubts now in her heart as to the role she had assumed for Donelle's sake. Perhaps it would be better to let the girl shoulder her father's possible crime and her foolish mother's wrongdoing, rather than the disguise which Jo had self-sacrificingly wrought for her.

And yet, even now she could not bring herself to lay the dead Langley open to a charge she did not believe, but could not disprove, and the girl, herself, to danger. And so as she drove to the Walled House she was very quiet, very subdued, but her faith was strong. She meant to give as much as she dared of the past to the woman whose sympathies and assistance she was about to interest. She was ready to put all her future wools and linens at Mrs. Lindsay's disposal in return for any help she could obtain for the betterment of Donelle. Poor Jo was ready to abdicate, if that

were best. After her months of happiness with the girl, after living in the dear companionship and love of the sunny young nature, she was willing to stand aside for the girl's future good.

"She shall not be condemned to death!" Jo snorted, and Molly reared. "St. Michael's shall not get her. But there must be a place for her, and I love her well enough to get out of her way. I only took her for the best, her best, and if I cannot keep her, I can let her go!"

Jo found Mrs. Lindsay on the beautiful shaded porch, found her changed, but none the less lovely and kindly.

"Why, it is the dear Mam'selle of the wonderful linens!" Alice Lindsay cried, stretching out her slim hands in welcome. "I have been thinking of you. How glad I am to see you. You have heard?" Mrs. Lindsay looked down at the thin black gown she wore.

"I have heard," Jo said and her throat grew dry.

"I—I have come back because my husband seems more here than anywhere, now. He loved the Walled House so much; he loved his Canada, Mam'selle."

Jo was thinking of two bleak, lonely weeks in her own past when she had stolen away and gone to Langley's deserted cabin because he, *the he* that she had known and loved—seemed more there than anywhere else. She had buried her hatred and bitterness toward him there. She knew it, now, as she had never known it before. The two women were drawing close by currents of sympathy.

They had tea together, they talked of future linens and wools, and then Jo told her story, taking small heed of the impression she was giving. She was blindly thinking only of Donelle, and Mrs. Lindsay did not hurt her by question or voiced doubt.

That night, when a great silence reigned over the Walled House, broken only by the soft, tender tones of a violin played at a distance in the moonlit garden, Alice Lindsay wrote a long letter to Anderson Law, her father's oldest friend, her own faithful advisor and closest confidant.

Law was an artist and critic. Old Testy he was called by those whom he often saved from the folly of their false ambitions; The Final Test, by those who came humbly, tremblingly, faithfully to him with their great hopes. To a few he was Man-Andy, the name that Alice Lindsay had given to him when she was a little child.

MAN-ANDY: I have had a wonderful day. I have waited to tell you that your advice as to my coming here was good. I know it is cowardly to run away from one's troubles, dear. Troubles, as you say, have their divine lessons, but I could not believe, at first, that I would find Jack here. I dreaded the emptiness and loneliness, but you were right, right! I am not desolate here and I have the blessed feeling of peace that can only come when one has chosen the right course.

I felt that everything worth while had been taken: Jack, my babies. Only the money remained, and that I hated, because it could not keep what I wanted. But you were splendid when you said, "make the thing you despise a blessing!" I've tried, Man-Andy, to make it a blessing to others, and it is becoming a blessing to me. I feel I am using it for Jack and for the babies and that they are making it sacred. I feared that in this big, empty house the ghosts would haunt me; not the strange old history ghosts of great ladies and dashing men who used to forget their homesickness for their mother-countries by revelling in this shelter in the New World. I did not think of them, for do you not remember Jack's comical ghost hunts? How he joked about it, saying that he'd yet lure some old English or French aristocrat to stay and sanctify our presence by his sponsorship? But oh! I did fear the memories of my man's dear, jovial ways, the pretty babble of my little babies.

And then—I know I am rambling shamefully, but I cannot sleep, the moonlight is flooding the garden—I hear Professor Revelle's violin. Andy, he has actually recovered to the extent of music when he thinks I do not know. As I look at the dear old soul, so like a gentle wraith, I remember how you and father and Jack adored his music and how Jack grieved when illness and poverty stilled it. But you found him, Man-Andy, and you lent him to me to save, and his music at least has been given back to him. Not with its old fire and passion—I think if any demand were made upon him he might be aroused. I may take lessons myself some day. But he plays dreamily, softly when he is alone, generally in the garden and at night. He forgets his blindness then.

But to-day I had a caller. I wonder if you remember the nice Mam'selle Jo Morey that Jack and I used to talk about? You have some of her linens in your studio. You may recall the incident of the summer when we told you of her troubles; her desertion by a man of the place and the death of her imbecile sister? I had almost forgotten it myself, so much has happened since then, but it all came back to me to-day when she came with her story.

Andy, her story is quite the most tragic a woman can have; such things happen even here. She did not cringe or whine, I would have hated her if she had; you know how I feel about such things. My Mam'selle Jo does not whine!

There was a child, and now that Mam'selle can afford to do well by it, she has taken it. She has done this so quietly and simply that it has shocked the breath out of the very moral Point of Pines. Still, before the breath left the body of the hamlet, it hissed! And when it recovers its breath it is going to hound this poor Mam'selle, whose shoes it is not worthy to touch. It's going to hound and snarl and snap, two of its inhabitants have done it already, and the Mam'selle

Morey is not going to have her child harried for what she is innocent of!

Isn't this a situation?

The Mam'selle knows her world, however, and all worlds are pretty much alike, Andy, and she is prepared, in exchange for her child's happiness, to renounce her! It almost broke my heart as she told me; she saw no other way and she fiercely demands that justice be shown the girl. I tell you it takes the fine, large courage to renounce, when love tempts. Mam'selle loves this child as such children often are loved, passionately because they cost so much.

And this Mam'selle Morey came to me. She felt I could understand, advise. Well, I do understand because of Jack's attitude toward such things, and yours and father's. Thank God, the men I have known have helped me uphold my standard, and I understand because of my dear, dear babies, who left so much of themselves with me when they had to go away.

I grew hot and cold as I listened, Man-Andy, and I grew puffed up and chesty, too. How I gloried, for the moment, in my power. It's all right to have power if you keep it in its proper place.

I kept saying to myself, "Mam'selle, you and I will win out! And you shall not be the sacrifice, either! Together we can play the game; two women ought to be able to see that one innocent child has its rights!"

Man-Andy, I rolled up my sleeves, then and there, and that dear old poem you love came to my mind, it often does; that one about tears:

> By every cup of sorrow that ye had
> Loose us from tears and make us see aright
> How each hath back what once he stayed to weep
> Homer, his sight; David, his little lad?

I thought of dear old blind Revelle; he has something back, even though much is withheld. He has safety, and his fiddle. And then I vowed that this brave, strong Mam'selle Morey should have her little lass. She shall not be taken from her; I will help, and give the girl her chance, I am quite fierce about it. And my Mam'selle shall keep her in the end, somehow I'll manage that. With other things, this girl shall get a comprehension of—her mother!

Man-Andy, tell me what you think of all this and tell me of yourself; of the Norvals, and the rest of the folks I love but do not need just now. And tell me of your sad duty, dear man. Do you go every week to the Lonely Place? Some day, when it is all past, you will come here to this Walled House. You and I will go out on the highway and kneel under one of the tall black and white-tipped crosses and give thanks! Man-Andy, to-night I can give thanks that I am being used, that the power my money can give is being used, and that I am not left to my tears.

To this long outpouring of the heart Anderson Law replied within the month.

MY GIRL: you have only proved yourself. It took a little time, but I knew you were not the sort to hide your face and run. Revelle and his fiddle are about the best combination I know, I certainly hadn't counted on the fiddle. I thought with care and safety he'd find peace and I knew he would be good for you; but I feared his blindness would kill his music.

It's a great thing, too, girl, that your children did not shut the door of your motherhood when they went out. You'd hardly have been worthy of them if you had not learned the lesson they taught.

As for us here: Jim Norval is doing some good things in his moments of genius. When plain talent grips him, he's not so good. Katherine, from perfectly exalted motives, is driving him to hell. It's the most puzzling situation I ever saw. You cannot advise a man to leave a high-natured, moral, devoted wife just because she's pushing him to perdition and depriving him of his birthright, but that's the situation in the Norval family. Their child somehow did not get its lesson over!

The Lonely House still holds my duty, but if the time ever comes when I can stand beside you under the cross, there will be many things, hard to bear now, that will then make thanks possible. ANDY.

Law's letter came after Donelle had entered the Walled House where she was to stay from Monday till Friday of each week. The week-ends belonged to Mam'selle Jo!

"For awhile, Mam'selle," Alice Lindsay had said, holding Jo's hands as she had made plain her understanding, "I will teach the child myself and learn to know her. We need not plan far ahead. There is a dear, old, blind musician living with me; if the girl has any inclination for music, she will be a god-send to him."

"I am sure she will have, Mrs. Lindsay," Jo's plain face was radiant, "her father had, and she sings the day through."

"You must bring her at once, Mam'selle, and believe me, whatever comes or does not come, she will always be yours. She is your recompense."

And within the week Donelle Morey came to the Walled House.

Her entrance was dramatic and made a deep impression upon Mrs. Lindsay.

There had been a struggle between Jo and Donelle before the matter had been arranged, so, while not sullen, the girl was decidedly on guard.

Propelled by Jo she came into the great, sunny hall. She was very pale and her yellow eyes were wide and alert.

"My dear," Alice Lindsay had said, "I hope you are going to be very happy here."

"I did not come to be happy, I came to learn," Donelle returned, and her voice saved the words from rudeness.

"Perhaps you can be both, dear," but Donelle looked her doubts.

Still from the first she played her part courageously. She studied diligently and, when she was given the freedom of the library, she showed a keen and vital interest.

She was not indifferent, either, to the kindness and consideration shown her, but the wildness in her blood reasserted itself and she often felt, as she had felt at St. Michael's, a desire to fly from restraint; even this kindly restraint. Point of Pines had given her a sense of liberty that was now lacking. The refinements and richness of the Walled House oppressed her, she yearned for Jo, for the hard, unlovely tasks, for the chance talks with Tom Gavot. But, oddly enough, it was the thought of Tom that kept her to her duty. Somehow she dared not run away and hope to keep his approval. Something of her struggle Alice Lindsay saw, and she considered it seriously. To win the girl wholly from her yearnings just then might mean winning her from Mam'selle. While not a child, Donelle was very unformed and might easily, if she were conquered, be lost to Jo whom she regarded simply in the light of an adopted guardian. She was grateful, she loved Jo, but the secret tie that Alice Lindsay believed existed held no part in her thoughts.

"But she shall be saved for Mam'selle," Alice Lindsay vowed. "I will not permit any other solution. If the time ever comes when she understands she shall know the splendour of this dear soul."

So Alice Lindsay took Jo into her confidence.

"You must not, Mam'selle," she said, "even think yourself renouncing her. She is yours and you ought not to forget that, nor deprive her of yourself. Take things for granted; let her see you as I see you!"

Jo's face twitched.

"There's no earthly reason," Alice Lindsay went on, "for blotting you out. Why, the girl will never know another woman as fine as you, Mam'selle. Think of how you have studied and thought yourself into a place that many a woman with untold advantages has not attained!"

"Donelle's father was a scholar," Jo faltered, not knowing how to act in the strained moment. "He taught me, not only books, but how to think."

"Yes, and to suffer, Mam'selle," Alice Lindsay controlled her true emotions. Then:

"Mam'selle, Donelle must learn to appreciate her inheritance from you. She shall, she shall! Now throw off your usual manner with her; let her see you!"

"She always has, Mrs. Lindsay."

"Very well, don't let go of her now!"

And so Jo permitted herself the luxury of doing what her heart longed to do, she put off her guarded manner and played for the first time in her life.

It was during Donelle's week-end visits home that she first came forth in her new character of comrade. In an especially fine spell of weather she suggested camping out in the woods. Donelle and Nick were beside themselves with delight, for Mam'selle was a genius at camping. Never had she so truly revealed herself as she did then, and Donelle looked at her in amazement.

"Mamsey," she said, "is it because I'm away from you so much that you seem different? You are wonderful and you know about the loveliest wood things and stars. It's like magic."

It was like magic, and Jo rightly concluded that something in Donelle's early life responded to these nights in the woods. She recalled the girl's delirium, her references to weary wanderings.

"It seems," Donelle once said, hugging her knees beside the glowing fire, "it seems as if I'd been here before."

"One often feels that way," Jo replied as she prepared a fragrant meal, "and I'm not saying but what we do pass along the same way more than once. It may take more than one little life to learn all there is to know."

And then Donelle talked of a book she had been reading and they grew very chummy. Once Jo suggested—it was when Donelle told her how she lived through the weeks, only because the week-ends were in view—that Nick should stay at the Walled House.

"Nick, would you leave Mamsey?" Donelle held the dog's face in her hands. It was an awful moment for Nick. He actually slunk.

"I'd hate you if you would!" Donelle continued. "Now, sir, who is your choice?"

Nick saved the day, he ambled over to Jo and licked her hand.

"There!" exultingly cried Donelle; "that shows his blood."

"It shows his common sense," laughed Jo.

Once Tom Gavot shared their campfire for a night. He was waiting for them when they dismounted, his eyes shining. He wore a new, and whole, suit.

"I am going away," he explained. This was no news to Jo, but it took Donelle by surprise.

"I am going to Quebec," he went on. "Father Mantelle has a friend there who is to take me into his office. I'm going to learn about roads. You see, I always knew I'd get a chance!"

He was very gay and full of hope.

"And how does your father take it?" asked Jo, bending over the flames.

The boy's face darkened.

"Father Mantelle talked to him," was all he said.

But that evening Jo was wondrously kind. She gave permission to Tom to make his own pine-bough bed in the woods; she even seemed to be asleep when, by the fire, Donelle, holding her body close, her pale face shining in the glow, said to Tom:

"I am never going to forget about roads, Tom Gavot. I always think of them as real things, I always have ever since you told me how to see them. I'm sure your roads are going to be very splendid ones."

"They'll be mighty lonely, just at first," Tom, stretched by the fire, smiled grimly.

"Yes," Donelle nodded, "yes; they will. Why, Tom, I stand by the gates of the Walled House and look at the road and it is the loneliest feeling. I think of Mamsey at one end and something in me goes stretching out until it hurts. It goes stretching and pulling along the road until I can scarcely bear it."

"That's the way it will be with me, Donelle," then poor Tom's face flushed a deep red. "You won't mind, will you, if I tell you something?"

"I'd love it." Donelle smiled happily.

"You see, I haven't ever had any one who cared since my mother died. I never dared tell any one but you about the roads. You seemed to understand; you didn't laugh. And when I'm off in Quebec and something in me goes stretching over the road until it hurts, it's going to be you at the other end! You're not laughing?"

"No, Tom Gavot, I'm—I'm crying a little."

"I think it's your eyes, they're like lights. And then you are kind, kind."

Just then Jo shook herself and awoke.

A few days later Tom was off for Quebec and Donelle's homesickness and longing for Mam'selle were to be lessened by an unlooked-for occurrence.

Mrs. Lindsay had not thought of Donelle being in the slightest musical, though Jo had suggested it, for she never sang in the Walled House as she did at Point of Pines. There were lessons and walks and drives; Mrs. Lindsay was growing genuinely attached to the girl, and more and more determined to see that life should play fair with her, but the idea of interesting old Professor Revelle did not occur to her. The shy, delicate old man shrank from strangers with positive aversion. He was not unfriendly, but his loss of eyesight was recent. His late poverty and illness, from which Anderson Law had rescued him, had left their scar, and he kept to the rooms Mrs. Lindsay set aside for him with gentle gratitude. Sometimes she dined with him there; often sat evenings with him; but for the most the old man was happiest alone.

Then came the day when the silent garden tempted him. He had heard the carriage depart earlier and thought that Mrs. Lindsay and the stranger girl had both gone driving.

With his violin under his arm Revelle groped his way from the house; he was learning, slowly, as the lately-blinded do, to walk alone. At the far end of the garden there was an arbour, Revelle knew it was rose-covered by the fragrance, and he loved to play there, for no one ever disturbed him. To-day he found the place and sat down. His old face was growing peaceful, full of renunciation; the fear and bitterness were gone.

The roses thrilled him, he could touch them by reaching out his hand; they were soft and velvety, and he hoped they were pink. He had always loved pink roses. And then he played as he had not played for years.

Close to him sat Donelle. She had been reading when he entered. She did not move or speak though she longed to help and guide him. She knew all about him, pitied and respected his desire

to be alone in a very lonely and dark world, but she had never heard him play before. As she listened the yellow eyes darkened. Never had Donelle heard such music; never had she been so gloriously happy. Something in her felt free, free! Then something, quite beyond her control, floated after the notes; it rested and throbbed, it ... but just then Revelle, with a wide sweep of the bow, stopped!

Donelle crept to his side, his quick ear caught the sound.

"Who is it?" he asked sharply.

"It's—it's Donelle, Donelle Morey. I—couldn't go away; please do not mind—if you only knew!"

"Knew what?"

"Why, it's what I've wanted all my life. I did not know; how could I? But now I know, the music has told me."

The voice, the intensity and passion stirred the old man.

"Come here!" he said, reaching out his hand. "The love you have, does it mean that you sing? Your voice is—is rather fine. Let me have the fingers."

Half afraid, Donelle placed her hand in his.

"Oh!" Revelle was feeling every inch of the slim hand and fingers. "The long hand and wide between the fingers! And the finger tips; it is the musician's hand unless nature has played a trick. Will you let me find out if nature has spoken true?"

"I—I do not know what you mean."

"Are you a young child?"

"No, I am old, quite old."

"Stand up, let me feel how tall you are. Ah! you are of the right age! Young enough to obey; old enough to hunger. Are you beautiful?"

"Oh! No. I'm sure I'm ugly."

"Of the light or the dark?"

"I'm white, I—I am thin, too."

"May I touch your face?"

Quite simply Donelle knelt again and quivered as the delicate fingers passed over her brow, eyes, and mouth.

"You have a soul!" murmured Revelle.

"A soul?" murmured Donelle.

"Ah! yes. You do not know. One never finds his soul until he suffers. You are young, but you have a soul. Keep it safe, safe; and while you wait, let me see if nature has made you for use. If you can learn, I shall find joy. I had thought my life was over."

And so Donelle began to find her way out upon her road.

CHAPTER X
PIERRE GETS HIS REVENGE

The first year passed, with those blessed weekends coming now, not as the only bright spots, but always loved.

"The girl may not have the great genius," Revelle told Mrs. Lindsay, "she may not go much further, but as she goes, she goes radiantly. Her tone it is pure, her ear it is true, and her soul, it is a hungry soul, a waiting soul. She will suffer, but she will be the better for that. If she is ever to be great it will be when she has learned to know suffering."

Donelle had a strange habit that amused them all; she played best when she could move about. Gropingly, painstakingly, she practised with the old, blind man beside her. At times she would wander under the trees on the lawn, her violin tucked lovingly under her chin.

"Pretty, little pale thing," Alice Lindsay often said. "What is life going to do with her?"

When three years had passed, Donelle was no longer a simple girl. Point of Pines was as detached from her real interests as St. Michael's was. She loved to be with Jo and Nick, but the luxury and comfort of the Walled House had become part of her life. She wished it might be that Jo and Nick could come to her; not make it necessary for her to go to them. She was not more selfish or ungrateful than the young usually are, but she was artistic and temperamental and her mind and soul were full of music and beauty. Unconsciously, she was pressing on into life by the easiest way. Life, she must have; life to the full, that had always been her ambition, but she had yet to learn, poor child, that the short, direct path that stretched so alluringly from the Walled

House was not the best one for her own good.

For Mrs. Lindsay she had a deep affection; for Revelle a passion of gratitude and yearning. He it was who had opened her heaven for her; he it was who subtly developed her. With no set purpose, but with the insistence that Art always demands, he brought to bear upon Donelle the arguments of devotion to her gift, her God-given gift, he reiterated. She must not let anything, any one stand in its path. She was not worthy of it unless she forsook all else for it.

Donelle had accepted what was offered to her. She believed Jo Morey had the best of reasons for burying the past. As she grew older, she saw the wisdom of forgetting much and in proving herself worthy of becoming what Jo, what Mrs. Lindsay, and most of all Revelle, hoped for her.

The St. Michael days were blotted out, they were but an incident at best. Jo was giving her every advantage, she must do her part. She saw the Point of Pines people on the road as she drove with Mrs. Lindsay or Jo and they were like shadows to her, they had no place in her sheltered, beautiful life. She heard indirectly from Tom Gavot, he was bravely hewing and hacking his road, poor chap. He was helping to support his unworthy father; he was coming home some day to show himself, but the time went by and he did not come!

And then, quite suddenly, Mrs. Lindsay decided to close the Walled House and go abroad. Professor Revelle's health was restored and Anderson Law had obtained employment for him.

"I want to take Donelle with me," Alice Lindsay said. "She's quite your own, Mam'selle; you stand first with her, so I can take her with a clear conscience and give her all the advantages she should have. She will come back to you in the end, or you will come to her."

Jo's lips drew close.

"Will my linens pay for this?" she asked.

"They will help, Mam'selle, and you have no right to stand in Donelle's way now that we have gone so far. Some day Donelle can repay me herself, she has great gifts."

Jo thought hard and quickly. In her heart she had always felt this day would come, lately she had been haunted by it. It was inevitable. Only God knew how she dreaded the separation, but she would not withhold her hand.

"I suppose, Mam'selle, this is what Motherhood means?" Alice Lindsay spoke the fact boldly, splendidly.

"It's all right," said Jo, "it's all it should mean. I'm glad I do feel as I do about her."

"And, Mam'selle, this girl loves you very tenderly. Sometimes I think we ought to tell her——'

"No, no, Mrs. Lindsay." Jo started and flushed.

"When she's found her place and made it sure: when she has so much that this won't matter, then she shall know everything. I haven't overlooked this, but I couldn't stand it now. I want her to be able to understand."

"All right, Mam'selle. And now it is your part to make her feel that it is your desire that she should make the most of her gifts. Send her forth happy, Mam'selle, that will mean much to her."

So Jo began the new role and actually made Donelle unhappy in the effort to achieve the reverse. Alone, in the white house at Point of Pines, Jo found her father's old clothes and contemplated them gravely. She was slipping back, poor soul, to her empty life.

Donelle had not accepted the proposed plans without a struggle. She was wonderfully sensitive and compassionate and her quick imagination made it possible for her to understand what the future would mean to poor Jo. Then, too, she shrank from the uprooting. Her dreams of what lay before were exciting and thrilling, but with sincere kinship she loved the quiet hills, the marvellous river, and the peace, freedom, and simplicity which were her birthright.

"Sometimes I fear," she said to Mrs. Lindsay, "that it will deafen me, hush me, kill me!"

"It will not, dear; and I will always be near."

"Unless you were, I would not dare. You are the only hope, Mrs. Lindsay."

"That's not so, Donelle. The real hope is your gift. You are taking it there to make it perfect."

"I hope so. And when I have learned, I must get Mamsey into my new life, quick."

"Indeed, yes!" Mrs. Lindsay nodded cheerfully.

"Isn't it queer how some people are part of you? Mamsey is part of me, Mrs. Lindsay." Then softly, "I suppose you know how Mamsey got me and from where?"

Alice Lindsay started.

"Yes, Mam'selle told me," she said.

"I never speak of it. Mamsey thought best that I should not; but I do not forget! Often, when we are driving past St. Michael's—I remember."

"Donelle, why do you tell me this now?"

"Just because I want you to understand how I feel about Mamsey. She didn't have to do

things for me, she chose to, and I know all about her spinning and weaving and—the rest. I have cost her a good deal, and I mean to make it all up."

Proudly, happily Donelle stood. And looking at her, Mrs. Lindsay fervently wished the real truth might be kept away from the girl. Better the uncertainty of birth to such a spirit than the ugly fact. Safer would her relations with Mam'selle be if she could keep her present belief.

"Come," she said suddenly, "take your violin and stand—so! This is the way my good friend Anderson Law is to paint you."

Donelle took the violin; she tucked it under her chin and drew her bow lovingly across it. The uplifted face smiled serenely. Donelle was no longer afraid; something bigger than herself caught her and carried her to safety.

Alice Lindsay's eyes grew dim.

"Life is not all that is lying in wait for the child," she thought. "What is love going to do with her?"

And then, it was two days before they were to start for the States, Donelle went for a walk along the quiet highway! She had bidden Jo good-bye! Her heart ached with the haunting fear that she had not been quite sure about Mamsey. Was it enough that she was going to prepare for life? Were her purpose and joy quite unselfish? How about those long empty days, when the Walled House would be but a memory?

And Nick! The dog had acted so strangely. His awful eyes, yes, they were quite awful, had been fixed upon her a long, long time, then he had gone—to Jo! After that he could not be lured from her. It was as if he said:

"Very well, think what you choose, *I* will never desert Mamsey!"

Jo had tried to force the dog from her; had scolded him sharply, but he would not stir.

His silent protest had angered Donelle, and she remembered it now, walking on the road. She felt her tears rising.

It was a day of calm and witchery. Never had the trees been more splendid, never the river more changing and beautiful. And the quiet, was there in all the world so sacred and safe a place as this?

And just then, toward Donelle, came a staggering, wretched figure. The girl stopped short and the man, seeing her, stopped also, not twenty feet away.

"It's Tom Gavot's terrible father," thought Donelle. She had never been so close to anything so loathesome before. She was not really frightened, the day made things safe enough, but she estimated the best chances of getting by the ugly thing and escaping from it.

Gavot knew her. All Point of Pines knew her and snapped their hateful remarks about her at Dan's Place. They were like a pack that had been defeated. Even Father Mantelle had the feeling that he had been incapable of coping with a situation that should not exist. It was putting a premium on immorality.

"Ha!" Pierre Gavot reeled and laughed aloud. When he was in the first stages of drunkenness he was diabolically keen. His senses always put up a revolt before they surrendered.

"So!" he called in his thick voice and with that debauched gallantry that marked him, "So! it is Mam'selle's bastard dressed and ready to skip out as her damned father did before her, leaving the Mam'selle to make the most of the broken bits. Curse ye, for what ye are!"

The veins swelled in Gavot's face, a confused, bestial desire for revenge on somebody, somehow, possessed him.

"Ye've taken all she had to give, as your father did before ye, blast him! And now, like him, ye kick her out of your way. Her, who spent herself."

The words were scorching into Donelle's soul, but they numbed sensation as they went. It was later the hurt would come! Now, there was but one thing to do, pass the beast in the road and get behind the walls of safety.

And so Donelle darted forward so suddenly that Gavot staggered aside in surprise. She gave him one horrified look and was gone!

No one saw her enter the house. She was breathing hard, her face was like a dead face, set and waxen. In the great hall was a book stand. On it was a dictionary.

Donelle was repeating over and again in her mind a word. A strange, fearful word, she must know about that—word. It would explain something, perhaps.

The trembling hands found it, the wide eyes read it once—twice—three times.

Slowly, then, the heavy feet mounted the shallow stairs. As old, blind Revelle used to grope in the upper hall, so Donelle groped now. She reached her room, closed the door and locked it. Then she sat down by the window and began to—suffer. The safe ground upon which she had trodden

for the last few years crumbled. At last she managed to reach St. Michael's. Yes, she remembered St. Michael's, but how long she had been there before Jo found her she could not remember!

But it was clear: Jo, not her father, had put her there. Jo had made up the sad story to save her, Donelle! She bore Jo's name, and that was to save her, too. And her father had deserted poor Mamsey long ago and she had made the most of the bits that were left!

That is what the horrible man had said. And they had all known, always. That was why people never came to the little white house; that was why Jo had put her in the Walled House, to save her. And Jo had stayed outside as she always had done, outside, making the most of the bits!

At last, a wild, hot fury smote the girl, a kind of fury that resented the love that placed her in a position which unfitted her for the only part she could decently play. Of course they must have realized that she would know some day, and have to give up! She could not go on with the sham and be happy. They had defrauded her of life while thinking they had saved her for life. It was cruel, wicked! The yellow eyes blazed and the slender hands clenched.

"What have they done to me?" she moaned.

And so through the afternoon, alone and driven to bay, Donelle suffered. The sun went down, leaving its benediction on the wonderful river which glistened and throbbed as it swelled with the high, full tide, but there was no peace for Donelle. A shame she could not understand overcame her. Her unawakened sex battled with the grim spectre.

Then memory helped the girl and she became a woman as she sat alone in the still room; a woman so pure and simple that Jo was saved.

How great poor Jo's love must have been, always! How little she had asked, how bravely she had borne her punishment!

The care and devotion of the long nights, when Donelle was so ill, returned like dreams and haunted the girl. That was the beginning of Jo, and this was the end? But was it?

It was all in her, Donelle's, hands, to decide. She could keep still! She could take her life, make it beautiful, and by and by she could come back to Mamsey. Then she would say, "This I have done for you! But I could not do it then! I could not give up then," Donelle murmured.

Then the present held the girl, drove away the temptation. There was the little, lonely white house under the hill at Point of Pines and Mamsey who that morning had said:

"Child, I'm gladder than you know to be able to give you your chance."

Her chance!

Just then a maid tapped at the door and gave her a message.

Mrs. Lindsay would be detained for dinner and would not be home until late.

"We are to start to-morrow," the girl said, "very early."

And again Donelle was alone with her chance!

Later she ate her dinner quietly in the dim oak dining room. Candles burned; there was an open fire on the hearth and pale yellow hothouse roses on the table. Never was the girl to forget that last meal in the Walled House. And then, she was once more alone upstairs with—her chance!

She went to the window and looked out. A rising moon was lighting the road, The Road!

Suddenly Tom Gavot seemed to stand in the emptiness and beckon her from that road with which he had played when he was a sad and neglected child. How clean and fine he had made it seem; he who had come from such a father! In that moment Pierre Gavot shrank from sight, he had polluted the road, but Tom had sanctified it.

The road was open now for Donelle to choose. Should she go over the hill to life or—— And so she struggled. She heard Mrs. Lindsay return, but it did not occur to her to confide in any one. The shame was only bearable if she bore it in secret, but where should she bear it? Out, over the hill, where no one knew; where Mrs. Lindsay and Jo would keep people from knowing? Could she be happy and forget?

Donelle took up her violin. She clutched it to her. It could make her forget, it *must*! Even if she wakened the household she felt she must play.

But she could not play! Her hand was heavy, her brain dull.

Then something Revelle had once said to her flashed into her mind.

"Always live right, child. You can never have your gift at its best unless you keep its place holy. No matter what any one may tell you, keep the place clean and right in which your gift lives!"

Then it was that Donelle dressed herself in a plain, warm suit, packed a little bag, took her violin, left a note on her dressing table, and went on—Tom Gavot's Road! Just for a moment she stood outside the tall gates and looked wistfully up the hill, then she turned as if relinquishing all

the joy and promise of life, and set her face toward Point of Pines.

CHAPTER XI
THE GREAT DECISION

Donelle made herself a little fire that night in the shelter of a pine grove. She slept, too, with her back against a sturdy tree and the sound of the river in her ears.

She had walked fast for many miles. She was tired, but she meant to go on and reach Point of Pines before any one saw her; before Mrs. Lindsay could get there and talk to Jo.

At three o'clock she roused herself and went on. There was no one else, in all the world, it seemed, she was alone, alone. But something was strengthening her, she no longer grieved or felt remorse. She was, poor child, learning a tremendous lesson, she had an ideal for which she was ready to suffer and die. She had found her soul and a peace had come to her; a peace that the world can neither give nor take away.

"I'm glad!" murmured Donelle; "I'm not a bit sorry. I'd have hated myself if I had gone away, after I knew."

The gray dawn was creeping with chilly touch over the empty road when Donelle, footsore and aching in every muscle, came in sight of the little house.

"Why, there's a light burning!" she said, "a light in the living room. Maybe Mamsey is ill, ill and all alone."

The fear drove her on more quickly.

Up the steps she went softly and peered into the room. Nothing mattered now to Jo, she had nothing to hide, so she had not even lowered the shade.

And there she sat, nodding before the stove in which the fire had long since died. She wore her father's old discarded clothes—she had resurrected them after returning from bidding Donelle good-bye—she had worked hard until late, had fallen asleep exhausted by the fire, and forgotten to go to bed.

Close to Jo, so close that his faithful head rested against her arm, was Nick!

He was not asleep, he was on guard. He had heard those steps outside; he knew them and his ears were tilted and alert. Still, he would not leave Jo! The time for choice had come and passed with Nick. His heart might break but he had decided.

The door opened softly, Jo never locked it, and Donelle came tiptoeing across the room. Nick tapped the floor, but otherwise did not move.

Beside the sleeping Jo the girl crouched down and waited. She was crying, blessed, happy tears, and one tired hand lay upon Nick's head.

The clock in the kitchen struck in its surprised, alarmed way. How well Donelle remembered! The sun edged in through the east window, and found the little group by the cold stove.

Then Jo awoke. She did not move, she only looked! She could not make it out, and gave an impatient exclamation. She felt that her mind was betraying her.

"Donelle!" she said presently, "what does this mean?"

"Only that I—I have come, Mamsey."

"Tell me everything." The words were stern.

"Why, Mamsey, there isn't much to tell—except—that I'm here."

"How did you get here?"

"I—I walked. I walked all night."

"And Mrs. Lindsay, she knows?"

"Oh! no, Mamsey, she was away, but I left a note. I had to come Mamsey, I had to. You see," brightly, piteously, "I—I couldn't play my fiddle. It would not be played. When I got to thinking of how it would be out where I was going, I just couldn't! The pretty dresses and the—the excitement made me forget for a little time, but all of a sudden I saw how it was going to be. Then I tried to play, and I couldn't! Then I knew that I must stay, because more than anything, Mamsey, I wanted—you!"

"This is sheer nonsense!" said Jo, but her voice shook, and the hand lying against Donelle's cheek trembled.

"You mad child! Why, Donelle, don't you see you are running away from your life?"

"It will have to find me here, then, Mamsey. Don't send me away. I would hate it as I would have hated St. Michael's if you had sent me back there. You see, Mamsey, when I run away I

always run to what is really mine. Don't you see?"

"Are you sick, child?"

Jo felt, now, the uplifted face.

"No, but I would have been, off there! And I couldn't play. What good would anything have been, if I couldn't play?"

Jo was thoroughly alarmed.

"Can you play here?" she asked, bewildered, not knowing what to think, but seeking to calm the girl on the floor.

"Why, Mamsey, let me try!"

And Donelle tried, rising stiffly, fixing the violin and raising the bow.

A moment of indecision, of fear; then the radiance drove the haggard lines from the tired, white face.

She could play! She walked about the plain home-room. She forgot Jo, forgot her troubles, she knew everything was all right now! The final answer had been given her! When she finished she stood before Jo, and Nick crept toward her. He, too, felt that something, which had been very wrong, was righted.

Mrs. Lindsay came later. She was alarmed and angry. She and Jo attacked poor Donelle's position and were indignant that they were obliged to do so; they, women and wise; she, a stubborn and helpless girl!

"I couldn't leave Mamsey," was her only reply, and she looked faint from struggle.

"But Mam'selle does not want you!" Mrs. Lindsay said almost brutally, seeing that she had succeeded only too well in preserving this girl for Jo. "You have no right to become a burden, Donelle, when you have the opportunity of independence."

"Am I a burden?" Donelle turned weary, patient eyes on Jo. And Jo could not lie. That white, girlish face wrung her heart.

"This is temperament run mad!" exclaimed Alice Lindsay. "I have a great mind to take you by force, Donelle. I will if Mam'selle gives the word."

"You won't though, will you, Mamsey?"

Jo could not speak. Then Donelle turned kind, pleading eyes to Mrs. Lindsay.

"You see, I couldn't play if I were dragged. When I'm dragged I can never do anything. I wish I could tell you how sorry I am and how much I love you; but I am so tired. When I got to thinking of Mamsey here alone, and the Walled House closed, why——"

Alice Lindsay turned from the sad eyes, the quivering mouth.

"Listen, dear!" she said in her old, gentle tones; "I've lived enough with natures like yours to understand them. Stay with Mam'selle this winter, Donelle, and think your way out. You have a clear mind, you will see that what we all want to do for you is right. In the spring I will return, we'll have another summer in the Walled House. A year from now all will be safe and right. The trip abroad can wait, everything shall wait, for you. Now will you be good, Donelle?"

She turned smilingly to the girl, and Donelle gratefully stretched out her hands.

"Oh! how I thank you," she said, "and I do love and trust you. I will try to be good. Oh! if you only really knew!"

"Knew what, Donelle?"

"Why, how I could not live away off there, even with you, if I remembered Mamsey sitting here making the best of the bits that are left." Then Donelle broke down and wept violently.

Still she was not ill. She was worn to the edge of endurance, but after a day and night of rest in the room beside Jo she got up, quite herself again.

"And we'll say no more about it until spring," vowed Jo, but a wonderful light had crept into her eyes.

"I'm a selfish, unworthy lot——" But the light stayed in her eyes.

Then one day Donelle took her fiddle and strolled out alone to test the virtue of her safe, happy feeling. She went down to the river and sat upon the bare, black rocks. The tide was low and the day was more like spring than early autumn.

"And now," whispered Donelle, "I'll play and think. I have to act too much when Mamsey is watching."

Donelle knew she had to untangle many loose ends, now that she had snapped her thread. She did not want, above anything on earth, that Jo should know her deep, real reason for returning. But how could she make sure with that horrible man, Pierre, loose in Point of Pines? It did not matter how lonely she and Jo might be, if only they could have each other without their common secret rising between them.

Donelle had stayed close to Jo since she had come back, she shrank from everyone. She meant, some day, to go to Marcel Longville—when the Captain was at a safe distance. She meant to have Marcel tell her many things, but not now! She was going to face the future quite bravely, without shame or cringing. Jo should have that reward at least.

In the meantime, Donelle wished fervently, and with primitive directness, that Pierre Gavot would die a quick and satisfactory death and be well out of the way before he again got drunk enough to open his vile lips.

"If he were here now," mused Donelle, the while playing a charming sonata, "I'd push him off the rocks and have done with it! What good is he? All his life he's been messing things, and I'm horribly afraid of him. I wish he was dead."

A crackling of the dry bushes startled her and she turned to see, coming down the Right of Way leading from the road to the river, Tom Gavot!

Donelle knew him at once though his good clothes, his happy, handsome face did their best to disguise him.

"Why!" she cried, getting up with a smile, "when did you get back?"

"A week ago," said Tom, "and it's about time. It has been three years since I went away." He beamed upon the girl. "I've learned how to see a road where there isn't even a trail," he went on. "I'm a surveyor. And you?" He glanced at her violin.

"I've learned to fiddle." Donelle's eyes could not leave the dark, handsome face. It was such a good, brave face, and the mere fact of Tom Gavot having returned seemed to make things safer. Tom was like that, quiet, strong, and safe! In a flash Donelle realized that the sense of shame and degradation which had driven her from the Walled House was driving her now to Tom Gavot. She felt sure that he, that all the others, had known what she herself knew now, and yet it had not made Tom despise her.

Her lips quivered and her eyes filled.

"It is so good to see you!" she said softly.

Tom's face was suddenly very serious.

"I came back to see how things were going," he said quietly, "and now that I am here, I'm going to stay."

"How long?" the question was weighted with longing.

"Until there is no more need," said Tom. Then he threw caution to the winds. "My father has told me!" he breathed hard, "he told me! Are you, a girl like—like you, going to let the mad words of a drunken man turn you back?"

For an instant Donelle faltered. Could there be a mistake? She had not thought of that.

"If what he said, Tom Gavot, was true, I had to turn back. The words *were* true, were they not?"

Tom longed to lie, longed to set her free from the horror that he saw filled her, but he was too wise and just.

"Suppose they were, suppose they were! Suppose Mam'selle did have the blackest wrong done her that a man can do a woman; hasn't she paid for it by her life and goodness?"

"Yes, Tom, she has!"

Hope had gone from the girlish face, but purpose and strength were there.

"And that is why I came back to her. For a moment, Tom Gavot, I stood on your road, the road you played with and mended. I wanted to run up and over the hill. I wanted to turn my back on the awful thing I had heard, but I couldn't, Tom, I couldn't. I would have seemed too mean to be on your road. I believe something died in me as I stood, but when I could think once more, I didn't suffer except for Mamsey. I'm so thankful I feel this way. I want to make up to her—for—for my father. He left her, but I never will. Why once, Tom, I asked her about my father, it was long ago, and she said he was a *good father*. And then I asked her about—about my mother, and she kept still. She let me think my mother was—not good; she would not hurt my father! But oh! if I can only keep her from knowing that I know. If I could only make her think I came back to her simply because I wanted her! I do not want her to think the truth! That would kill her, I know. She is so proud. So fine. I want to make her happy in my own way."

"She shall think that, if I can help!" said Tom.

"But you mustn't stay here for me, Tom. I couldn't bear that."

"See here, Donelle. If you have turned back, so will I. I had my choice of going to the States or overseeing some work back in the hills here. I have chosen."

"But, Tom, you mustn't turn back."

"Perhaps neither of us has turned back," Tom's dark face relaxed. "When things make you

dizzy you cannot always tell which is back or forward. I wish you would play your fiddle."

Donelle looked up at him with a kind of glory in her eyes.

"I will," she said; "and after, you must tell me about your roads, the roads that you can see when there are no roads!"

"It's a bargain."

So Tom sat down upon a rock and Donelle paced to and fro on the leafy path and, as she played and played, she smiled contentedly at Tom over her bow. When she was tired she dropped beside him and leaned against a tree.

"Now," she whispered; "I want to hear about your roads."

"It's splendid work," said Tom. "You can imagine such a lot. Someone wants a road built; you go and see only woods or rocks or plains, then suddenly, you see the road—finished! You set to work overcoming the obstacles, getting results with as little fuss as possible, always seeing that finished road! It's great!"

"Yes, it must be. I think, Tom, the work we love is like that. When I am practising and making mistakes, the perfect music is singing in my ears and I keep listening and trying to follow. Yes, it is great!"

They were both looking off toward the river.

"It's the sort of work for me," Tom murmured, thinking of his roads. "You know I like to lie out of doors nights. I like the sky over me and a fire at my feet. Do you remember," he laughed shyly, "the night before I went away; how Mam'selle made believe to be asleep while we talked?"

"Yes," Donelle's eyes were dreamy; "dear Mamsey, how she has made believe all her life."

"Donelle, I only learned a little while ago that it was Mam'selle's money that sent me off, gave me my chance."

"Tom!" And now Donelle's eyes were no longer dreamy.

"Yes. She worked and saved and never told." Tom's voice was vibrant with emotion.

"And she worked and saved that I might have my chance," murmured Donelle.

"I'm going to pay her back double," Tom said.

"Now, Tom Gavot," Donelle rose as she spoke, "you can see why I came back. I am going to pay her back—double. Some day I may go away and learn how to make money, much money, but first I have to show Mamsey that I love her best in all the world."

"I guess you know your way," Tom replied. "And, Donelle, I want to tell you, I'm not going to live with my father. I couldn't. Here, can you see that little hut down there?"

Donelle bent and peered through the trees.

"Yes," she said.

"Well, I'm going to clean that up and live there. It has a chimney, and the windows look right on the river. When you open the wide door it's almost as good as being out under the sky. That's where I'm going to set up housekeeping."

"How wonderful, Tom! And Mamsey and I will help you. We'll make rugs and curtains. We'll make it like a home."

"It will be the first, then, that I've ever had." Tom did not say this bitterly, but with a gentle longing that touched Donelle.

"I'll come and see you, sometimes, Tom. Mamsey and I. It will be great fun to sit by your fire and hear about your roads."

"And you'll fiddle, Donelle?"

"Oh! yes, I'll fiddle until you tell me to stop." Then suddenly Donelle grew grave. "Tom, do you think you can keep your father straight if you are so far away?"

"I'll keep him *quiet*!" Tom answered. "I'll see to that."

"After a little while, no one will remember," Donelle went on slowly. "Point of Pines is like that. Mamsey knew, they all knew. But if I can keep them from thinking that I know, I do not mind."

"They shall!" Tom promised.

What Tom Gavot did not tell Donelle, but what burned and blistered his soul, was this: Pierre, sober and keenly vicious, had welcomed Tom with eagerness and cunning. Tom meant money and perhaps care. Tom was redeemed and successful, he would have to look after his poor father in order to keep the respect he had wrung from better folk.

After a maudlin display of sentiment and devotion Pierre had said:

"That girl of Mam'selle Morey's, Tom, she's yours for the getting!"

"What do you mean?" Tom had asked, turning his young and awful eyes upon his father, "I thought Mam'selle—I thought Donelle was with the Lindsays and going to the States. Father

Mantelle wrote——"

"Ah! but that was before I played my game, Tom." And Pierre had given an ugly laugh. "They took the girl and put her out of our reach, they thought; even the good Father frowned at that. He tried to speak the truth up at the Walled House, but they would not hear. The girl was kept from knowing, and the pride of her was enough to make an honest soul sick. She looked down on us—us! But I waited my chance and when I got it, I flung the truth in her white face, and it sort of did for her! I saw that the pride they had put in her couldn't stand mud!

"And so she's here, Mam'selle's girl, and when one is not over particular and knows the worst, he can take and make—— What's the matter? Leave off shaking me, Tom. I'm your old father! Mother of Heaven, let me go!"

But Tom, holding the brute by the shoulders, was shaking him like a bag of rags. The flaming young eyes were looking into the bleary, old ones, looking with hate and loathing. The tie that held the two together added horror to the situation.

"You—did this thing, you! You killed my mother; you have tried to damn everything you ever touched; you pushed this young girl into hell—you! And you tell me I can pull her out, in order to shove her back? You!

"Well, then, hear me! I'll try, God helping me, to get her out, but nothing that belongs to you shall harm her. And if your black tongue ever touches her or hers, I'll kill you, so help me God!"

Then Pierre found himself panting and blubbering on the floor with Tom rising above him.

"Father Mantelle shall know of this," groaned Gavot. "He'll put the curse of the Church on you."

"I'll fling him beside you, if he dares speak of this thing."

Actual horror now spread over Pierre's face. If natural ties and the fear of the Church were defied, where did authority rest?

"See here," poor Tom, having conquered his father, was now conquering himself, "see here. So long as you keep your tongue where it belongs, I will see that you do not want, but I'm going to be near enough to *know* and keep you to the line. I couldn't breathe in this hole, it's too full of —of dead things, but I'll be near, remember that."

And Pierre accepted the terms. He grovelled in spirit before this son of his, and his lips were free of guile while he ate and drank and slept and hated. And the others, too, left Jo and Donelle alone. There seemed nothing else to do, so the little flurry fell into calm as the winter settled.

CHAPTER XII
THE HIDDEN CURRENT TURNS

The winter passed and spring came. Point of Pines awoke late but very lovely. Mam'selle and Donelle had at last burned the old clothes of the long-dead Morey. That phase, at least, was done with and much else had been laid on the pyre with them.

"And you came just because you wanted to, child?" Jo often asked when she even yet doubted her right to happiness.

"Yes, Mamsey, just for that. Wasn't I a silly?" And then Donelle would look into Jo's deep, strange eyes and say:

"You never run and hide any more, Mamsey. I see how glad you are; how you love me! Kiss me, Mamsey. Isn't it strange that I had to teach you to kiss me? Now don't keep thinking you mustn't be happy, it's our duty to be happy." Donelle gloried in her triumph.

Jo dropped a good many years in that winter and Nick inherited his second puppyhood. He no longer doubted, he no longer had a struggle of choice, for Mam'selle and Donelle kept close.

They read and worked together, and sometimes while Jo worked Donelle played those tunes that made Nick yearn to howl. But he saw they did not understand his feelings so he controlled himself.

"And when spring comes, child, you will go to Mrs. Lindsay, won't you?"

Jo played her last card.

"You see, it has all been going out and nothing coming in for years. You cost a pretty figure, Donelle, though I never grudged a cent, God knows! But you must help now, I'm seeing old age in the distance."

"Come spring," whispered Donelle, and she struck into the Spring Song, "we'll see, we'll see! But, Mamsey, we can always keep boarders. I should love that and you have always dreamed of

it. That room upstairs," the lovely tones rose and fell, "I can just see how some tired soul would look into that room and find peace. We'd make good things for him to eat, we'd play the fiddle for him, and——"

"A man's so messy," Jo put in, "I'd hate to have the room messed after all these years."

"Well, there are women boarders," Donelle was adaptable to possibilities. "We'd be firm about messiness; man or woman. How much are you going to charge, Mamsey?"

This was a joke between them.

Longville's rapacity disgusted Jo. On the other hand, she felt that what one got for nothing he never valued. It was a nice question.

"I'm figuring about the price, child. The Longvilles never count what the boarders give them besides money."

"What do they give, Mamsey?"

"Rightly handled, they give much. Think, Donelle," Jo's eyes lighted, "they come from here, there, and everywhere! If they are treated right, they can let you share what they know. Why once, when I was waiting on table at the Longvilles', there was a man who had been around the world! Around the world, child, all around it. One day he got talking, real quiet, to the man next to him and I'll never forget some things he said. I got so interested I stood stock still with a dish in my hands. I stood until——"

"Until what, Mamsey?"

"Until the Captain called from the kitchen."

"Oh! my poor, Mamsey. Well, dear, our boarder shall talk and we'll not stop him and you shall not be called from the kitchen."

"You are laughing, Donelle."

"No, Mamsey, just planning."

"But you must go away, child. You must learn, and then perhaps they'll take you at the St. Michael's Hotel. Someone always plays there summers, you know. Could folks dance to your tunes, Donelle?"

The girl stared.

"Anyway you could learn," Jo sought to comfort.

"Perhaps I could, Mamsey, but I'd rather take boarders."

"We could do both, Donelle," Jo was all energy. "Old age is within eye shot, but I'm long sighted. There's a good bit of power in me yet, child, and I'm eager for you to go with Mrs. Lindsay when she comes."

Poor Jo, having had the glory of Donelle's choice, was almost desperate now in her desire to send the girl forth. She had not been blind; she was wise, too, and she realized that if the future were to be secure and her own place in it worthy of love and respect, she must refuse further sacrifice. And sacrifice it would be, a dull, detached life in Point of Pines.

It was May when a letter came to Jo from Anderson Law. It was a brief letter, one written when the man's heart was torn with grief and shock. It told of Mrs. Lindsay's sudden death just when she was preparing for her return to the Walled House.

It dwelt upon Law's knowledge of the affection and ambition of Mrs. Lindsay for her protégée, and while her will did not provide for the carrying out of her wishes, Law, himself, would see to it that everything should be done that was possible.

He would come to Canada later and consult with "Mam'selle Morey."

Jo looked at Donelle blankly.

What the two had thought, dreamed, and hoped they, themselves, had not fully realized until now. In the passing of Alice Lindsay they felt a door closing upon them.

Donelle was crying bitterly. At the moment she felt only the personal loss, the sense of hurt; later the conviction grew upon her that what had unconsciously been upholding her was taken away. She had been hoping, hoping. The blow given her by Pierre Gavot, the paralyzing effect of it, had worn away during the secluded winter months; she was young, the world was hers, nothing could really take it away. Nothing had really happened in Point of Pines and they all knew! The larger world would not care, either. She had adjusted herself and in silence the fear and shame had departed, she had even grown to look at Jo as if—it were not true! But now, all was different.

"This man, this Mr. Law," Jo comforted, "will have some plan. And there are always my linens, Donelle, and if there is a boarder——"

But Donelle shook her head; a little tightening of her lips made them almost hard.

"This Mr. Law does not come, Mamsey," she said, "and besides, what could I do in that big,

dreadful city with just him?"

"There would be that Professor Revelle," Jo's words were mere words, and she, herself, knew it. Donelle again shook her head.

But what humiliated her most of all was that she had let Jo see the truth! All the fine courage that had borne her from the Walled House to Point of Pines; where was it? She had meant to make up to poor Jo for the bitter wrong that was a hideous secret between them, and all the time there had been the longing for release; the expectation of it.

"I am like my father," shuddered the girl, "just as that awful Pierre said—only I did not run away."

With this slight comfort she began her readjustment, but her hope was dead. She struggled to forget that it had ever existed, and she put her violin away.

This hurt Jo cruelly, but she did not speak. Instead she wrote, in her queer, cramped handwriting, to Anderson Law.

It was a stilted, independent letter, for poor Jo was struggling between the dread of losing her self-respect and her fear that Donelle should lose her opportunity.

Law received the letter and read it while young James Norval was in his studio.

"Jim, do you remember that girl that Alice Lindsay discovered up in Canada?" he said; he was strangely moved and amused by Jo's words.

"The little Moses?" Norval was standing in front of an easel upon which rested one of his own pictures, one he had brought for Law's verdict.

"What?" Law stared at Norval.

"Oh! wasn't that the girl that some woman said she had adopted out of a Home?"

"Yes. What of it?"

"Only a joke, Andy. You remember Pharaoh's daughter *said* she took Moses out of the bulrushes. Don't scowl, Andy; you don't look pretty."

"Listen to this letter, Jim, and don't be ribald." Law read the letter.

"What are you going to do, Andy?" Norval was quite serious now.

"As soon as I can I'm going up there, and take a look at things."

"You are going to help the girl?"

"Yes, if I can."

"After all, Andy, can you? Could Alice? The girl would have to be rather large-sized to overcome her handicaps, wouldn't she?"

"Alice had faith."

"I know, but a man might muddle things."

"I shall run up, however." Law was still scowling.

Then Norval changed the subject.

"How's Helen?" he asked, deep sympathy in his eyes. The insane wife of Anderson Law was rarely mentioned, but her recent illness made the question necessary.

"Her body grows stronger, her mind——" Law's face was grim and hard.

"Andy, can't you be just to yourself? Have the years taught you nothing? There can be but one end for Helen and if you see to her comfort, you have every right to your freedom."

"Jim, I cannot do it! God, Man! I've had my temptations. When I saw her so ill, I saw—Jim, I saw hope; but while she lives I cannot cast her off. It would be like stealing something when she wasn't looking."

"But Lord, Andy! Helen can never come back. They all tell you that."

"It seems so, but while life remains she might. She loved me, Jim. The woman I loved in her died when our child came but I cannot forget. I'm a fool, but when I've been most tempted the thought has always come: how could I go on living if she *did* recover and found that I had deserted her?"

"You're worn to the edge, Andy, better chuck the whole thing and come off for a vacation with me. But first look at this, tell me what you think."

Law's face relaxed. He shifted his burden to where it belonged, and walked over to the easel.

"Umph!" he said, and stepped to the right and to the left, his head tilted, his eyes screwed up.

"Another, eh?"

"Yes."

"Jim, what in thunder ails you to let a woman play the devil with you?"

"You ask that, Andy?"

"Yes. Our cases are quite different, Helen's dead, but Katherine knows damned well what she is doing."

"She doesn't, Andy. In one way she's as dead as Helen, she hasn't waked up."

"And you think she will? You think the time will come when she can see your genius and get her little carcass out of the way?"

"Hold up, Andy! I came to have you criticise my picture, not my wife."

But Law did not pay any attention.

"She ought to leave you alone, if she cannot understand. No human being has a right to twist another one out of shape."

Norval retreated; but he was too distraught to refuse any haven for his perplexity.

"After all," he said, "there's no more reason for my having my life than for Katherine having hers. She wanted a husband and we were married. If I had known that I couldn't be—a husband, I might have saved the day, but I didn't, Law, I didn't. Getting married seemed part of the game, nearly everyone does get married. And then, well, the trouble began. There are certain obligations that go with being a husband. Katherine has never exacted more than her due only ——"

"Only, her husband happened to be a genius and Katherine doesn't know a genius when she sees one. From the best intentions she's driving you to hell, Jim."

"Oh! well, I may be able to get the best of it, Andy, and paint even if I do keep to the well-trodden paths of husbands. A fellow can't call himself a genius to his own wife, you know, especially when he hasn't proved it. One hates to be an ass. You see, Andy, when all's said and done, I can wring a thing or two out. This is good, isn't it?"

The two men looked at the picture.

"It's devilish good, but it has been wrung out! Jim, it's no use. The home-loving, society-trotting, movie-show husband role will be the end of you."

"Well, if I slam my studio door in Katherine's face and leave her to go about alone, or sit by herself, that would be the end of her. Andy, the worst of it is that when she puts it up to me, I see she's right. We're married and she only wants her share."

"I suppose this meant," Law was gravely contemplating the picture, "nights of prowling and days when you felt as if you'd kill any one who spoke to you?"

"Something like that, and all the while Katherine was entertaining and I'd promised to help. I didn't go near them once."

"Umph!"

"So you see, Testy, it isn't Katherine's fault. The two roles don't jibe, that's the long and short of it."

"And your love," Law was thinking aloud. "Your love and sense of right——"

"I'm not a cad, Andy."

"Leave this thing here for a day or two, Jim," Law raised the picture and carried it to the window. "I never saw such live light," he said. "Where did you get it."

"I—I was lying under the Palisades one night and just at daybreak I saw it. It's a home product, though it looks Oriental, doesn't it?"

"Yes, it does."

There was silence for a few moments, then Norval asked in quite his natural manner, "And you won't come away for a clip, Andy?"

"Not until autumn, Jim, then I'm going to run up into Canada."

"All right. Having got the—the live light out of my system, and if you won't play with me, I'm going to coax Katherine to take me to any summer orgy she wants to. I owe it to her, she hasn't had a good dance for ages."

"Jim, you're a fool or——"

"A modest reflection of yourself, Testy."

But something snapped that summer which sent the Norvals and Anderson Law whirling in widely different directions. In the upheaval Donelle and her small affairs were forgotten.

Mrs. Law died suddenly.

The doctors sent for Law and he got there in time.

"She may, toward the end," they told him, "have a gleam of consciousness. Such things do happen. You would want to be with her."

"Yes, in any case," Law replied and he took his place by the bed. In his heart was that cold fear which many know in the presence of death.

The long afternoon hours drifted by. The face on the pillow, so tragically young because it did not show the tracings of experience, scarcely moved. Toward evening Law went to the west window to raise the shade, there was a particularly splendid sky. When he came back he saw that

a change had come; the change, but instead of blotting out expression in his wife's eyes, it was giving expression, meaning, to what had been, for so long, vacuous. Law wanted to call for help, but instead he sank limply into the chair and took the hand that was groping toward his.

"I'm glad you're here——" said the strained, hoarse voice.

"I am glad, too, Helen."

For years Law had not addressed his wife by name. That would have seemed sacrilege.

"Have you been here all the time?"

"Yes, dear."

"That was like you! And the baby; it is all right?"

"Yes, quite all right."

"It is a boy?"

Law struggled, then said:

"Yes, Helen, a boy."

"I'm glad. I want him to be like his father."

She smiled vaguely; the light went out of her eyes, she drifted back.

There were a few hours more of blank waiting, then it was over.

A week later Law left a note for Norval.

"I'm sorry, old chap, that I could not see you. Pass my regrets along. I'm off for the ends of the earth, and I've neglected buying a return ticket."

And just when Norval was most sensitive to shock; just when Law's trouble and desertion left him in the deepest gloom, Katherine devastated the one area, which he believed to be sane and impregnable, by a most unlooked-for assault.

She was the sort of woman who comes slowly and secretively to conclusions. She was as unconscious of this herself as others were. Apparently she was a most conservative, obvious person, a person with an overwhelming sense of duty and obligation and untiring in her efforts to prove this.

Since Helen Law's death, Norval had gone as little to his studio as possible; had devoted himself to Katherine; had condoned her coldness and indifference.

"I deserve all she gives," he thought and rose to greater effort. He even got to the point of noticing her beauty, her grace, and concluded that they, and what they represented, meant more than paint pots and canvases.

"A man cannot have everything," he confessed, "he must make a choice."

Virtually Norval had made his choice, when Katherine blotted out, for the time being, all his power to think straight.

He was trying to plan for the summer, he was patiently setting forth the charms of the watering places he loathed but which promised the most dissipation.

"I am not going away with you, Jim." Katharine's soft face grew hard. "I have a duty to myself, I see it at last. All my life I have sacrificed everything for you, Jim."

This was humiliating, but Norval assented.

"Even my talent!" Katherine flung this out defiantly.

They were in their home, having one of their endless get-no-where talks.

Norval meant to do his full part, but the trouble was that he had no part in the actual life of his pretty, commonplace wife.

"Your talent, Katherine, your talent?"

Norval did not question this derisively, but as if she had told him of having an eye in the middle of her forehead.

"You have not even been interested enough to notice." This with bitterness.

Norval, for some idiotic reason, or lack of it, stared at the middle of her smooth, white brow.

"I've written this; I did not tell you until it was between covers."

Norval took a book she offered as he might have taken a young and very doubtful baby.

"It looks ripping!" he said.

"It—it is well spoken of," Katherine's eyes were tear-dimmed.

Norval gingerly handed the book back.

"You—you don't even care, now! You won't open it. I have dedicated it to you. The first copy is yours. I don't believe you'll even read it."

"I will, Kit," Norval grabbed the book back fiercely. He was so stunned that he could not think at all.

Katherine writing a book! It would be as easy to think of her riding the circus ring.

"I'll sit up nights reading it, Kit. That's what folks always do, they don't lay it down until the

last word, even if it takes all night! What is it about?"

"It is called 'The Awakened Soul.'" Katherine tried to repress a sob. Her anger, too, was rising.

"Good God!" gasped Norval, forgetting his wife's hatred of profanity.

Katherine reached for the book and held it to her hurt heart.

"You are selfish, you are an egotist, Jim. Your talent, your freedom to develop it have made you callous, brutal. There are more ways of killing a woman than to—beat her. Now that I am sure I have a sacred spark that must be kept alive, I shall demand my rights; freedom equal to your own!"

"Of course, Kit, if you've gone in for this sort of thing, we'll have to shift our bases a little. I know that."

"Jim, we're not fitted for each other!" The sob rose triumphant and because in his soul Norval knew that she spoke the truth, he was furious and ready to fight.

"Rot!" he cried. "Now see here, Kit, don't get the temperament bug; there's nothing in it! You can do your job and yet keep clean and safe; do it best by playing the game honest. Good God! I haven't smutted up my life along with my canvas, you don't have to. It's the fashion, thank the Lord, to be decent, although gifted. Your book has run you down, old girl. Let's cut and forget it!"

The indignation of the narrow, weak, and stubborn swayed Katherine Norval.

"Jim," she said, gulping and holding desperately to "The Awakened Soul," "I think we should be—be—divorced."

"Punk!" Norval snapped his fingers. "Unless you've given cause, there isn't any."

"I—I cannot live under present conditions, Jim."

"All right, we'll get a new set."

"You are making fun and I am deadly in earnest."

"You mean you want to chuck me?" Norval frowned, but something was steadying him.

"I mean that I must live my life."

"Of course, Katherine, this all sounds as mad as a March hare, and it's August, you know. Why, we couldn't get free if we wanted to, we're too decent."

"But you're not happy, Jim."

"Well, who is, all the time?"

"And, Jim, you do your best work when you are leaving me horribly alone. I've noticed." This was another hideous truth and it stung.

"I've done my best, Kit," he said lamely.

"And it hasn't worked, Jim. I will not stand in your way. Though I die, I will do my duty, now I seek!"

"Don't, Kit, for heaven's sake, don't."

"I mean every word that I say. I will not submit longer to being—being eliminated. I must have reality of some kind. Jim, you don't fit into home life. Our baby died. You can forget me, and I have had to forget you. I want my freedom."

For a full moment they stared helplessly over the chasm that for years had been widening without their knowing it. They could not touch each other now, reach as they might.

"I—why—I'm stunned," said Norval.

"I alone have seen it coming," Katherine went on. "If my staying made you happier, better, I would stay even now; but it does not, Jim."

And Norval continued to stare.

"I feel I am doing you and—and your Art a great service by letting you go." Katherine looked the supreme martyr.

"On what grounds?" mumbled Jim, "'An Awakened Soul'?"

This was most unfortunate.

"I'm leaving for California to-morrow!" Katherine spoke huskily, she no longer cried.

"Everything ready, only good-bye, eh? Well, Kit, you've worked efficiently once you began."

They looked at each other like strangers.

"I shall not follow you. When you want me, come to me. My soul has not been awakened as yours has, I'll keep on right here and fly the flag over the ruins. My God! This *is* a shot out of a clear sky."

"Jim, I've seen the clouds gathering ever since——"

"When, Kit?"

"That first picture that Andy said meant genius, not plain talent, and since the baby went."

"Poor girl."

"But not so poor as I might have been," Katherine again clutched her book proudly.

"It's the heat, Kit. By autumn we'll be rational. A vacation apart will fill up the cracks."

"Until then, Jim, we'll be friends?"

"Friends, Kit, friends!" Norval clutched the straw. On this basis a sense of relief came.

And so Katherine went to California—and Jim Norval?

CHAPTER XIII
THE INEVITABLE

Jim Norval took to the Canadian north-west.

He had meant to be quite tragic and virtuous. He had meant to stay in the studio and fight out the biggest problem of his life, but he did not. Undoubtedly the shock Katherine had given him stunned him at first. But, as he revived, he was the victim of all sorts of devils which, during his life, had been suppressed by what he believed was character.

Perhaps if the season had been less humid and Anderson Law had been near with his plain ideals and picturesque language, things might have been different. But the humidity was infernal and Law obliterated.

The man is the true conservative. Realizing how cramping this is, he has verbally relegated the emotion to woman; but he has not escaped actuality. No matter how widely a man's fancy may wander, his convictions must be planted on something. Norval, having married, believing himself in love, took root. Now that he was confronted by the possibility of either shrivelling or clutching to something else, he found he could make no decision in the old environment. For a week he contemplated following Katherine, it would be easier than floundering around without her. The next week he decided to telegraph. He grew calm as he wondered whether it would be wiser to capitulate; take the position of an outraged but masterful husband, or to say he was on the verge of death?

Then something over which Norval had no control calmed and held him.

"A summer apart will hurt neither of us," he concluded, and took the train for Banff. Mentally and physically, he let go. He kept to the silent places, the deep woods and big rivers. He took no note of time.

Once a letter was forwarded from Anderson Law. Law wrote:

When I came to, I found myself on the way to Egypt. It was too late to turn back, Jim, or I would have done so and got you to come with me, I can bear folks now. If you think well of it, come along anyway. And, by the way, in the general jamboree do you know I completely forgot the little girl of Alice Lindsay's, fiddling away up in Canada. I do not usually forget such things, and I'm deeply ashamed. If you don't come to Egypt, perhaps you would not mind looking her up and explaining. I'll be back in a year or so.

Norval smiled. It was his first smile in many a day. It was mid September then and, though he did not realize it, he was edging toward home. Home! After all, it was good for a man and woman to know the meaning of home. Of course you had to pay for it, and he was ready to pay. It's rather shocking to drift about and have no place to anchor in. That side of the matter had been uppermost in Norval's mind for weeks. He meant to make all this very clear to Katherine; he wondered if she, too, were edging across the continent. There must be hours in the studio, of course. He and Katherine had enough to live on, but a man ought to have something definite in the way of work. Painting was more than play to Norval, it was a profession, a job! If he made Katherine look at it as a job, everything would smooth out. Then, too, he meant to focus on her newly discovered talent. Perhaps she was gifted and he had been brutally blind. No wonder she had resented it. And, thank God, he was not one of the men who wanted the world for themselves. It would really be quite jolly to have Katherine write about Awakened Souls and things of that sort while he painted. Then, after business hours, they would have a common life interest, maybe they could adopt children. Norval adored children. Yes, it was as he had hoped; a summer apart had brought them together!

And just then Katherine's letter came.

It ran:

JIM, I am not coming back. Here in my little bungalow I have found myself and I mean to keep myself!

I feel very kindly. All the hurt is gone now or I would not write. I see your genius, I really do, and I also see that it would be impossible for me to help you. I tried and failed horribly. Had you married a woman, the waiting, thankful sort, the kind of woman who would always be there when you came back, always glad to have you making your brilliant way and basking in your light, all would have been well. But, Jim, I want something of my own out of life, and I wasn't getting it. I was starving. I feared I would starve here, but I haven't and—— Well, Jim, I don't know how divorces are managed when people are as respectable as we, but unless you want to leave things as they are, do try to help me out. After all, you must be just enough to admit that there is something to be said for me?

The last feeling of security died in Norval's heart as he read. He had been flung into space when his wife had first spoken. He was not angry now. He was not really grieving, but he felt as a man might who, in falling, had been clutching to what he thought was a sturdy sapling only to find it a reed.

He had been falling ever since Katherine had shown him the "Awakened Soul," but he had reached out on the descent for anything that might stop him, even the partial relinquishing of his ambition. And here he was with nothing! Falling, falling.

Then, as one notices some trivial thing when one is most tense and shocked, Norval thought of that little girl of Alice Lindsay's fiddling away in Canada!

"I'll get down to Chicoutimi and take to the river; Point of Pines is on the way and I can do this for old Andy. It's about the only thing for me to do anyway, just now."

There were forest fires all along the route and travel was retarded. When Point of Pines was seen in the distance, its location marked by a twinkling lantern swung from a pole on the dock, the captain of the *River Queen* was surly because one lone traveller was determined to be put ashore.

"Why not go on to Lentwell?" he argued; "we're late anyway. You could get a rig to bring you back to this God-forsaken hole to-morrow. It's only six miles from Lentwell."

But Norval insisted upon his rights.

"What in thunder do you want to go for?" the captain grew humorously fierce. "No one ever goes to Point of Pines."

"I'm going to surprise them," Norval rejoined. "Give them a shock, make history for them."

"Your luggage is at the bottom of the pile," this seemed a final argument, "you didn't say you were going to get off."

"I didn't know just where the place was; but chuck the trunks at Lentwell, I'll send for them."

So the *River Queen* chugged disgustedly up to the wharf and in the gloom of the early evening Norval, with a couple of bags, was deposited on it.

A man took in the lantern that had made known to the captain of the departing boat that Point of Pines was doing its duty. Then a voice, not belonging to the hand, called from a short distance back of the wharf:

"Jean Duval, did a box come for us?"

"No, Mam'selle."

"Didn't anything come?"

"Nothing, Mam'selle."

"Why, then, did the boat stop?"

"To make trouble, Mam'selle, for honest people."

With this the unseen man departed, grumbling. He had either not seen Norval or had decided not to court further trouble.

Norval laughed. The sound brought a young girl into evidence. She was a tall, slight thing, so fair that she seemed luminous in the dim shadow caused by the hill which rose sharply behind her.

"Well!" she said, coming close to Norval. "Well! How did you get here?"

"The *River Queen* left me," Norval explained, "probably instead of the box you expected."

"Why?" asked the girl.

"Heaven knows! I rather insisted, to be sure, but I don't know why. I wonder if any one could give me a bed for the night? Do you know?"

"Perhaps Mam'selle Morey could. All her life she's been getting ready for a boarder."

Norval started.

"Mam'selle Morey?" he said slowly; "and you——?"

"I'm Donelle Morey. I have Molly and the cart here. We can try, if you care to."

So Norval put his bags in the cart and stretched out his hand to help the girl.

"Thanks," she said; "I will ride beside Molly on the shaft."

"But—why, that's absurd, you know. The seat is wide enough for us both."

"I prefer the shaft."

The air, manner, and voice of the girl were proofs enough of Alice Lindsay's work, but Norval was determined to keep his own identity, for the time being, secret.

"I'm Richard Alton," he said, as the little creaking cart mounted the Right of Way.

"Good evening, Mr. Richard Alton," came the reply from the shaft. It was improbable that the slip of a girl sitting there was laughing at him, but the man on the seat had his doubts.

"I'm a painter," he added.

"A painter? Do you paint houses?"

"Oh! yes, and barns and even people and trees."

This seemed to interest the voice in the gloom, for they had entered the woods and it was quite dark.

"You are making fun?"

"Far from it, Mam'selle."

"I am not Mam'selle. I'm Donelle."

How childish the words and tones were!

"Excuse me, Donelle."

"And here's home!" Suddenly Molly had emerged from the trees and stood stock still in the highway in front of the little white house.

"Would you rather wait until I let Molly into the stable, or will you go in?" Standing in the road, with the moonlight touching her, Donelle looked like nothing so much as a silver birch in the shadowy woods.

"I'd much rather wait. I'm horribly afraid."

"Afraid of what?"

"That Mam'selle Morey may not approve of me as a boarder."

"Then she will say so," comforted the girl, turning to open the gate across the road for the horse. "Molly," she said, "you trot along and make yourself easy, I'll be back in a few minutes." Then she turned to Norval. "We'd better go right in. If you are not to stay here you'll have to try Captain Longville's and that is a good three miles."

"Good Lord!" muttered Norval, and began to straighten his tie and hat in a desperate attempt at respectability.

As long as he lived Norval was to remember his first glimpse of Jo Morey and the strangely home-like room that greeted him. Perhaps because his need was great the scene touched his heart.

The brilliant stove was doing its best. The hanging lamp was like electricity for clearness. The brightness, comfort, and Jo at her loom made a picture upon which the tired, heartsore man looked reverently.

Jo lifted her glad face to welcome Donelle and saw the stranger!

Instantly the protecting brows fell, but not until Norval had seen the worship that filled the eyes.

"Mamsey!" Donelle went quickly forward and half whispered.

"This—this is a boarder! Now, don't——" Norval could not catch the rest, but it was a warning to Jo not to put her price too high.

"A boarder?" Jo got upon her feet, plainly affected. She took life pretty much as it came, but this unexpected appearance of her secret desire almost stunned her.

"Where did you get him, Donelle?"

Then the girl told her story while her yellow eyes danced with childish amusement.

"He's just like an answer to prayer, isn't he, Mamsey?"

"And I'm quite prayerful in my attitude," Norval put in. "Anything in the way of a bite and a bed will be gratefully received. Name your price, Mam'selle."

Now that the hour had come Jo's conscience and her sense of justice rose in arms against each other.

"He looks as if he could pay," she mused.

"But see how tired he looks—and interesting!" Conscience and inclination pushed Jo to the wall. However, she was hard-headed.

"How about five dollars a week?" she ejaculated.

"Oh!" gasped Donelle to whom money was a dead language; "Mamsey, that is awful."

Norval was afraid he was going to spoil everything by roaring aloud. Instead he said:

"I can stand that, Mam'selle. I suppose you'll call it a dollar if I'm put out to-morrow?"

"Surely."

Then Jo bustled about preparing food while Donelle went back to Molly, with Nick hurtling along in the dark beside her.

And so Norval, known as Alton, occupied the upper chamber of Jo Morey's house. His artist's eye gloated over the rare old furniture; he touched reverently the linen and the woollen spreads; he laid hands as gentle as a woman's on the dainty curtains; and he gave thanks, as only a weary-souled man can, for the haven into which he had drifted. He was as nervous as a girl for fear he might be weighed and found wanting by Mam'selle Morey. He contemplated, should she give him notice, buying her. Then he laughed. He had not been in the little white house twenty-four hours before he realized that his landlady was no ordinary sort and to view her in the light of a mercenary was impossible.

But Jo did not dismiss her boarder. His adaptability won her from the start and, although she frowned upon him, she cooked for him like an inspired creature and hoped, in her heart, that she might prove worthy of the fulfilment of her dreams. To Donelle's part in the arrangement she gave, strangely enough, little thought except that the money would ease the future for the girl. Perhaps poor Jo, simple as a child in many ways, believed that it was inherent in a boarder to be exempt from the frailties of other and lesser men. She never thought of him in terms of sex, and Donelle was still to her young, very young.

Alton had been with her a week when Marcel Longville, embodying the sentiments of the village, came deprecatingly into Jo's kitchen and sat dolefully down on a hard yellow chair. She sniffed critically. Marcel was a judge of cooking, but no artist. She cooked of necessity, not for pleasure. Jo revelled in ingredients and had visions of results.

"Crullers and chicken!" said Marcel. "You certainly do tickle the stomach, Mam'selle."

"He pays well and steady," Jo answered, attending strictly to business. "And such a relisher I've never seen. Not even among your best payers, Marcel. They always ate and thought afterward if they wanted to, or had to; mine thinks while he eats. I've watched him pause a full minute over a mouthful, getting the flavour."

"That's flattering to a woman, certainly," Marcel sighed. Then: "Father Mantelle says your boarder is handsome, Mam'selle, and young."

"Tastes differ," Jo basted her chicken with steady hand; "he's terrible brown and lean. As to age, he wasn't born yesterday."

"What's he doing here, Jo?"

"Eating and sleeping, mostly eating. He wanders some, too. He's partial to woods."

"Hasn't he any excuse for being here?"

"Marcel, does any one have to have an excuse for being in Point of Pines? What's the matter with the place?"

"The Captain argues that he is a prospector." Marcel brought the word out carefully.

"What's that?" Mam'selle dipped out her crullers from the deep fat.

"Sensing about timber or land, or something that someone secret wants to buy, and has sent him to spy on."

"Well, I don't believe the Captain has shot the right bird," Jo laughed significantly, "the Captain isn't always a good shot. My boarder is a painter."

"A painter? What does he think he can get to do here? We leave our houses to nature."

"He's going to fix up the wood-cabin." Jo spoke indifferently, but her colour rose. The wood-cabin was Langley's deserted house. Years ago she had bought it, for a song, and then left it alone.

"He goes there every day. I shouldn't wonder if he was going to paint that. It will take gallons, for the knotholes will just drink paint."

"Mam'selle," here Marcel panted a bit, "you don't fear for Donelle?"

Jo stood still, wiped her hands on her checked apron, and stared at Marcel.

"Why should I?" she asked.

"Jo, a strange man and Donelle growing wonderful pretty, and——"

Still Jo stared.

"Mam'selle, the men have fixed the world for themselves; you know that. They have even fixed the women. Some are to labour and bend under their loads until they break, then the scrap heap! Others, the pretty ones, are to be taken or bought as the case may be. And young girls innocent and longing do not count the cost. Oh! Mam'selle, have you thought of Donelle?"

Poor Marcel's eyes were tear-filled.

Jo looked dazed and helpless. Presently she said, with that slow fierceness people dreaded:

"Marcel, I haven't lived my life for nothing. No man fixes my life for me nor labels me or mine. Donelle is nothing but a child. Why, look at her! When she's a woman, if a man wants her, he's going to hear something that I'm keeping just for him, and unless he believes it, he's not fit for the girl. In the meantime, my boarder is my boarder."

With this Marcel had to be content, and the others also. For they were waiting for the result of the interview like hungry animals afraid to go too near the food supply, but full of curiosity.

Yet for all her scornful words, Jo watched the man within her house. She realized that he was still young and for all his leanness and brownness, handsome, in a way. He had a habit, after the evening meal was done, of sitting astride a chair, and, while smoking, laughing at Donelle.

"He'd never do that if he saw in her a woman," thought Jo with relief. "She amuses him."

And that surely Donelle did. Her mimicry was delicious, her abandon before Alton most diverting. She knew no shyness, she even returned his teasing with a quick pertness that disarmed Jo completely.

"Well, Mr. Richard Alton," Donelle said one night as she watched him puff his pipe, "I went up to the wood-cabin to-day to see how much painting you'd done and I found it locked. I looked into the window and there was something hung inside."

"Little girls mustn't snoop," said Alton.

Donelle twisted her mouth and cocked her head.

"Very well," she said, "keep your old cabin. I know another that is never locked against me."

"Meaning whose?"

"You'll have to hunt and find, Mr. Richard Alton."

Norval laughed and turned to Jo.

"Why don't you spank her, Mam'selle?" he asked. "She's a little rascal." Then: "Whose fiddle is that?" for Donelle never played.

Donelle's eyes followed his and rested upon the case standing against the wall.

"How did you know it was a fiddle?" she asked.

"Well, it's a fiddle case. Of course, Mam'selle may keep cheese in it!"

"It's—it's my fiddle," Donelle's gaiety fled, "but I don't play it any more."

"Why?"

"Well, everything that went with the fiddle has gone! I'm trying to forget it."

"Mam'selle," Norval frowned his darkest, "have you ever heard of a bird who could sing and wouldn't?"

"No, Mr. Alton, never!" Jo was quite sincere. Her boarder was always giving her interesting information.

"It can be made to, Mam'selle. Again, I advise spanking."

Surely there was no fear that her boarder and Donelle might come to grief! Jo laughed light heartedly. Her own bleak experience in the realm of love and danger was so far removed that it gave her no guidance. She might have felt differently had she seen what happened the following day. But at that time she was diligently building her wood pile while Donelle, among the trees on the hilltop, was supposed to be instructing a couple of boys in sawing wood.

But Donelle had finished her instructions, the boys were working intelligently, and she had wandered away with her heart singing within her, she knew not why. Then she threw back her head and laughed. She knew the reason at last, Tom Gavot was coming back! Tom had been seeing roads in the deeper woods for nearly three weeks, but he was coming back. Marcel had said so. Of course that was why Donelle was happy.

> And my heart is like a rhyme,
> With the yellow and the purple keeping time;
> The scarlet of the maples can shake me like a cry
> Of bugles going by.

Over and over Donelle said the words in a kind of chant which presently degenerated into words merely strung together.

"Like a rhyme—keeping time—like a cry—going by——" and then suddenly she heard her name.

"Donelle!" Standing under a flaming maple was Norval.

"I have been following you," he said, and his eyes, dark, compelling, were holding hers.

"Why, Mr. Richard Alton?"

"Because I am going to make you promise to play your fiddle again."

"No, I am happier when I forget my fiddle."

"Why, Donelle Morey, are you happier?"

"You would not understand."

"I'd try. Come, sit here on this log. The sun strikes it and we will be warm."

Donelle stepped off the narrow path and reached the log, while Norval sat down beside her.

"Now tell me about that fiddle."

"Once," Donelle raised her eyes to his, "once, for a long time I stayed, you would not know if I told you where, but it was near here and yet so far away. Everything was different—I thought I belonged there and I was the happiest girl, and had such big dreams. They taught me to play; a wonderful old man said I could play and I did. A dear lady opened the way for me to go on! Then something happened. It was just a word, but it told me that I did not belong in that lovely place, and if I went on I would be—cheating somebody; somebody who had let me have my life and never asked anything, who never would, but who would go on, making the best of——" Donelle's eyes were full of tears, her throat ached.

"Of what, little girl?"

"The—the bits that were left."

"Perhaps," Norval, quite unconsciously laid his hand over Donelle's which were clasped on her knees, "perhaps that somebody could have made quite a splendid showing of the bits, dear girl. And you might have made the place yours, the one that did not seem quite your own. Places are not always inherited, you know. Often they are—conquered."

"You make me afraid," said Donelle as she looked down at the hand covering hers. "You see, I want to do the thing you say. I almost did it, but the dear lady died. I'm not very brave; I think I would gave gone."

"She may not be the only one, child."

"But I couldn't take anything unless I had it, clean and safe. I wouldn't want it, unless I, myself, made it sure first. I'm like that. Don't you think something you are afraid of being sometimes keeps you from being what you want to be?"

"Yes. But, little girl, come, some time, to the cabin in the woods and play for me; will you? I might help you. And you could help me, I am trying to find my place, too."

"You?"

"Yes, Donelle." Then, quite irrelevantly, as once Tom Gavot had done, he said: "Your eyes are glorious, child, do you know that? The soul of you shines through. Donelle, it is almost as bad to starve a soul as to kill it. Will you bring the fiddle some day?"

"Yes, some day."

She was very sweet and pretty sitting there with the autumn light on her face.

"Donelle!"

"Yes."

"Just Donelle. The name is like you. You will keep your promise?"

"Some day, yes."

CHAPTER XIV
A CHOICE OF ROADS

Day after day Donelle looked at her fiddle, but turned away. Day after day she sang the hours through, working beside Jo, or playing with Nick. Something was happening to her; something that frightened her, but thrilled her. She kept remembering the touch of Norval's hand upon hers! In the night, when she thought of it, she trembled. When she saw him she was shy.

"I wish Tom Gavot would come back," she said to herself, for Tom had been detained. Then, at last, one day she heard that he was on his way. He would leave the little train, five miles below Point of Pines, and would walk the rest of the way. She knew the path so she went to meet him.

It was mid afternoon when she saw him coming, swinging along in his rough corduroys and high boots, his cap on the back of his handsome head, his bag slung over his shoulder.

She stepped behind a tree, laughing, and when he was close she suddenly appeared and grasped his arm.

"Donelle, I thought——"

"Did I frighten you, Tom?"

"Well, you know there is always the bit of a coward in me. Why are you here?"

"I came to meet you, Tom."

"Has anything gone wrong?" His face darkened; poor Tom never expected things had gone right. His life had not been formed on those lines.

"No, but I wanted you, Tom. There are so many things to talk about, wonderful things. I've gone to your cabin, Tom, and made it ready for you. Every day I've lighted a fire the nights are cold. I thought you might come at night."

Donelle had lighted a fire of which she knew nothing, and Tom could not tell her!

"You're kind," was all he said as he looked at her. Then: "I never had a home until I got that cabin, Donelle. While I am away, I see the curtains you and Mam'selle made and the bedspread and all the rest. When I've been shivering in camp, I saw the fire on my own little hearth, and I was warm!"

Donelle smiled up to him.

"Tell me about your road," she said.

"Well, there's going to be one! I meant to come back ten days ago, but something happened and I decided to start work this fall, not wait for spring, so I stayed on. There was sickness at a settlement back in the woods. Many people almost died, some of them did, because they couldn't get a doctor and proper care. It's criminal to put women and children in such a hole; there's got to be a road connecting those places with—help! A man is a brute to take a woman with him under such conditions. What *he* wants goes! He never thinks of *her* part."

"But, Tom, maybe she, the woman, wants to go."

"He ought not to let her, he knows."

"But if she just will go, what then, Tom?"

"It doesn't make it right for him, he knows."

"But it might be worse to stay back, Tom. A woman might choose to go."

"But *she* doesn't know; *he* does."

"But she may want to know, and be willing to pay."

"Donelle, you're a crazy little know-nothing."

Tom looked down and laughed. He was wondrously happy. "Always wanting to pay for what isn't worth it."

"You're wrong, Tom. It is worth it."

"What?"

"Why, the thing that makes a woman want to go into the woods with a man, even when there are no roads; the thing that makes her willing to pay before she knows."

Tom breathed hard.

"I suppose it is—love, Tom."

"It's something worse, often!" Gavot turned his eyes away from the upturned face.

"Lately, Tom," Donelle came close to him and touched his arm as she walked beside him, "I've been thinking about such a lot of new things and love among them."

"Love!" And now Tom stood still, as if an unseen blow had stunned him.

"Yes, and I had no one to talk to. I couldn't speak to Mamsey. Always I think of you, Tom, whenever thoughts come. You see everything, just as you see your roads in the deep woods. Are you tired, Tom?"

"No," Gavot got control of himself, "no, not tired."

"You see," and now they were going on again, "the big feelings of life just come to everyone. They don't pick, and when you are young, you have young thoughts. That is the way it seems to me, and often, Tom Gavot, the very things that you ought to have an old head to think about come when you haven't any sense at all." This tremendous truth fell from the girlish lips quite irrelevantly. "And then you just take and pay what you must, but often you have to pay more than you ought, because—well, because you are young when you bought——"

Donelle sobbed. "I've been thinking of Mamsey," she ended pitifully. Tom stopped short. He flung his pack on the ground and laid his strong, work-hardened hands on Donelle's shoulders.

"You don't have to pay for Mam'selle," he said in a whisper; "she's paid, God knows."

"But I've got to pay for my father, Tom."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, you see, lately I've known that I must be like my father more than like, like Mamsey. She learned and stayed and paid, he ran away. Oh, Tom, it's good to be able to say this to you, out here under the trees, alone. It has been choking me for days and days. You see, Tom, a big

feeling comes up in me that wants and wants. And, always, too, there is another feeling. I do not want to pay, as Mamsey did. It would be easier to run and hide! But, Tom, I'm not going to, I'm not! I'm going to pay for my father!"

"What ails you, Donelle? Has any one been talking?" Tom still held her, his hungry heart yearned to draw her close, but he held her at arm's length.

"No, it is only—thoughts that have been talking. I just cannot settle down by Mamsey, and know I'm to stay here without that running away feeling. Then I say: 'I don't care, I want to go and I'll go,' and then—why, I cannot, Tom, for I know I must pay for my father."

"Go where?"

"Go, Tom, where my fiddle would take me. Go where people do not know; go and learn things, and then if any one did find out—pay!"

Poor Tom was weary almost to the breaking point. Nights in rough camps, days of wood tramping had worn upon him, the fire of which Donelle knew nothing sent the blood racing through his veins. Her touch on his arm made him tremble.

"See here, Donelle," he said; "would you come along my road with me? Would you, could you, learn enough—that way?"

But Donelle smiled her vague smile, "I think I must have my own road, Tom. The trouble is I cannot see my road as you see roads. I only feel my feet aching. But, Tom, surely you must have seen life a little in Quebec, tell me: could a great big strong love keep on loving even if it knew about me and Mamsey?"

"Yes." The word was more like a groan.

"Even if it had to keep Mamsey from knowing that we know?"

"Yes."

"Why, Tom, dear Tom, you make me feel wonderful. You always do, you big, safe Tom. I just knew how it would be; that is why I had to come and meet you."

She rubbed her cheek against the rough sleeve of his jacket. "I think your mother would just worship you, Tom."

Then Gavot laughed, laughed his honest laugh, and picked up his pack.

"Donelle," he said presently, "you ought to make your music again. You have no right not to."

"You, you really mean that, Tom?"

"Yes, I do."

"Well, I think I'll get the fiddle out some day, soon, and come to your cabin. While you draw your roads on your paper, I'll see if the tunes will come back."

But Donelle did not speak of Richard Alton.

The autumn lingered in Point of Pines; even the gold and red clung to the trees to add to the delusion that winter was far off. The mid-days were warm, and only now and then did the frost nip.

Norval kept saying to himself, as he lay on that wonderful bed in Jo Morey's upper chamber, "I must go back!" But he made no move southward. The quiet of the woods, the lure of the river held him, and then he began to ask why he *should* go back?

Law was still in Egypt, Katherine was undoubtedly in her bungalow; why not have what he always had wanted, a winter away from things?

Then a letter forwarded by his lawyer clarified his thoughts. It was from Katherine, who had discovered a new set of duties and was hot-footed to perform them.

She wrote:

JIM, until you are willing to die for something, you have never lived. In letting loose what really was never mine, my own came to me. I have a new book out. Shall I send you a copy? I've called it "The Soul Set Free." I do not want to be too personal, but I find the world loves the close touch.

You have not said one word, Jim, about a divorce and I have waited. I think you owe me assistance along this line, and now I must insist. For, Jim, with the rest of what is my own has come a startling realization, that love, understanding love, is to be mine, too. Until I hear from you I will not name the man who discovered my talent before he saw me. He read the manuscript of my first book, he had never heard of me then. Only recently has he come to California. He is my mate, Jim, I know that, and I owe him a great duty. I must go as I see duty, but I must go with a clear conscience. I owe him that, also.

Norval read this amazing letter lying on a couch before a blazing fire in his wood-cabin. He read and reread it. He felt as he might have felt had a toy dog—or a fluffy kitten, risen up and smitten

him. Katherine had been giving him a series of tremendous thumps ever since she had shown him her awakened soul. Little by little she had receded from his understanding of her; but to come forth now in this stupefying characterization of the untrammeled woman, was—— Norval laughed, a hard, bitter laugh.

Then he went to his improvised desk, the cabin was filled with his attempts at furniture making; it was a remarkable place.

He wrote rather unsteadily:

KIT, do you remember the story of the mouse that ran in the whiskey drippings, licked his legs, got drunk, and then took his stand, crying, "Where's that damned cat I was so afraid of yesterday?" Well, you make me think of that. You were once, unless I was mistaken, a nice little mouse of a thing, pretty well scared of the conventional cat—the world, you know. Then came the whiskey lickings, your talent. I'm afraid you're drunk, child, drunk as a lord. But there you are, all the same, with your back up against the wall, defying the cat. Well, you're thirty-two, and although you were afraid of the cat, you certainly know something about the animal. I agree with you that we were not suited to one another, and I'm ready to let your soulmate have a show. I do not quite know how to do it, but if you think you will not be defrauding him too much—and if your sense of duty will permit, give me time to get my breath and I swear I'll think up some sort of "cause" that will set you free. Just now I am hidden away in the woods, painting as I used to paint when Andy stared and stared. I can tell quality now. I'm on the right road and do not want to be jerked back until I've made sure. Perhaps the law in California would make it easy for you. Anything short of making a villain of me, I'm willing to consider.

Then Norval, having written, stalked down to the Post Office, sent his ultimatum off with the Point of Pines official stamp on it, and went to Dan's Place for no earthly reason but to forget. He drank a little, scorned himself for taking that road out of his perplexity, drank a little more with old, grimy Pierre Gavot, and then started back to the wood-cabin. He did not want to face Jo Morey—or Donelle. He felt unclean; he was, in a befuddled way, paying for Katherine.

The sun was setting in a magnificent glory of colour and cloud banks. There was a flurry of snow in the clouds, and until it fell there would be that chill in the air that was vicariously cooling Norval's hot brain.

He wanted the seclusion of the cabin more than he wanted anything else just then. He had left a fire on the hearth, he could stretch himself on the couch for the night. He did not want food, but he was frantic to get to his canvas; he had begun a few days ago a fantastic thing, quite out of his ordinary style. While there was light enough he could work. So he pressed on.

The clouds quite unexpectedly gave up their burden, and Norval was soon covered with snow as he flew along, taking a short cut to the cabin. But having given up the snow, the clouds disappeared and the daylight was lengthened. Pounding the snow from his feet, shaking himself like a bear, Norval entered the cabin and saw—Donelle standing transfixed before the easel!

She did not turn as he came in; she was rigid, her hands holding her violin case.

"You—you said you were a painter!" she gasped when she felt Norval was near her.

"And you think I'm not?" Something in the voice startled her, she looked at him.

"You said you painted houses and barns and——"

"People sometimes and trees. I spoke the truth, but you think I'm no painter?"

"Why, I've been—I've been thinking I was dreaming until just now. See these woods," she was gazing at the unfinished thing on the easel, "They are my woods. I know the very paths, they are back of the lumber cutting. See! is there a face, somewhere in the dark, a face back of those silver birches, is there?"

Norval, with the Joan of Arc conception in mind, had painted those woods while Donelle's face had haunted him.

"Can you see a face?" he asked. He was close to the girl now, so close that her young body touched him.

"Is it only a fancy?"

"Look again, Donelle. Whose face?"

"I—I do not know!"

But she did know, and she looked mutely at him.

"Donelle, why did you come here?"

"I promised I was going to—to play for you."

"Then, in God's name, do it! See, go over there by the window." Norval had folded his arms over his breast. He was afraid of himself, of the madness that Katherine and Dan's Place had evolved. "Play, and I'll finish this thing."

"I can play best if I move about."

"Move, then, but fiddle!"

"You are sure you want me? I can come again. You are strange, I should not have stolen in, but once I had seen—I couldn't get away."

"Donelle, you are to stay. Do you hear? For your sake and mine you are to stay. Now, then."

He turned his back on her, flung off his coat, and fell to work.

Donelle tuned her violin, tucked it under her chin, and slowly walking to and fro, she played and played until the hunger in her heart grew satisfied. Like a little pale ghost she passed up and down the rude room, smiling and happy.

After half an hour Norval looked at her; he was haggard, but quite himself.

Then Donelle turned and, nodding over her bow, said:

"It's all right, the joy of it has come back and—— Oh! I see the face among the trees. What a beautiful picture! It's like a wood with a heart and soul; it's alive like Tom Gavot's road. Now we must go home, Mr. Richard Alton. We're tired, you and I.

"Home?" Norval laughed. "Home?"

"Yes, to Mamsey. I always am so glad of Mamsey when I'm tired."

"Donelle, I meant to stay here to-night."

"But instead, you are coming with me!" Donelle put out her hand, "Come!"

Norval raised the hand to his lips.

"You little, white wood-spirit," he said, "they did not teach you to play, they only let you free. Donelle, are you a spirit?"

"No," and now the yellow eyes sought and held his, "I'm a—woman, Mr. Richard Alton."

CHAPTER XV
THE LOOK

And Donelle began to know what love was. Know it as passionate, daring natures know it. She thought of her father, of Mamsey, in a new light. She grew to understand her supposed mother with a tragic realization and she shuddered when she reflected upon her father.

"To go and leave love!" she thought. "Oh! how could he?"

Then Donelle took to gazing upon Jo with the critical eyes of youth, and yet with pity.

What manner of girl had Jo been? Had she always been plain?

The word caused Donelle pain. It sounded disloyal to Jo; but it sent her to her mirror in the little north chamber beside Mam'selle's.

The face that looked back at Donelle puzzled her. Was it pretty? What was the matter with it?

The eyes were too large, they looked hungry. The mouth, too, was queer; it did things too easily. It smiled and quivered; it turned up at the corners, it drooped down, all too easily. The nose was rather nice as noses go, but it had tiny freckles on it that you could see if you looked close. Those freckles were, in colour, something like the eyes.

"I like my hair!" confessed Donelle, and she smoothed the soft, pale braids wound about her delicately poised head. "My throat is too long, but it's white!"

Then she tried on her few dresses, one after the other, and chose a heavy dark blue one. Jo had woven the material, it was very fine and warm.

"I think I will take my fiddle and go up to the wood-cabin," thought Donelle, and then her face grew bright and rose-touched.

But instead, Donelle went to Tom Gavot's hut.

Once outside the house, she simply could not go to the wood-cabin. She knew Alton was there, he painted constantly when he was not tramping the sunny forests or sitting with Jo and Donelle, reading in the smothering heat of the overworked stove.

"Some time when he is away, then I'll go."

But oh! how she wanted to go. The very thought of Alton made her thrill. Sometimes she saw him looking at her, when Jo was bent over her loom or needles, and the look always called something out of Donelle; something that went straight to Alton and never returned!

On that winter day, a still white day, Donelle carried her violin under her long fur coat; she must play to somebody, and Jo had gone to the distant town for the day.

The door of Tom's hut was closed, but a curl of smoke rose from the chimney so Donelle knocked rather formally.

Tom's step sounded inside, he took down the bar which secured the door and flung it open. His eyes were dark and his brow scowling.

"Why, Tom," laughed Donelle, "who are you locking and barring out? Maybe you do not want company?"

"I don't, but I want you."

"Tom, who do you call company?"

"Mam'selle's boarder, that Mr. Alton." Tom had run across Norval once or twice since his return.

"Don't you like him, Tom?"

Donelle had come inside and taken a chair by the hearth, now she flung her coat aside and laid the violin on her knee.

"Yes, I like him well enough, and that's the trouble. I don't want to like people unless there is a reason. I can't find a reason for this man."

Donelle laughed.

"What is he here for anyway, Donelle?"

"Why don't you go up to his wood-cabin and see, Tom? He's asked you." She had heard Norval do so rather insistently.

"Yes. But I'm not going."

"Why, Tom?"

"I'm too busy."

"I wish you would go, Tom. I wish you could see his pictures. Why, Tom, you'd feel like taking the shoes off your feet."

Tom laughed grimly.

"Not while the weather's so cold," he said.

"But, Tom, that's the reason for Mr. Alton. He is getting our woods and skies and river safe on his canvases. He's going to take them back to people who have never seen such things."

"Why don't they come and board here, then, and see them for themselves?" Tom threw a log viciously on the fire. "You don't mean he's doing this to give a lot of people pleasure?"

"Tom, he sells his pictures; he gets a great deal of money for them."

"Umph!" Then, "Has he ever put you in the pictures, Donelle?"

There was a slight pause. Remembering the faint suggestion in the first picture she had ever seen in the cabin, Donelle said softly:

"No, Tom."

"I'm glad. I'd hate to have a lot of strangers staring at you."

"Tom, you're scrouchy. Let me play for you."

And, while she played, growing more rapt and absorbed as she did so, Tom took his drawing board to the window and bent over his blueprints. Gradually the look of doubt and irritation left his face, a flood of happiness swept over him. He began to see roads. Always roads. He wanted to go to Quebec in the spring and tell his firm about something he had discovered lately; and it was on Mam'selle Morey's land, too. If there were a road back among the hills over which to haul that which he had found, haul it by a short cut to the railroad, by and by Mam'selle and Donelle would not have to take objectionable strangers into their home and——

Donelle played on unheedingly, but Tom started as a knock fell on the door!

"I will not open it!" he thought savagely. "Let him think what he damn pleases."

The tune ran glidingly on.

"You like this tune, Tom?" Donelle was far away from the still cabin.

"Yes, I like it, Donelle, but play something louder, faster."

"Well, then, how about this?" and with a laugh Donelle swung into a new theme.

Again the knock! This time softer but more insinuating.

Then all was quiet, but the mad music was filling the warm room.

Just then the visitor at the door stepped around the house and came in full view of the window before which Tom sat, rigid and defiant. It was Norval, and he paused, came nearer and stood still. Tom got up, and the movement attracted Donelle's attention. She turned and saw the two men glaring at each other, the glass between.

"Curse him!" muttered Tom, "curse him!"

Norval vanished instantly, but not before Donelle had caught the expression in his eyes.

"Tom," she said affrightedly, "what did he think?"

"What does it matter what he thought?"

"But, Tom, tell me, what did he think to make him look like that? Perhaps, perhaps he thinks I

should not be here, alone with you."

"Damn him. What right has he to stare into my place?"

"But, Tom, his eyes, I cannot bear to think of the look in his eyes. It—it was laughing, but it hurt."

"Who cares about what he thought?" Tom was savage.

"I do," Donelle whispered. She was putting her violin away. "I do. I couldn't stand having a man look at me like that. Why, Tom, it made me feel ashamed."

Again Gavot cursed, but under his breath.

"You going?" he asked. "Wait, I'll come with you. Wait, Donelle."

But the girl did not pause.

"I'd rather go alone," she called back.

But she did not go directly home, she took a round-about way and reached the hill back of the little white house. The tall pines rose black from the untrodden snow, the winter sky was as blue as steel, and as cold. In among the trees, where it was sheltered, Donelle sat down. There she could think!

The power of a look is mighty. The mere instant that Norval had gazed upon Donelle through the window was sufficient to carry the meaning in the man's mind to the sensitive girl.

It took her some time to translate the truth as she sat under the trees on the hilltop, but slowly it all became clear.

"He does not know, but he thinks wrong of me." Donelle spoke aloud as if repeating a lesson.

"Why should he think wrong?" questioned the hard teacher.

Then Donelle remembered her father and Jo, and the word with which Pierre Gavot had polluted her life.

"That's why he laughed," shuddered the girl. Her own secret interpreting the hurting look though knowing him only as Richard Alton, she had no reason to believe he knew her story.

Then the relentless teacher pointed her back to the look in Dan Kelly's eyes, the look that had frightened her and had made Jo send her away to the Walled House.

"Unless I save myself," moaned Donelle, "no one can keep people from looking—those looks!"

Quietly she got up and walked down the hill, a tall, slim, ghostly form, with eyes haunted by knowledge.

That night after the evening meal Norval stayed in the bright living room and tortured Donelle. He knew he was brutal, but something drove him on. He was suffering dumbly, suffering without cause, he believed. Why should he care that a girl about whom he knew too much should hide herself away with a rough young giant behind a locked door in a lonely hut?

Then he concluded it was because he knew how Alice Lindsay and Law might feel, that he suffered. They would be so shocked.

"After all," Norval tried to reason himself into indifference, "blood will cry out. The world may be damned unjust to women, but there is something lacking when a girl like this makes herself—cheap."

Then it was that Norval began his torture. Jo was in the kitchen at the moment, Donelle was clearing the table.

"Where were you this afternoon?" Norval was carefully filling his pipe, sitting astride his chair.

"Part of the time I was in the woods on the hill," Donelle glanced at Jo through the open door.

"That's odd!" Norval puffed slowly and Donelle's eyes pleaded unconsciously. For no real reason she did not want Jo to know she had been with Tom. She was haunted by the look!

"Why don't you come up to my cabin and play to me?" This in a tone so low that Mam'selle could not hear.

"I—I don't know. I might be in the way while you work."

"On the contrary. Come up to-morrow, Donelle, I'll paint you with your fiddle. You'll make the town stare, the town back home."

The colour rose to Donelle's face. She remembered Tom's words.

"I do not want strangers staring at my face," she said with some spirit.

"Why not? It's a pretty face, Donelle."

Then the girl crossed the room and stood before him.

"If you talk and look like that," she warned in an undertone, "I'll make Mamsey send you away."

Norval laughed.

"I don't believe you will," he said, and reached out toward her.

And, for hours that night, after everything was still, Donelle lay in her dark room and cried while she struggled with her confused emotions.

"He shall go away! He shall *not* dare to look at me so, and whisper!"

Then she tossed about.

"But he must not go until I make him ashamed to look at me—so. But how can I? How can I?"

Toward morning sleep came and when Donelle awoke, Norval had had his breakfast and gone.

After the morning's work was finished Jo asked Donelle to go on an errand. A poor woman back among the hills was ill and needed food of the right sort.

"I have a crick in my back, Donelle," Jo explained, "I don't believe I could walk there, and the road is unbroken. Molly is too old to force her way through. If you take the wood path, it won't be too far."

"I'd love to go, Mamsey. It's such a still day, and did you ever see such sunlight?"

The release was welcome, poor Donelle still was thrashing about in her confused emotions. She was grateful that Alton was gone; she yearned to see him, and so it went.

"I'll be back as soon as I can, Mamsey. Is the basket packed?"

It was only eight o'clock when Donelle set forth. She wore her long, dark fur coat, a cowl-like hood of fur covered her pale hair, her delicate, white face shone sweetly in the soft, dusky setting. The eyes were full of sunlight but her mouth drooped pathetically.

Jo remembered the look long after the girl had departed.

"I mustn't keep her here," she reasoned; "I'm going to write again to that Mr. Law. I will wait until spring; he couldn't come now. I'm going to ask him to come up here and talk things over."

Then Mam'selle went to her loom and worked like a Fate; there were piles of wonderful things to sell. Surely they would help Donelle to her own! And so Jo worked and dreamed and feared, while Donelle made her way over the crusty snow, through the silent, holy woods, over the shining hill to the sick woman in her distant cabin.

For an hour the girl worked in the lonely house. She built a roaring fire, carried in a store of wood, fed and cheered the poor soul on her hard bed, and then turned her face toward Point of Pines.

Almost childishly she dallied by the way, trying to set her feet in the marks she had made on the way up. So interested did she become in this that it made her *almost* forget that queer, sad feeling in her heart.

"I'll make a new path," she decided, and that caused her to think of Tom Gavot and Alton and —the Look!

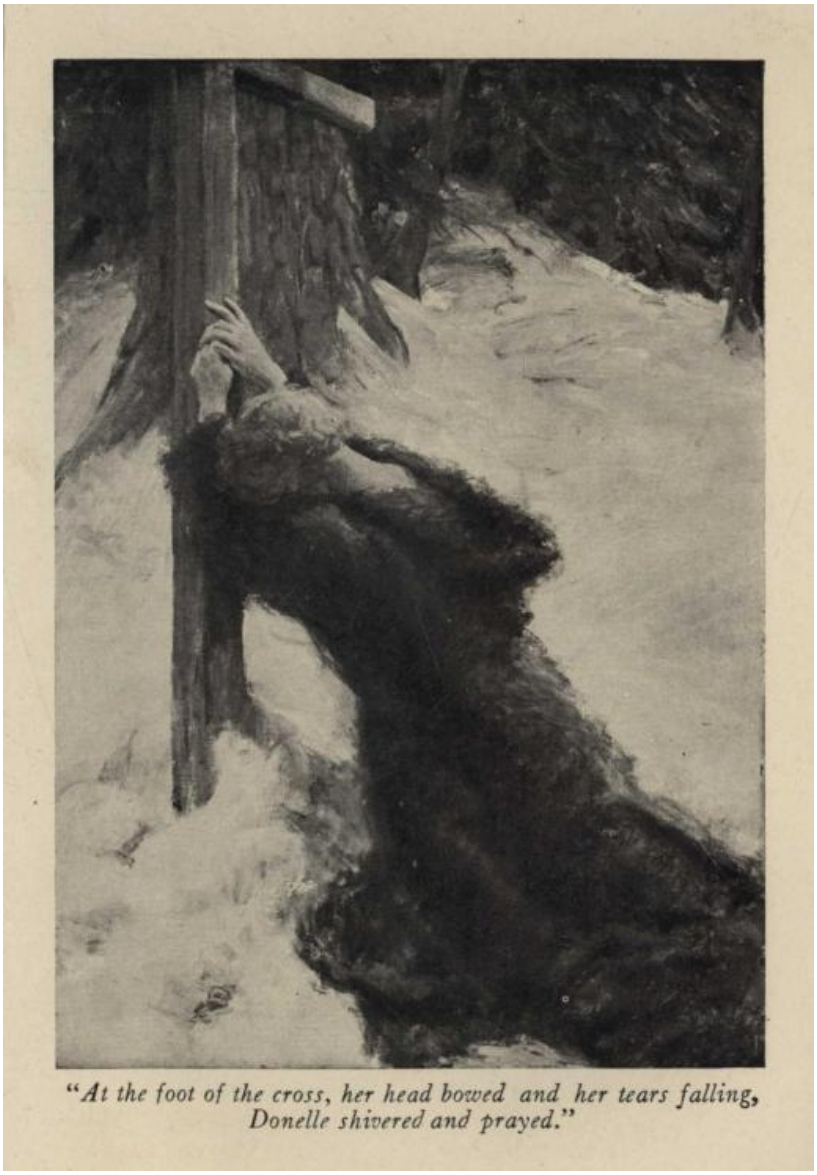
Then she forgot all else and drifted far away. She was unhappy as the young know unhappiness; no perspective, no comparison. Never had there been such a case as hers! Never had any one suffered as she was suffering because no one had ever had the same reason!

When Donelle recalled herself, she found that she was on the highway several miles beyond Point of Fines. The sun was sloping down, the west was golden, and a solemn stillness, almost deathly, pervaded space.

There was a tall cross close beside Donelle. Black it rose from the unsullied snow, white tipped it was and shining against the glowing sky. Beneath it someone had evidently knelt, for the crust of the snow was broken. What meaning all this had for Donelle, who could tell? But the confusion and hurt of the last few hours clutched at her heart, and she who had never been urged by Jo Morey to consider religion in any form went slowly to the cross and sank down!

The teachings of St. Michael's claimed her, the memory of little Sister Mary with the lost look clung to her; then a peace entered into her soul.

"No one could hurt me there," she sobbed. "No one could look at me—with that look." Then, at the foot of the cross, her head bowed and her tears falling, Donelle shivered and prayed.



*"At the foot of the cross, her head bowed and her tears falling,
Donelle shivered and prayed."*

Presently she raised her face; it was calm and pale. There was a round teardrop on her cheek that had not fallen with the others. She turned and there by the roadside stood Norval. How long he had been there he could hardly have told himself.

When he had gone to the white house for his noon-day meal, Jo had told him, quite inconsequently, of Donelle's errand and he had followed her, for what reason God only knew.

"Donelle!" he said, "Donelle!"

The terrible look in his eyes was gone, gone was the mocking smile of the night before. Pity, divine pity, moved him.

"Donelle!"

"Yes, Mr. Richard Alton." The poor girl strove to be her teasing self, but her lips trembled and suddenly a strange, almost an awful, dignity and detachment overcame her. Standing with clasped hands, in her nun-like garb, she seemed to have taken farewell of the world that women crave.

"What are you doing, Donelle, by that cross?" Norval did not draw near, and a distance of several feet separated them.

"Thinking and praying."

"Thinking what? And praying for what?"

The trouble in his eyes met the trouble in hers and called for simple truth.

"I was thinking of how you looked at me yesterday when I was in Tom Gavot's hut and of how you made me suffer last night. And I was praying to God to help me, help me to stop loving you."

So naïve and direct were the words that they made Norval breathe hard. In a flash he saw the true nature of the girl before him. She was old, gravely, inheritedly old; and she was, too, a young

and pitiful child.

People had only touched the outer surface of her character and personality. Alone she had learned the primitive and desperate lessons of womanhood.

"Stop loving me?" Norval repeated the words slowly.

"Yes, I was beginning to love you very much, more than everything else. Then, when you looked as you did yesterday, I remembered and all night I was afraid. Oh! I am glad you did not get to loving me. It hurts so!"

"How do you know that I have not got to loving you? How do you know but that it was because I love you that I looked as I did yesterday?"

"Ah, no, Mr. Richard Alton, you couldn't have looked so had you loved me." Donelle tried to smile and made a pitiful showing.

"You don't know men, Donelle."

"But I know love."

Now that she had taken her last leave of it, Donelle could talk of it as little Sister Mary might have done, for she had vowed beside the cross to go back to St. Michael's. Long ago Sister Angela had said that she would find peace there. Then she spoke suddenly to Norval.

"You see, maybe you have heard something about Mamsey and me, but you did not quite understand and you felt you had a right to look as you did. I wonder why men want to make it harder for—for women, when women try to forget?"

Norval winced; the shaft had sunk into its rightful place.

And still the white-faced girl stood her distance, and tried to smile.

"I am going to tell you all about Mamsey and me," she said. "I will tell you as we walk along."

CHAPTER XVI
THE STORY

How little she really knew of life! But how the last year of suffering and renunciation had filled the void with a young but terrible philosophy. Norval did not speak. With bowed head, hands clasped behind him, he walked beside Donelle as she went along, bearing her cross and poor Jo's.

"You see I could not let Mamsey know that I knew. I could not hurt her so. She would have made me go away, and always I would have remembered her here alone where my father left her. And Tom Gavot has helped me keep the people still. He stays here, and he wanted to go way, way off, and be something so different. That is why I can play for Tom in his cabin. He knows and understands; he couldn't hurt Mamsey and me, he couldn't! Women like Mamsey and me feel a hurt terribly, that's why I am telling you this, I want you to be kind. Don't make things harder, they are bad enough!"

"Donelle, for God's sake, spare me!"

The words were wrung from Norval, but he did not look up.

"I'm sure now that you know, you never will hurt us again," Donelle's voice soothed and caressed unconsciously. "I!—I wanted to be happy just as if nothing had happened, before I was born, to keep me from being happy. I thought about love, just as girls will. They cannot help it. Then you came and I wanted you!"

A quivering fierceness shot through the words. Norval gave a quick glance at the face near him and saw that the purest, most primitive statement of a mighty truth held the girl's thought. If she had said, she, the first woman, to him, the first man:

"You are mine, I want you," she could not have said it more divinely.

"I wanted to make you happy; to play for you while you painted your beautiful pictures, and then when you were tired and I was tired, why, our big love would bring us more and more happiness. Then, well, then you looked at me through Tom Gavot's window and somehow I understood!"

Donelle and Norval were nearing the little white house, they could see the smoke rising from the chimney. Norval's thoughts were racing madly ahead, crowding upon him, choking him. He meant to make the future safe for this young girl, safe from himself and the sacredest passion of his life which, he now acknowledged, had mastered him. Reason, world-understanding, had no part in it, he wanted her. He must have her, and was prepared to clear the path leading to an honest love. But he could not tell her of Katherine, of himself, there was no time; no time and her experience could not possibly have prepared her for bearing it.

"I am going to tell you a great secret," Donelle half whispered, "back there by the cross I remembered what the Sisters at the Home used to tell me. They knew, but I did not—then. For girls like me—well, I am going back to St. Michael's-on-the-Rocks and teach the babies. That's why I could tell you what I have just told you."

Then Norval turned and took her in his arms. So swiftly, so overpoweringly did he do this, that Donelle lay quiet and frightened, her white face pressed against his breast, her wonderful eyes searching his stern, strange face.

"No, by God! You are not going back to St. Michael's!" he whispered. "You little white soul, can't you see I love and adore you? Can't you see it was because I couldn't bear another man to—to have you, that I was a brute to you? Do you think that any wrong others have done can keep you from me, from letting me take you where you belong? Donelle! Donelle, kiss me, child."

Only the deep eyes moved; they widened and grew dark.

"May I—kiss you?"

"No." And Norval did not kiss her!

"But you are mine, Donelle, and all the powers in the world cannot alter that. I am going to make you believe me. What do I care for anything but this? You have driven everything but yourself from sight. When you play, great heavens, Donelle, when you play to me, moving about as you did that first and only time in my cabin, you took me into a Great Place. Don't tremble, little girl, don't. Every quiver hurts me. I am going to make you forget the brute in me; I'm going to meet your love, dear heart, with one as fine, so help me God! Trust me, Donelle, trust me and when you can tell me that you do trust me, we will go to Mam'selle. She will understand, she has the mighty soul. Oh, Donelle!"

Norval leaned over the tender face, almost touched it with his lips, but did not.

"My little white love!" he whispered. "But you will come and play for me?" he pleaded.

"Yes."

"And you will, you will give me a fair show?" She smiled wanly.

"If I ever give you cause again to fear me, I hope——"

Then Donelle raised her hand and laid it across his lips.

"I am so afraid of this wonderful thing that is happening to me," she said, "and you mustn't say—well! what you were going to say just then."

"Don't fear the love, my darling. It's the sacredest thing in the world." Norval had taken the hand from his lips and now held it in his own. "And we'll keep it holy, Donelle. That is our part."

"Yes, yes; but to think, to think!"

"Don't think, sweet, here. Come close and try to—to—love for a moment without remembering."

"Why, how can I?"

"Try."

And so they stood with the golden light of the west on their faces. Norval did the thinking. He thought of the quickest possible method of setting Katherine free and making it right for him to kiss Donelle. He thought of the wild realization of his true nature—a nature that had been distorted and contracted by inheritance and training. He did not want the beaten tracks, that had always been the trouble. He wanted the unbroken trails, God! how he had thirsted and hungered for just what this little, wild, sweet thing in his arms represented. Love, simple, primitive love, music, understanding! And then Norval thought of Anderson Law! Thought of him, longed for him at that moment as a blind man might long for guiding, not to the right path, but on it.

"You may kiss me now!" This in a whisper.

The quick surrender startled Norval. He bent his head, still thinking of Law.

"My woman," he said to that uplifted face, "when I have the right, that somehow I forfeited, I will kiss you."

"But you said we were not to think; when you think, you remember."

"Yes, Donelle, we remember and we look ahead with faith."

Gently Norval let her free. He smiled at her, and the look in his eyes made her stand very straight, but she smiled back.

"I am so happy," she said simply. "And I thought I was never to be happy again."

"And I—why, Donelle, you've taught me what happiness means. And you will keep your promise about coming to the wood-cabin?"

"Yes, Mr. Richard Alton." Donelle made a courtesy.

"And you'll bring the fiddle?"

"Of course."

"And Donelle, before you, dear child, I beg the pardon and forgiveness of Tom Gavot."

"I wish he could know that you are what you are," Donelle's eyes saddened.

"He shall, child. That, I swear. Next to Mam'selle," here, almost unconsciously Norval raised his cap, "next to Mam'selle, Tom Gavot shall know. Come, little girl, here's home!"

And together they went up to Jo's house. It was marvellous how they managed the great thing that had happened. Never outwardly did it overcome them.

The winter grew still and hard, the people shrank into their houses. There were trodden paths, like spokes of a wheel, leading from most of the houses to the hub, which was Dan's Place; there were more or less broken paths reaching to the river, where, under the ice, fish were obtainable.

Tom Gavot just at that time was called to duty and left his father with money enough to keep him silent; and food and fuel enough to keep him safe.

Jo, with a growing content and happiness, cooked for her boarder, revelled in his society during the long evenings, and was perfectly oblivious of the stupendous thing that was going on under her very eyes.

Norval sent for books, many of them. Books of travel; Jo grew breathless over them.

"I can sit in this rocker," she often said to Marcel Longville, "shut my eyes, and there I am in those far places. I see palm groves and I hear the swishing of the sea. Mercy! Marcel, just fancy a body of water as long as the St. Lawrence and as wide as it is long!"

"I can't," said Marcel. "And I wouldn't want to. Water isn't what I take to most. But I do like the palm countries, Mam'selle. They are, generally speaking, warm. Sometimes I feel as if I never would be warm again as long as I live."

While Norval read aloud to Jo and Donelle, he would often lift his eyes to find Donelle looking at him. Over the gulf of silence that separated them they smiled and trusted.

Norval wrote to his lawyer, instructed him to take legal steps at once, upon whatever ground he could, legitimately, select. "Leave my wife and me free," he said; "with as decent characters as our stupid laws permit. I don't see why society should feel more moral if we are sullied."

But Norval did not write to Katherine. He left that for his lawyers to do. He did, however, send a pretty fair statement of the case of himself and his wife to Anderson Law who, at that time, was basking under Egypt's calm skies, wandering in deserts, forgetting, and pulling himself together.

And according to her promise Donelle went often to the cabin in the woods. Because it was winter and Point of Pines in a subnormal state, no one knew of the secret visits. Not even the joyous notes of the violin attracted attention. Norval painted as he never had in his life before. His genius burned bright. He knew the difference now; it made him humble and grateful. He painted the winter woods with an inspired brush. They were asleep, but not dead. His sunlight was alive; his moonlight, pure magic. He caught the frozen river with its strange, shifting colours; he dealt appealingly with the lonely, scattered houses; they seemed, under his hand, to ask for sympathy in their isolation.

Guided by Donelle's interpretation, he painted a road full of mystery and delight. A long road leading to a hilltop.

"Oh!" Donelle cried when she stood close and beheld the picture. "Now I see what Tom saw long ago, but you had to teach me. The road is alive, it is a—a friend! You just would not want to hurt it or make it ashamed. Oh! how the sunlight lies on it. I believe it moves!"

Norval lifted his face, his yearning eyes claimed the love he saw in Donelle's.

"Sweetheart, trot around and play for me," he would suddenly say, his lips closing firm, "play and play while I make Tom Gavot's road ready for him. Child, when I give Tom Gavot this picture, I'll make him understand many things."

"And you will give him the Road? He'll be so happy." Donelle was moving about, her eyes dreamy.

"I wonder!" breathed Norval.

"Wonder what?" Donelle paused.

"About a thousand things, my sweet."

By and by Norval painted his love; painted it in the splendid picture that afterward hung in a distant gallery and was known as "Fairer than morning, lovelier than the daylight."

In it sat Donelle where the western glow fell upon her. With a rapt expression in her yellow eyes, her violin poised, the bow ready, she was looking and smiling at the vision that had caught and held her.

"I seem to be looking at you," Donelle whispered as, standing beside him, she gazed at the

canvas. "Waiting for you to tell me what to play. I believe, I believe you are saying to me, 'play our pretty little French song.' Shall I play it now?"

"Yes, my beloved, and then," Norval was sternly intent upon his brushes, "then we'll go for a tramp with Nick. That infernal little scamp is like an alarm clock. Look, Donelle, he's coming up the path, coming to tell us the evening meal is ready. Sometimes I wonder if Mam'selle guesses?"

After some delay a letter came from Norval's lawyer.

It said:

I think by summer we can bring everything to a satisfactory conclusion. I can take no definite steps at present because Mrs. Norval's lawyer writes that she has been quite ill and has gone to the mountains to recuperate.

Norval frowned, he was getting impatient of delay, he wanted to take Donelle to Egypt in the early summer. He wanted Law to set his seal of approbation upon her.

But Donelle saw no reason for perplexity; she existed in so glorious a state that no disturbing thing ever entered. It was enough for her to waken in the morning and to know that her love was in Jo's upper chamber, safe and near. It was joy for her to look at Jo herself and think that the world could no longer hurt her. How could it, with the big love holding them all?

When Norval touched her, Donelle felt the thrill of trust and understanding. She never doubted now and often she would laugh as she remembered her vow by the cross and thought of St. Michael's-on-the-Rocks.

"Oh! but it is the magic that has caught me!" she whispered to herself, hugging her slim body and wishing, with happy tears, that all the world, her little world, could know.

She wanted Jo to know, and Tom Gavot! She couldn't bear to have Tom nursing a hate while he was away making his roads. She wanted everyone in Point of Pines to know, even old Pierre.

She wished, almost pathetically, that Mrs. Lindsay and Professor Revelle could know.

"For they made me just a little more like my dear love," She said to herself. "They brightened me and gave me the music. My dear loves me to be pretty and he loves my music."

But it was not all so easy for Norval. There were times when, alone with Donelle in the wood-cabin, the crude side of love made its tremendous claim.

How desirable Donelle was when, casting her violin aside, she flung herself in a chair by the hearth and said:

"Come, put the paints away and wipe the brushes carefully. Come tell me a story and then, dear man, I'll stir you some maple and put in a lot of nuts. Oh! but I will make it good."

Norval, at such commands, felt his strength departing.

"There's one story I'd like to tell you, little woman," he once flung back to her desperately.

"And that is what?"

"A story of a man and woman."

"Go on, go on," Donelle urged. "That will be the best of all."

"You bet it will!" Then Norval tossed his brushes aside.

"I'm coming over to take you in my arms and kiss you, sweet!" he warned, but did not move.

"Well, why don't you? And then we can tell Mamsey."

Norval frowned.

"Shall I come to you, dear man?"

Oh! how she lured and tempted from her safe, innocent love. "I trust you now. I beg your pardon because I once did not. I will come half the way."

"My sweet, when I take you in my arms to tell you the story I mean to tell you, I will come all the way! Now stir the syrup, you hard little bargainer. Throw in an extra handful of nuts for the crimes you commit but know not of."

"And now you are laughing!" cried Donelle.

"Far from it, I'm thinking of swearing."

"At what?" Donelle was cracking the nuts.

"At the absolute stupidity of——Good Lord, child"—Norval sprang toward her—"your skirt was on fire! He crushed the sparks and held her for a moment.

"If anything happened to you," he muttered.

"What would you do?" Donelle trembled a little in his arms.

"I'd go—don't look at me that way, Donelle—I'd go to St. Michael's-on-the-Rocks."

CHAPTER XVII
THE BLIGHTING TRUTH

Then spring came softly, fragrantly up the hill from the river. Almost every day a new little flower showed its head. Tom Gavot came back grim, tired, and eager. He found his cabin swept and shining, a fire upon the hearth, and a bunch of timid snow blossoms in a cracked mug on the table—that made him laugh. But at the sight of them Tom's weariness vanished and he sat down by his own fireside with a sigh of complete content.

Jo sang at her work that spring, actually sang "A la Claire Fontaine." She sang it boldly, without reservations, and Nick forgot his years and a growing dimness of the eyes. He smelled around among the delectable new things in the woods, found the scent for which he was searching, and trotted off gaily, feeling young and dapper once again. Molly, the sturdy horse, felt her oats; she almost ran away once, tossing Jo from the shaft into the muddy road.

But Jo only laughed aloud. It was all so absurd and natural.

"The little red cow," Jo said to Donelle that spring, "is old, old. I really do not know that it's wise to keep her longer. She eats her head off."

"But you are going to keep her, Mamsey, aren't you? You just couldn't send her away? Think of all her pretty calves, and she has been so faithful."

Suddenly Mam'selle recalled the night before Donelle came: when she and Nick had bided with the little red cow.

"Of course," she blurted out, "I am going to keep her. I was only supposing."

"Oh! Mamsey, you are such fun, and you never hide any more. You're really getting to be handsome. Do you know Mr. Alton, Mr. Richard Alton, says he'd like to paint you as 'The Woman With the Hoe.' He says you'd show the man—I don't know who he means—what a hoe can do for the right sort."

"Well, Mr. Richard Alton isn't going to mess me up in his paints. It's an awful waste of time for a full-grown man to make pictures all day. I wonder when he's going home?"

"I wonder?" whispered Donelle.

"We'll never have another boarder like him, child."

"Oh! never, Mamsey."

"I wish he'd stay through the summer. I'd like to fling him in the teeth of Marcel's boarders."

"Oh! Mamsey."

"The Captain says he's all ready for folks now; he's opened sooner because Father Mantelle prophesies an early summer."

Then one night, after everyone was in bed, the *River Queen* sneaked up to the wharf—there is no other word for her action—and a lone figure, with several bags and a trunk, was deposited.

Jean Duval, who had swung out the lantern from the pole, took charge.

"I'll just take you up to Captain Longville's," he said. "The Captain can manage."

The following morning Donelle found, upon going to the living room, that Alton had departed at daybreak.

"He wanted to see the sunrise on the river," Jo explained; "he took lunch enough to feed a dozen; fried chicken and doughnuts and pickles. He's the biggest pickle eater I ever saw," Jo laughed. Then added: "Donelle, I'm going to the village to-day with my linens. The man in the shop over there has offered a tidy sum for them. I don't think I can get back to-night. Molly acts like a colt, but her staying powers are nothing to boast of. You better go to Marcel——"

"But I hate to, Mamsey."

"Child, I'd rest easier——"

"Then I'll go, Mamsey. I'd even go to that dirty old Pierre's or to the Kelly's if you would rest easier, Mamsey. Isn't life just like a book?"

"It is!" murmured Jo with conviction. "It certainly is wonderfully like a book."

After Jo had gone and Donelle had put the little house in order she closed the door and windows and whistled to Nick.

"Come on, you old dear," she said, "and how thankful I am you can't talk, Nick. You can look and thump your tail all you want to; no one understands that. Nick, when *he* gets back, he'll be tired. We'll be there to meet him. Come on, Nick!"

The sun was warm and bright, it filtered through the trees and reached the brave spring flowers showing in the moss and the rich, black earth.

"Don't step on the flowers, Nick. Where are your manners?" Donelle gave a laugh and Nick

made wide circles. And so they came to the wood-cabin and went inside. Donelle left the door open for she meant to make a rousing fire, and the day was too fine to be shut out. Nick pattered around the room for a few moments and then curled up in the window seat.

"There, now," said Donelle at last, "I think everything is right and cosey, I can finish that book."

So she took the story she and Norval had been reading and, buried in the deep chair, with her back to the door, she was soon absorbed.

She heard a step outside, smiled, and made believe she was asleep.

Someone entered, saw her, and quickly drew conclusions; bitter, cruel conclusions, but conclusions that drove an almost defeated sense of duty to the fore.

"Good morning. Is this Mr. Norval's—" there was a pause—"studio?"

Donelle sprang up as if she had been shot. A thin, desperately sick-looking woman in rich velvet and furs confronted her. The incongruous garments, the strangely haunting name, made Donelle stare.

"Is this Mr. Norval's—studio? I asked." The thin, sharp voice seemed to awaken Donelle at last.

"No," she replied, "this cabin is where Mr. Richard Alton paints his pictures."

"Indeed! He's changed his name, I see. I—" and now the stranger came in and closed the door after her, closed it with an air of proprietorship—"I am Mrs. James Norval," she said, sitting down. "And you, I suppose, are—let me see if I can recall your name, it is rather an odd one. Now I have it, Donelle Morey. That's right, isn't it?"

"Yes." Donelle stood staring. She was not quite sure that she was awake, but—yes, there was Nick snoring on the window seat and the lovely river picture was on the easel. Besides, like a stab, the name she had just heard became vividly familiar, it belonged to the Walled House.

"Yes, I'm Donelle Morey," she managed to say faintly.

"I know all about you. Mrs. Lindsay was my friend. I thought Mr. Law was going to look after you. Has he been up here, Mr. Anderson Law?"

Katherine Norval was glancing about the room, her keen eyes taking in the pictures. How splendid they were!

"No, Mr. Law has never been here."

Donelle was groping, groping among other familiar names in this suddenly quickened moment.

"I suppose he sent Mr. Norval?"

A righteous anger seized upon Katherine Norval; she felt she understood. Anderson Law had urged her husband to act for him. Norval had come, disguised, and had taken his own method of solving matters. He was making "cause" for his divorce undoubtedly, while at the same time he was deluding an innocent and trusting girl.

A stern sense of duty arose in her. "I will save the girl as far as I can," she thought, "but what a dastardly thing!"

"My dear," she said, "I do wish you would sit down. You make me feel quite uncomfortable." Katherine meant to disregard, before Norval's victim, what she really believed.

Donelle groped toward a chair and sat down.

"I quite understand your surprise," said Katherine. "You have known my husband as—as Richard Alton. You see, Mr. Law was going abroad; he was to have carried out Mrs. Lindsay's wishes for you, but he sent my husband instead. I suppose Mr. Norval wanted to know you well before he disclosed his errand."

Donelle was experiencing the same sensation she had felt when Pierre Gavot, upon the lonely road, had spoken the terrible word years and years before!

"I see I have surprised you, child?"

Katherine Norval was growing restive under the look in the wide, glowing eyes fixed upon her. "It is always a bit of a shock to find that someone has—played with you. But I'm sure my husband meant no harm, at first; and then he would not know how to get out of his scrape. That would be like him, too." A laugh followed the words, a hard, thin, but sweet laugh.

Still Donelle sat looking straight before her and keeping that awful silence which was becoming irritating.

"Perhaps you do not believe me," Katherine said rather desperately and with a distinct sense of the absurdity of her position. "See here!"

Taking a locket from her bosom she opened it and held it before Donelle's staring eyes.

"These are my husband and baby!"

The picture of Norval was perfect; the child, young and lovely, seemed to be smiling trustfully at him.

"It's a pretty baby," Donelle said, and her voice seemed to come from a long distance. Then she got up quickly.

"Where are you going?" asked Katherine Norval.

"I—I don't—— Oh! yes, I'm going to Tom Gavot's."

"Don't you think you better wait here with me until—until Mr. Norval returns? He will speak openly to you then and explain everything."

"No, oh, no, I couldn't!"

A great fear rose in Donelle's eyes.

"My dear, I am very sorry for you!" And Katherine spoke the truth. She was sorry, deeply so, but she was more shocked and indignant than she had ever been in her life before. It was to Norval's credit that she did not believe the worst of him. She concluded that stupidity, rather than viciousness, had led him on to deceive this simple girl without realizing what the actual result would be.

"And so you will not wait with me?" She watched Donelle cross the room. "I am so sorry, child. I wish now that I had come before."

"Good-bye!" Donelle gave her a long, sad look. Then she whistled to Nick and went out, closing the cabin door behind her as one does who leaves a chamber of death.

She walked along slowly, feeling nothing keenly, but noticing with a queer sort of concentration the flickering shadows; there were clouds coming up, it was growing darker. She was glad that she had closed the little house before leaving. If there were a storm all would be safe. Presently she came to Tom Gavot's hut and went in, thankful that it was empty, though she knew Tom would soon be coming.

She made a fire, brushed the hearth, and sat down upon the floor, trying hard to think—think! But she could not get very far. Round and round the one fact her thoughts whirled. The man she loved, the man she had trusted, had wronged her in the deadliest way. He had killed something in her, something that had made her happy and good. She did not want to remember anything now; she wanted to put herself beyond the reach of the look Norval had once given her, and of his later words—words which had made her trust him. Donelle grasped at the thought of St. Michael's with a yearning that hurt her. If little Sister Mary were there, she would understand. Donelle was sure the lost look in Sister Mary's eyes would make her understand. But St. Michael's was a long way off, and Donelle meant to place herself out of reach of more hurt before Norval could see her. Pride, love, shame, and then—desperation swept over the girl. Everything had failed her, everything, and all because her father had left her mother! That was why people dared to—to play with her.

And just then Tom Gavot came in, shaking the wet of a sudden shower from his fuzzy coat.

"Well!" he cried, looking at Donelle with startled eyes; "what's the matter?"

"Tom, I wonder if you would do—something for me? It's a big thing, and you'd just have to trust me more than any man ever trusted a girl before." A feverish colour flamed in Donelle's cheeks.

The light flickered in Gavot's eyes, his lips twitched as he looked at her.

"I guess you know there isn't anything I wouldn't do for you, Donelle," he said, coming close and standing over her protectingly.

"It—it isn't fair to you, Tom, but I'll live my whole life making it up to you. And you know I can keep my word."

"What is it, Donelle?"

"Tom, I want you to—to marry me. Marry me, now, this very afternoon!"

"My God!" murmured Tom and sat down, leaning forward over his clasped hands.

"It's this way," Donelle went on slowly, as if afraid she might not make herself clear and yet fearing more that she might wrong another in her determination to reach safety. "It is Mr. Richard Alton. He—he isn't Mr. Alton at all, he's Mr. Norval. Mrs. Lindsay used to talk about him, and he came here to—to get to know me without my knowing him. And then—something happened!"

"What?" The word issued from Tom's lips like a snarl.

"We loved each other very much, Tom. We couldn't help it, but you see I am the kind of girl that makes it seem as if it did not matter very much, I guess. I am sure he didn't mean to hurt me; it just happened, and neither of us could help it, Tom."

"God! I'll kill him."

"Oh! no, Tom, you will not, you shall not hurt him. You will just help me, and then he'll think, I—I—did not care very much, that I was playing, just as he was. I want him to think that, more than anything else, for then everything will be easy. He must not think I care!"

"Did he tell you that he would marry you?" asked Tom with a terrible understanding in his eyes.

"Well, not exactly," Donelle tried to be very just, very true, "it was the big love, you know, and I just thought of being always with him."

"Why have you stopped thinking so?"

"Well, Tom, I will tell you. I was up in his cabin, waiting for him this morning, and his wife came. I know about her, too. When I heard her name I knew everything. And she told me many things and she showed me their baby's picture. It is such a pretty baby—oh! Tom."

The misery on Donelle's face roused in Gavot a cruel hate.

"Blast his soul!" he cried, then took Donelle's face in his cold hands and looked deep into her eyes. His soul revolted at the question he was about to put, it was like giving poison to a child: "Donelle, tell me before God, has he done to you what—what your father did to Mam'selle Jo?"

For an instant Donelle repeated the words in her inner consciousness until the meaning was quite plain. Her lovely eyes never faltered, but suddenly a new knowledge rose in them.

"No," she whispered, "no, Tom, not that. It was only—the love."

"Thank God, then, I've got you in time."

"Yes, in time, Tom. That's what I meant. He would never hurt me that way, Tom—never! But I do not want him to know that he could hurt me at all! Don't you see, Tom, if he thought that I was caring for you all the time and just playing with him, it——"

The quivering face writhed in Tom's hands.

"Oh! Tom, I know it is wicked for me to ask you to do this for me, but all my life long I will repay you!"

The man looked down at the girl, who was pleading with him to take that for which his soul hungered—at any price! Full well he knew that she would keep her bargain, poor little hurt thing. And he could slave and work for her—he could shield her from harm and make her safer than she could be in any other way. The devil tempted him, and for the moment, claimed him.

"Yes, by God!" he cried. "I will take you to Father Mantelle's now! We'll make our future beyond the reach of that infernal scoundrel, Norval, or whatever his name is!"

"Tom, never any more must we talk about him. We must just begin from now—you and I. All these years Mamsey has let people think well—of my father. I think I am a little like Mamsey, Tom, and from now on, it is just you and I. You must promise or I could not marry you."

"Come on, Donelle! See, it is raining, you must wear this heavy coat, it will quite cover you. Come!"

Tom had appropriated her, taken command. His face was almost terrible in its set purpose.

She followed him mutely, obediently, as any little hill woman might have done. Her face was ghastly, but she did not tremble. Side by side they made their way to Father Mantelle's; the rain poured upon them, their steps sloughed in the soft earth, and behind them trudged Nick, looking old and forsaken!

Father Mantelle did his duty—as he saw it. He made sure that Tom fully understood what he was undertaking; he made sure that Donelle was wiser than he had believed her. He winced as she confessed that her love for Mam'selle Morey had, after full comprehension of their relation, brought her back and kept her silent. She had known about herself all along.

"And that's why," Tom put in, "that we insist upon silence now. I'm going to run things hereafter."

And so Father Mantelle married them and put the blessing of the Church upon them.

It was quite dark when they left the priest's house; dark and still storming in the quiet, persistent way that spring knows.

"Was Mam'selle going to leave you in the house with—with that man to-night?" Tom asked suddenly.

"No—I was going to Marcel's. But, Tom, I must go and feed the animals." Almost Donelle had forgotten the helpless creatures. She was terribly afraid that she might encounter the man she most dreaded in the world, for he was quite one of the family and often made his own meal when Jo and Donelle were away. But if he had gone to the wood-cabin first, she argued, he would not come to the little white house. Of that she felt sure!

So she and Tom fed the animals and made them safe for the night. In doing the homely, familiar tasks Donelle felt a certain peace, but she had not yet recovered from her terrible shock;

she was spiritually numb.

"Come, now!" Tom said at last. "We must get back to the hut, you're wet to the skin and I haven't eaten since morning."

"Tom!" Donelle was aghast; and then she remembered that she, too, had fasted since breakfast.

So, silently, stolidly they went down the Right of Way to the river-hut. The fire was still burning on the hearth, the room was hot and still.

"Come in, Nick!" called Tom to the dog who had kept close to them; "come in!"

Wet and bedraggled Nick slouched in and, eyeing Donelle as if she were a stranger, passed to the far side of the room and lay down, his head upon his paws, his eyes alert.

Tom brought out food and they all ate, Nick condescending to come nearer.

The heat, the weariness and suffering of the day, began to tell upon Donelle and presently a terror seized her—a terror she had never known in her life before. She looked at Tom with wide eyes, her face became livid.

The rain outside beat against the window and pattered on the roof.

The devil that had tempted Tom earlier was taking control of the situation. His face was tense, his eyes burning. He was thinking, thinking, and his thoughts scorched. He was thinking of women, women, his mother, Mam'selle Morey—even that unknown woman, the wife of the man who had all but ruined Donelle. Then he thought of Donelle herself, but he dared not look at the pale little thing by the fire. She was his! She had done him a great injustice, it was only fair that he should hold her to her bargain. She had only thought of herself, how to save herself, she ought to pay for that.

Pay—pay—pay! The word was hateful and ugly. Again Tom thought of his mother, and her face rose sharply before him.

Then the finest thing that Tom ever did in his life he did at that moment.

In the still, hot room, with eyes at last resting upon Donelle's bowed head, he vowed to his God that *she* should not pay, not if it cost him all that life held dear! If the time ever came when she could give—Tom breathed hard. Then he spoke.

"Donelle," his voice was deep and solemn, "you're tired, done almost to death, but you're safe—safer than you know. I want you to go to that bed"—Gavot pointed to his cot in the far corner by the side of which Nick lay curled—"and you are to sleep. I'm going to pile the fire high, and——"

"Tom, let me go to Marcel's just for to-night, please, Tom!"

The agony in Donelle's eyes made Gavot shudder.

"I guess I'd rather have my wife stay here," he said. Then added, "You must do what I say, Donelle. I've done my part, you've got to do yours."

"I will, Tom. I will."

Gropingly she walked across the room, while Tom piled wood on the fire. In the dark shadows she waited. Then Tom rose up, took his heavy coat, his fur cap, and went toward the door.

"Good-night," he said. It was like a groan. "Good-night, and you're safe, Donelle, so help me God! After I am gone, draw the bar across the door."

Then Donelle was alone with Nick. She stood and looked blankly after Tom. Then she tiptoed across the room, took the bar in her hand, paused, lifted it, and—let it fall! Proudly she went back, her eyes were aflame, her heart beat until it hurt. She lay down upon the wide cot, drew over her the heavy blankets Mam'selle had donated for Tom's comfort, and fear left her.

"Nick," she whispered, "Nick, come here!"

The dog came close, licked the hand reaching out to him in the darkness, then lay down close to the bed.

For an hour Donelle listened, waited, then she began to suffer. But she made no moan and always no matter how she thrashed the matter over, she saw St. Michael's-on-the-Rocks. It seemed like home after a hard journey; her home, the place where she belonged. The only place to which she had a right to go.

CHAPTER XVIII
TOM GAVOT SETTLES THE MATTER

The rain had detained Norval. He had watched the sunrise on the river and he had caught as much of it as his soul could take in. He had eaten a hasty lunch at noon and then became

absorbed by the beauty of the gray mists that were rising, where, but a little time before, the glory had controlled everything. He painted until mid-afternoon, then a raindrop caused him to glance up.

"Hello!" he said, and scrambled for his belongings. In a few minutes he was on his way back, but to protect his sketches, he had to pause every now and then, when the downpour was heaviest.

He had meant to go right to Jo's and get dry clothing, but by skirting the road he could reach the cabin *en route*, leave his paints and canvases, and the rest did not matter. It was after five when he came in sight of his cabin.

"By all that's holy," he said, and laughed, "that little rascal is there, she's made a fire. Of course this is all wrong, she mustn't—— But to think she has no fear!" Somehow this elated Norval considerably. He hastened on, meaning to get Donelle and start out at once for Mam'selle's, as it was growing very dark.

He opened the door with an amused smile on his face, then he fell back.

"My God! Katherine," he said, "what does this mean?"

"I think, Jim, you better come in and close the door. I cannot go out in this rain and we can have our talk here." Katherine spoke as if her presence there was the most natural thing in the world; her voice was hard and even. She knew her duty; she had even acknowledged, during the hours she had sat alone after Donelle went, that part of the blame for all this confusion rested upon her. She had fallen short in her estimate of her original duty to Norval. She had deserted him, not without some cause to be sure, but no matter what his selfishness and indifference had been in the past they had not made it right for a wife to forsake the sacred tie that bound her.

After Donelle had left the hut Katherine went over and over the matter from the day when with her "Awakened Soul" in her hands she had demanded a freedom that it was in no man's power to bestow. It had taken her a long time to learn her lesson, but once having learned it, having come back, her path of duty was, to her, quite plain. She gave not a moment's thought to the shock her sudden appearance would give Norval; she was rallying from the effects of the shock that Donelle had given her. She must make sure, of course, but the more she considered, the more confident she became that no real harm had been done. She had come in time.

Self-centred, incapable of wide visions, Katherine Norval had leaped over non-essentials and had arrived at safe conclusions. But her husband was unnerving her; he made her feel as that white slip of a girl had and she resented it.

Norval was deliberately taking off his wet coat. Having done this he put on an old velvet jacket, came to the fire, leaned his arm on the mantel-shelf and looked down upon his wife. That she was still his wife he had to confess, though she seemed the merest stranger.

"I don't suppose there is a chance that I am dreaming?" he said grimly in an effort to relieve a situation that was becoming hideously awkward. "You don't happen to be an optical illusion, do you?"

"I'm quite myself, Jim. Is it such an unusual thing for a wife to come and see her husband, especially when she has much—much business to discuss? And your work——" Katherine was struggling with the growing impression that she was bungling something, though absurdly enough she did not quite know what. "You've worked to some purpose, Jim."

Norval ignored her reference to his work.

"It's a bit queer to have my especial kind of wife here," he said. "You see, Katherine, I had every reason to believe that you desired to eliminate me; I'd taken every step possible to assist you. I simply cannot account for you, that's all."

Norval noted her pallor and thinness, then he remembered that she had been ill.

"Jim," she said suddenly, her sharp little chin raised, her cold, clear eyes searching his, "before we go any further I must ask you a question: This girl, this Donelle Morey, what is she to you? What are you to her?"

"What right have you to ask that?" Norval grew rigid. "How did you manage to get here? How did you know I was here, anyway, Katherine?"

"You sent a letter once with the postmark on it. Then I remembered! For awhile, I did not care. Then things became different. Jim, I must know, I have a right to know, has this girl any claim upon you? I could make nothing of her, I——"

"Good God! Have you seen her?" Norval sprang a step forward. "Have you talked to her?"

"Why do you glare at me so, Jim? Of course I have seen her, talked to her. I came last night. I am staying at a house down the road. I heard that a painter by the name of Alton lived with Mam'selle Jo Morey, made pictures in a cabin in the woods; I put things together. I went to

Mam'selle Morey's, found the house empty. I came here and found the—the young girl quite at home, apparently waiting for you."

The cold voice was calm and deadly distinct, the eyes were indignant—but just.

"And then you talked!" There was a sneer in Norval's voice. "I suppose you felt it your duty to talk? What did you talk about, Katherine?"

Norval was in a dangerous mood, but his wife had never been afraid of him and she knew no fear now. Besides, she had the whip hand. He knew it; she knew it!

"I told her your name, for one thing. I do not question your conscience, Jim. I leave that to you."

"Thank you, and what next did you tell her?"

"I told her the truth. Are you afraid of the truth? Are you afraid of the truth, Jim? You were flying under false colours, were you not?"

"Yes."

"I told her Anderson Law sent you; he did, did he not, Jim?"

"He asked me to come, yes."

"And you think you have fulfilled your duty to Anderson Law? You think he would approve?"

Norval winced.

"I ask you again, Jim, has this girl any hold on you?"

"If you mean the vile thing I fear you mean, no! As God hears me, no!" Norval spoke in a still fury. "If you mean has she the highest claim a woman can have on a man, yes. Katherine, it may be best for us to get this over as soon as possible. If I seem brutal, you'll have to forgive me. I'm pretty far gone in my capacity of self-control. I dare say you've spoken nothing but the truth to the girl you found here. I make no excuse for her or myself. Think what you please, patch it up anyway you can. Whatever wrong has been committed is mine, not hers. She never knew of your existence until you informed her. She is as simple as a child, as wonderful as a woman can be before the world has spoiled her. I love her and she loves me. I meant to tell her everything when I was free; she could not understand before. My only desire is to—to marry her and know the first pure joy of my life. But I suppose your plain, damnable truth has killed her. If it has, I swear——"

"It has not killed her, Jim." And there was a glint in Katherine's steely eyes. "She said she was going to a Tom Gavot, whoever he may be. And, Jim, doesn't it sound a bit, well, peculiar, for you to speak as you have just spoken to—to your wife? For, after all, I still am your wife."

"But that tie will soon be broken. Why did you come here; why, in heaven's name?"

An impotent fear held Norval. Katherine was there, and Donelle had gone to Tom Gavot! That was about all he could take in. Suddenly Katherine Norval's face softened, her head dropped, she looked terribly ill and haggard.

"Please, Jim," she pleaded, "sit down, I must tell you something I came here to tell you, and I'm not very strong."

Norval sat down, still repeating in his clogged thoughts:

"Donelle has gone to Tom Gavot."

"I suppose," Katherine's words ran along, at times sinking into Norval's confused brain, "I suppose I had to pass through a certain phase of life, as many do. I had been so sheltered, so, well suppressed by my training and experience. Then, when I believed I could write, I felt I could not resist the thing that rose up in me. I almost hated you because you seemed to stand between me and my—my rights. Then for a time I was bewildered by my success, and when he, the man I told you about, came into my life, I was driven astray! He seemed to see only me, my life. He subjugated everything to my wishes. He was getting for me what I did not know how to get for myself; recognition and—and a great deal of money. Jim, I, who had never earned a penny! It was wonderful! Then, I was taken ill and he wanted me to get my divorce and marry him at once. I tried to, I really felt it was right, I wanted to, but as soon as I saw him in the light of a husband, Jim, a dreadful revulsion came. I kept seeing you, in him. I wonder if you can understand? When he came to my room I saw you and when I saw him I was afraid. It seemed so fearfully wrong.

"I was sent away into the hills where it was cold. I had had pneumonia and the doctors thought I should have the mountain treatment. I would not let him come, Jim. I went alone, and I was so lonely; so miserable——" Katherine was weeping desolately and sopping the tears up with her delicate handkerchief.

"Often I longed to die and be put under the snow, where it would be warmer and I could forget. And then I began to think of you, Jim, as I never had before. I saw you always patient with my moods, always kind. I saw you so humble about your great talent, trying so hard to hide it and live down to me! Yes, Jim, down to me. And then I hated myself and the silly ideas I had had. I

was afraid to die until I told you. I was afraid to go to our—our baby, until you understood. And so I came back, Jim, and I found that girl—here. Oh! Jim, I may have only a little while to stay, please go with me for the rest of the way!"

Katherine stretched out her thin hands.

But Norval did not move. He stood looking at the woman before him with compassionate eyes, but his soul saw Donelle. Alone in the midst of all this trouble stood Donelle who had done no wrong, who had come into her great love with trust and purity. Must she be the sacrifice? She, for whom he hungered and thirsted with the best that was in him?

And yet, if he defended Donelle's claim, could he hope to make Katherine, make any one, believe that he was not seeking his own ends first, Donelle's afterward? The easiest thing to do may often be the bravest, and after a moment Norval made his choice.

"Katherine," he said, "this is heart-breaking, incomprehensible. Things have gone too far for us to retrace our steps as simply as you think. You must try to believe that I do not want to hurt you, but I fear I must. You and I were never fitted for each other, though I did not realize it until you took your stand. Your decision knocked life all out of gear for me and I wandered about like a lost soul. I came here to see this young girl for Andy Law's sake and with no other intention than doing him a good turn and learning all I could. I grew to love Donelle Morey and learned to know what love was for the first time in my life. Oh! I know what you, what our world would say; she's not your kind, their kind. But before God, she's my kind! I cannot set her aside. I did not oppose your wishes, Katherine, even before I saw this girl. I felt I had no right to stand in your way. Have you a right to stand in mine, now? Is there no justice in my case? Katherine, you think only of yourself. You are a selfish woman!"

Dumbly Katherine looked at Norval. She was capable of drawing only one conclusion—he was a man! He felt no duty, no sacred relationship. She was ill, desperate; he wanted to be free and seek love where youth, health, and fascination were. She felt she understood and she must save him from himself.

"Jim, think of our child!" She thought she was putting herself aside, she resented the thing Norval had called her.

"I do think of him, Katherine. I have never forgotten him. I was glad he was dead when, when you went away."

"But, Jim, has the past no hold upon you? No claims?"

"Yes, and because it has, I dare not make any further mistakes. Listen, Katherine, I am going to tell this—this young girl, Donelle, the whole ugly, confused thing. I'm going to lay my soul, yours, too, if I can, open before her and she shall decide. She, young as she is, has a spirit that can face this tremendous situation, and she has a mighty love that can save us all. May I take you to your boarding-place, Katherine, or will you wait here? I must go to Donelle."

"Jim, Jim, what are you thinking of? Dare you burden this child with this hideous decision?"

"Yes." Norval strode toward the door.

Katherine wept afresh. "I will wait here. I'm tired and I cannot endure the long walk in this storm."

And then Norval was gone out into the night, closing the door behind him with a sound so final that the woman by the hearth moaned.

Crashing through the thicket Norval went to Gavot's cabin only to find it empty. But the fire burned freshly upon the hearth.

"She's been here and made his place ready for him," thought Norval, "and then she went back home."

So up the Right of Way Norval plodded to Mam'selle's house. He went into the living room and lighted the lamp. There on the table lay one of Jo's queer notes of instruction.

"I can't get back to-night. There's chicken and stuff in the pantry. Donelle's staying with Marcel Longville."

Norval smiled at the note and clutched it close. How trustingly it had been left. And Donelle was safe with the Longville's. There was a gleam of comfort in the blackness.

Norval walked to the kitchen and took two glasses of milk. He then went upstairs, changed his wet clothes, came down, extinguished the light and, with cap drawn over his face, hands plunged in his heavy coat pockets, set forth in the drizzle on the three-mile walk to Longville's. Before he reached the house he paused. What had his wife told them? Did he dare present himself? He stood still on the road to consider. Just then Marcel came to the door, candle in hand, and spoke to the Captain, who was behind her in the room.

"It's queer that that Mrs. Norval don't come back, Captain. I wonder if she's lost. I wonder if

we oughtn't to set out and look her up?"

"Like as not she's found Mam'selle and Donelle more to her taste. You told her how to reach them, didn't you? She's safe enough. Her kind hates water as a cat does, she's under shelter. Mam'selle will look after her, try to keep her like as not, now that she's out for business."

"It's early for the boarding season, anyway," murmured Marcel, going within, "too early by far."

"I must go back to Gavot's!" thought Norval, and turned wearily to retrace his way over the wet, slimy road.

It was nearly nine when he reached Tom's place and he was just in time to see Gavot come out of the house with bowed head and stumbling step. He went close and spoke before Tom realized that any one was near.

"Gavot, in heaven's name, have you seen Donelle Morey?"

Tom reeled back against a tree.

"You dare come here?" he growled under his breath. "Damn you!"

"Hold on, Gavot, you're too big a fellow to judge a man unheard. I know things are black against me; I'm going to try to explain. It's your due and I can trust your common sense. Can we go inside and have it out?"

"No, I want none like you to enter my house."

"Then you shall hear what I have to say here." Norval drew nearer.

"Not so fast, you!" Tom warned him off. "Answer me a few questions first, no talk, just plain answers. Then we'll argue about the rest, I'm thinking. Is your name what you've held it to be, Richard Alton?"

"No, Gavot——"

"Are you a married man?"

"Gavot, in God's name, let me——"

"Answer me, or I swear I'll try to kill you."

"Don't be an ass, Gavot."

"Have you a wife?"

"Yes, but——"

"And you made a girl love you, with all this in your soul? Well, she came to me, curse you, before—before much harm was done. When she heard what she heard this morning, her eyes were opened and she came where she rightfully belonged. Donelle came to me! She told me, and we were married an hour ago. I've always wanted her, she knew that, and when she knew about you, she came to her senses."

"You lie!" Norval made a movement toward Gavot, but Tom stayed him.

"If you touch me," he said threateningly, "I'll do my best to end you. Go to Father Mantelle, if you doubt my word. But first, look here; look through the window you spied through once before."

Like thieves the two men went to the side of the house. Just then, in the fireplace a large log fell, the sparks lighting up the room inside. In the glow Norval saw Donelle curled up on the bed, her hand on the head of faithful Nick. A deep moan escaped him, he turned to Gavot like a stricken man.

"By all you hold holy," he whispered, "deal with her as you hope for God's mercy. She was driven to you when she was beside herself. I cannot help her, but it lies in your power, Gavot, to keep her out of hell."

"I know what to do with my own, you! See to it that you do the same." Tom glared at Norval.

Then Norval turned and went back to the wood-cabin. His face had grown old and stern, his eyes hard. Katherine was awake; she was still crying.

"Jim—what—what—is it to be?"

"I'm going the rest of the way with you, Katherine. And as you value the future, let us bury everything here. To-morrow, we must take the boat back to New York."

Early the next morning Norval, he and Katherine having passed as comfortable a night as possible in the cabin, went to Mam'selle Jo's and hastily packed most of his clothing. He sent a boy to Longville's for Katherine's luggage, giving them no explanations, left a brief note for Jo, and—drifted from Point of Pines.

Mam'selle returned from her business trip late in the afternoon. Marcel stopped her as she passed.

"I think you'll find company at your house," she said, quite excitedly for her. "A boarder came here day before yesterday; she walked down to Point of Pines the next morning. She knows your

boarder. The storm must have kept her. I daresay Donelle made her comfortable."

"Donelle?" Jo stared. "Wasn't Donelle with you last night, Marcel?"

"No."

Jo waited to hear no more. She laid the whip on Molly's surprised back and bent over the reins.

CHAPTER XIX
THE CONFESSION

Jo was not one to take any step hurriedly. Though her heart broke, she was cautious. Upon entering her quiet house she found a note from Alton. It merely said that Donelle would explain. Going to the room above, Jo saw that a hurried but orderly departure had evidently been made.

"He hasn't messed much," she muttered vaguely, while a great fear rose in her heart, she knew not why.

"Well, there's nothing to do but wait for Donelle," she concluded, and began the waiting.

She went to the stable and sheds. The animals had evidently been fed the night before, so Jo milked the cow, did the chores, and whistled aimlessly for Nick. She was comforted by his absence, he was with Donelle. But where was Donelle? The sun was setting, what should be done?

Jo decided to wait until the sun had gone wholly down before she took any steps. She was not one to set tongues wagging.

It was nearing sundown when Marcel Longville, standing by her kitchen window, saw Donelle coming toward the house. The Captain was at Dan's Place. Donelle walked slowly, and when she saw Marcel, smiled wanly and opened the door.

"Marcel," she began, and her voice was tired and thin, "I want you to do something for me. I want you to—to tell a lie for me."

"Why, child, what's the matter?"

"Marcel, Mamsey thought I was here last night. Will you please tell her I was?"

Marcel's hands were in biscuit dough; she leaned forward heavily, and the soft, light mass rose half-way up her arms.

"Lord! child, where were you last night? I thought you were keeping my boarder as well as your own. Mam'selle just stopped here; she looked queer enough when she found you were not here. There's no use of the lie, child. She knows."

For a moment Donelle looked as though nothing mattered, as if the earth had slipped from beneath her feet.

From Gavot's window she had seen the *River Queen* depart with its two passengers from Point of Pines. Tom had not been visible since daybreak, the world had drifted away. Alone, in space, Donelle waited, looking dumbly at Marcel.

"Where were you, child?"

"I was at Tom's cabin. I'm married to him. Father Mantelle married us."

Marcel raised herself, the dough clinging to her hands. She shook it off, tore it off, went to a bucket of water and soaked it off, then sank into a chair.

"I'm fainting," she announced in a businesslike tone, and seemed, for an instant, to have lost consciousness.

This brought Donelle to her senses, she sprang to Marcel and put her arm around the limp form.

"It's quite true," she faltered, "but of course you could not know. All my life has happened to me since yesterday morning. I've got used to it, but I forgot you did not know. Nothing is any use now, nothing need be hidden. I am going back to Mamsey and tell her everything—everything."

Marcel was reviving. She still lay on the young, protecting arm, her eyes fastened on the white, sad face above her.

"You better go slow, Donelle, when you tell Mam'selle. You don't want to stop her heart," she cautioned.

"No, I do not want to stop her heart. But I'm going to tell her everything, beginning from the time I came back from the Walled House, after Pierre Gavot told me—who I was! I can tell her now because it does not matter; nothing matters since I'm married to Tom Gavot."

"It will kill her, Donelle! Mam'selle brought you from the place where she hid you. She's had

high hopes for you. It will kill her to know you're married to Tom. Whatever made this happen?"

"Why, whatever makes such things happen to any one?" Donelle sighed. Then: "If you are better, I'm going now to Mamsey."

"And I'm going with you!"

Marcel sprang to her feet.

"Come, I'm ready," she said, wrapping her rough shawl about her head and shoulders.

And together they went to Jo, followed by poor Nick.

They found Jo sitting in the living room, knitting, knitting. Every nerve was strained, but outwardly she was calm as ever.

"Well, child," she said as they entered, "you look worn to the death. You need not talk now unless you want to." She rose and went to Donelle.

"I want to, Mamsey. I want to."

"And you want Marcel to stay?" Jo spoke only to the girl. No one entered the sacred precincts of her deepest love when Donelle needed her.

"Yes, I want her, too, Mamsey, because she is your friend and mine."

Marcel blinked her tears back and sat down. Jo went back to her chair and Donelle dropped beside her and quietly told her pitiful story; both women sat like dead figures while they listened.

"You see, Mamsey, there was no other way, I had to do something quick. But," and here she smiled dimly, "there must have been some reason for what happened. Maybe the love was so big it caught him and would not let him go. I do not know, but just as you have kept still about my father after he left you, so I am going to keep still about my man. Tom knows, you, and now Marcel Longville, know. No one else matters, shall ever matter!"

But Jo was rousing herself. Her deep eyes flamed, she forgot Marcel, she leaned over the girl at her feet.

"How did you know your father left me?" she whispered.

"Pierre Gavot told me!"

"When?"

Donelle described the scene on the road by the Walled House, but she withheld the ugly word.

"And you came back because of that? You believed I was——"

"I knew you were my mother, and I could not hurt you as my father had. You had never hurt him. I had to do his part. But now, Mamsey, I am glad, oh! so glad, for now I understand everything that life meant for me. I'm safe here with you and Tom and I mean to—pay—pay. You know I always said I would pay, if I were part of life, and I will!"

Jo got up unsteadily. She seemed tall and menacing, her breath came hard and quick.

"Whose step is that outside?" she asked suddenly. The two had not noticed, but to Jo's "Come" Father Mantelle entered. He meant to make sure that all was well; he had seen Mam'selle return and had come as soon as he could.

"Father," Jo said solemnly, "take a seat. I am going to confess! Once you would not give me an opportunity, now I am going to take it."

Her trembling hand lay upon Donelle's head. The girl did not move.

"This child is not mine. I swear it before my God. Her father left me for another woman. Marcel can testify to that. My heart broke within me, and later, when my poor sister died, I went away. I went to—to Langley's cabin in the woods. I fought out my trouble there, and then came back to my years of labour, that you all know of. I never knew, until long after, the black thoughts that were held against me. I lived alone—alone." Here Jo rose majestically, threw back her head, and let her flaming eyes rest upon the two petrified listeners. Her hand was still touching with a marvellously gentle touch the bent head of Donelle, who was crouched on the floor at her feet, and was listening, listening, her breath coming in quick, soft little gasps.

"And then," the stern voice went on, "Pierre Gavot did me the most hideous wrong a man can do a woman, Gavot, Pierre Gavot, a man unworthy of looking at an honest woman, offered to—to marry me, for my money! He sought to get control of the only thing that I had won from life for my own protection. But out of his foul lips something was sent to guide me. He somehow made me see that I might yet have what my soul had hungered and almost died for—a child! I went to St. Michael's. I meant to take what some other woman had disinherited. I meant to take a man-child, because I felt I could not see another woman endure what I had endured! But God worked a miracle. He drove me aside, He sent"—and here Jo's eyes fell upon Donelle with a glance of supreme pity and of worship—"He sent this girl to me, I found her in the woods. During the weeks of her sickness, which followed her coming to my house, she revealed—her identity. It was

marvellous. I was frightened, but in my soul I knew God was having His way with me. He had sent me the child of the man I had loved, of the woman who had betrayed me!

"I went, when I could, to St. Michael's and got the Sisters' story, and I found——" Jo paused. Even now she hesitated before delivering her best beloved to the danger she long had feared. Then she remembered Tom Gavot and lifted her eyes.

"This girl's father had been accused of taking the life of his wife. He was bringing his child to me because he knew I would understand. He died before he could reach me. But a man, who, before God, I believe was the guilty one, was after the girl, wanted to get possession of her. For what reason, who can tell? The Sisters saved her. When I took her, I tried to save her by giving her my name. I felt that I was less harmful to her than—than the things the world might say. But I see," poor Jo's voice quivered, almost broke, "I see I was wrong. How could I prove my belief in the innocence of Henry Langley, though I could stake my soul's salvation on my belief that he did not kill his wife?"

Donelle was slowly rising to her feet. A dazed but brilliant light flooded her eyes, she reached out to Jo as she used to do in those first nights of delirium and fever.

"Mamsey, Mamsey, he did not! It was this way. My father came into the cabin, he had been hunting. My mother was there. I was there, and—and the man! I cannot, oh! Mamsey, I cannot remember his name, but I hated him. I was afraid. He used to say he would carry me off if—if I told! When my father came into the cabin—I cannot remember it all, for I ran and hid behind a door. But yes, I can remember this: the man said I was—his! Then my father ran toward him and he screamed something, and my mother," Donelle was crouching, looking beyond Mantelle and Marcel, at what no eyes but hers could see, "and my mother cried out that what the man said was a lie! And then my father and the man struggled. They fought and the gun went off—and—and—my mother fell!

"Mamsey, I—I cannot remember the rest. I was always tired, always going somewhere, but my father did not do that awful thing!"

A sudden stillness filled the dim room, a silence that hurt. Then Jo's tones rang out like a clanging bell:

"Father, this girl is Tom Gavot's wife?"

"She is." The priest was as white as death. Marcel was silent.

"Then no harm can reach her from that man, wherever, whoever, he is?"

"None."

"And that boy took my girl believing what the world thinks is the worst?" Jo's voice suddenly softened, her eyes dimmed. There was no reply to this. Marcel was crying softly, persistently, her face covered by her poor, wrinkled hands. The priest's white face shone in the shadowy room.

Then Jo laughed and lifted Donelle up.

"Child, you have seen the worst and the best in man. We still have Tom Gavot and he will keep all harm from you." Then she turned to Marcel. "Margot would have been proud of Tom, could she have known," she said. Marcel groped her way across the room. Her eyes were hidden, her sobs choked her.

"Mam'selle," she faltered, "Mam'selle Jo!"

Then the two women clung together. Father Mantelle watched them. What he thought no one could know, but a radiance overspread his face.

"Mam'selle Morey," he said quietly at last, "you have opened my eyes. God's peace be with you."

Then, as if leaving a sacred place, he turned and went out into the early evening.

Marcel soon followed, but she was not crying when she went. Donelle had kissed her, Jo had held her hands and smiled into her eyes. Marcel had received her blessing from them.

Then, when they were alone, Jo lighted the lamp and piled wood in the stove.

"And now we will eat, child," she said. Donelle was still dazed, trembling.

"I remember!" was what she kept repeating. "How strange, Mamsey, but I see it clear and true after all these years."

"And now, forget it, Donelle. The vision was given to you from God. It has done its work. We must forget the past." And for years it was never talked of between them.

"But, Mamsey——"

"Not another word, Donelle. We must eat and then talk of Tom."

It was after eight when, the work indoors and out finished, Jo and Donelle talked of Tom Gavot. By that time Donelle was quiet and strangely at peace.

"All night, Mamsey, while Nick and I were in his cabin," she said, "he was out in the rain! I

crept to the window many times and always he was there walking about or sitting by a little fire that he made in a dry spot to warm his poor, wet body. Mamsey, he told me to put the bar across the door, and I wanted to, but I did not." Donelle's eyes shone. "Somehow I felt safer with the bar off. And then, when it was morning, Tom was gone."

"He will come again!" breathed Jo, her breast heaving. "And what then will you do with him, child?"

"I do not know, Mamsey."

"He has done the greatest thing for you that it is possible for man to do."

"Yes, I know, I know. But, Mamsey," the agony of deadly hurt shook Donelle's voice, "Mamsey, for a little time I want, I must stay with you. And we must never speak of the other! You kept still when, when my father——"

"Yes, yes, Donelle, I understand," Jo clutched the girl to her. "You shall stay with me for a little time, but I think the day will come when you will go to Tom Gavot on bended knees."

"Perhaps, Mamsey, perhaps. I love Tom for his great goodness. I see him always, so safe, so kind, so splendid, but just now—— Oh! Mamsey," the girl shuddered, "the love has me! I know I am wrong and wicked to let it hold me. I know I was selfish and bad to let Tom save me. You see I had to do something quick; I was so alone. But by and by, Mamsey, the way will be easier and then I will think only of Tom Gavot. I promised."

In the upper chamber were a few articles belonging to Norval. Jo put them under lock and key the following day, and set the room in its sweet, waiting orderliness once more. The cabin in the wood too, was securely closed against prying eyes and hands. A few sketches and pictures were still there—"The Road" among them. The others had been hastily gathered together. Books rested on a shelf and table, the oil-stained coat hung on a peg. Jo longed, with human revolt, to set fire to the place where she and Langley's child had known Gethsemane, but her hand was held.

And still Tom Gavot did not return. No word came from him for a week, and a great fear rose in Jo's heart. Then came a brief note to Donelle.

You know you can trust me. Father Mantelle has written to me about you and Mam'selle; it's a big thing. And, Donelle, I'm never going to take anything you don't want to give! I didn't marry you to hurt you. I did it to help you. It seemed the only way, in the hurry.

I'm staying here in Quebec for a few months. Nothing can harm you now and I am thinking of longer and bigger roads, farther away, where I can make more money and get ahead. It can't harm you, Donelle, to tell you that, always from the first time I saw you, I loved you better than anything else. I love you now better than myself, my roads, anything! And because I love you this way, I'm leaving you with Mam'selle.

How they all evaded Norval. It was as if he had never been. Point of Pines was like that.

Since Tom had not killed him, he was able to blot him out.

"Tom is a man, a big one!" murmured Jo. "Donelle, you will be able to see him by and by."

"Yes, Mamsey, by and by."

Then summer came warmly, brightly, over the hills, but with it stalked a grim, black shadow. A shadow that no one dared speak about aloud, though they whispered about it at Dan's Place, on the roads, and in the quiet houses. Father Mantelle felt his old blood rising hot and fierce. He remembered his France; but he remembered that his France had driven his Order from its fasthold. He remembered England, with traditional prejudice. Then he gazed into the depth of the black shadow that would not depart, and preached "peace, peace," even before his people had thought of anything else but peace. It was full summer. The States' people filled Marcel's house, the Point of Pines hamlet throbbed and waited. Then the shadow stood revealed—War! And from over the sea England called to her sons. And they no longer paused. They lifted up their stern young faces and turned from field, river, and woods, turned back again Home!

And the women! At first they were stunned; horrified. It could not be! It could not be!

Soon, soon, they were to learn the lesson of patience, bravery, and heroism, but at first they saw only their boys going away. They saw the deserted houses, farms, and river, their own great helplessness, their agony of fear.

They saw their children grow old in a night with the acceptance of this call they could not quite comprehend, but which could not be disregarded. It was such a strange call, it sounded depths they, themselves, had never known. It found an answer in their untried youth. They simply had to go.

The old men were sobered, exalted. Even Pierre Gavot forgot the tavern, put on his best clothes, and waited for Tom. Were all the others going, and not his son? Gavot was full of anxiety. He did not want to drink and forget. He was obliged to stay clearheaded and watch for Tom's return. He even forgot himself and his demands on Tom. He'd manage somehow, but he could not endure the shame of Tom's not going overseas.

It was an hour when souls were marching up to the Judgment Seat, each according to its kind.

And one day Jo Morey met Pierre on the high-road, her burning woman-heart not yet adjusted to the shock that was reverberating through Canada.

"And so, Gavot," she said, "'tis taking this cause to bring you to your senses? I hear of your talking of Tom as if he was a big thing. Why, he's been big ever since he was born, and you took no heed."

Pierre drew back. Tom was not yet revealed as a hero, but Gavot could not conceive of the boy being anything else.

"I'm ready to lay my only son on the altar," mumbled Pierre grandiloquently. "I can sacrifice my all for my country."

Jo laughed, a hard, bitter laugh.

"You men!" she sneered, "ever since Abraham carried his poor boy up the mountain to lay him on the altar, you've all been alike, you fathers! You don't lay yourselves on the fire, not you! You don't even live your decent best when you might, but you're ready enough with the sacrifice of your young. Gavot, have you ever noticed that the Sarahs of the world don't carry their sons to the altar?" Jo's feelings choked her.

Gavot looked at the woman before him with bleared and strangely serious eyes. "That's wild talk," he mumbled, "bad talk. The right has to be done. Could such as *I* fight?"

Jo looked at the wretched creature by the roadside and she did not laugh now. That intangible something that was settling on the faces of her people hushed her.

CHAPTER XX
GAVOT GETS HIS CALL

And Tom Gavot was in Quebec. The alarm had stilled, for an instant, his very heart, and the first terrible sense of fear that always came to him in danger rose fiercely within him. His vivid imagination began to burn and light the way on ahead. Horrors that he had read of and shuddered at clutched at his brain and made it ache and throb.

No one knew of his sad marriage. He was going about his work bearing his heavy secret as best he could, but now he began to view it in a new light. He was married; he could remain behind with honour. But could he?

"Going to enlist, Tom?" the head of his firm asked one day. "We'd hate to lose you, we want to send you to Vancouver. There's something special to do there. After all, the matter will soon be settled and we need some boys here."

"I'm thinking it over," Tom replied, and so he was, over and over while his quivering flesh challenged his bright spirit.

He walked daily in front of the Chateau Frontenac and watched and watched the gallant boys, oh! so pitifully young, marching, drilling with that look in their eyes that he could not comprehend. He went to the Plains of Abraham and stood spellbound while the past and present flayed his fevered imagination. He stood in front of the pictured appeals that the Government posted on fences and buildings, and still his flesh held his spirit captive. Then one day, quite unconsciously, the Government reached him—him, Tom Gavot! There was a new picture among the many, an old mother with a transfigured face, her hand on the shoulder of her boy.

"My son, your country needs you."

Tom looked, and turned away. It did not seem fair to—to bully fellows like that. He was angry, but he went back. The boy's face seemed to grow like his own! Poor Tom, he could not realize that it was the face of young Canada. The woman why, she was like the long-dead mother! Tom felt sure, had his mother lived, that she would have been old and saintly. Yes, saintly in spite of everything, for would not he have seen to that? He, and his roads?

Tom thought of his roads, his peaceful, beautiful roads. Would he be fit to plan them, travel on them if he let other men make them safe for him?

Then one September day he said quietly—and the man to whom he spoke never forgot his eyes—"I'm going to enlist. I'm going back to my home place. I'd like to start with the boys from there." So Tom went back to Point of Pines. He almost forgot that he was the husband of Donelle Langley. He had taken farewell of many, many things without realizing it: his own fear, his wife, his roads, his hope of Donelle.

He went back very simply, very quietly, and with that new look in his sad young eyes he seemed like a stranger. Not for him was the glory and the excitement. He was going because he dared not stay. His soul was reaching out to an ideal that was screened in mystery, he had only just courage enough to press on. Pierre looked at his boy pleadingly.

"Tom," he whimpered, "I'm not much of a father. I can't send you off feeling proud of me, I've held you back all your life. But I can make you feel easier about me by telling you that I've got work. You won't have to fash yourself about that."

Tom regarded his father with a vague sense of gladness; then he reached out falteringly and took his hand!

Marcel drew Tom to her heart. All her motherhood was up in arms.

"Tom," she whispered, "all through the years I've broken my heart over those little graves on the hill, but to-day I thank God they're there!"

Tom held the weeping woman close.

"Aunt Marcel," he asked quietly, "if they, the children, were here, instead of on the hill, would you bid them stay?"

"That's it, Tom, I couldn't, and that's why I thank God He's taken the choice from me."

Tom kissed her reverently with a mighty tenderness.

"Aunt Marcel," he went on, "when I'm over there I shall think of you and of the children on the hill. I'll try and do my best for you and them. I may fail, but I'll try."

And at last Tom went up the road to Mam'selle and Donelle. They saw him coming and met him on the way. Jo's head was bent; her breast heaving. A terrible fear and bitterness made her face hard and almost cruel.

All night she had been recalling Tom's pitiful youth. And now this renunciation! But on Donelle's face shone the glory of the day.

Quietly, firmly she took Tom's hands and lifted her eyes.

"Oh! but you are splendid," she whispered. "I thought perhaps you might feel you ought to stay back for me! But, Tom, everything is all right and safe! Always you are going to grow bigger, nearer, until you make me forget everything else. Why, Tom now, now I would go with you on your road, if I could! You must believe that, dear."

Tom looked at her. He saw the thrill of life, adventure, and youth shake her. He saw with an old, old understanding that because he was going away, alone, upon the road, he meant to her what he never could have meant had he remained. He saw that his renunciation had awakened her sympathy and admiration, but he saw that love lay dead in her eyes.

"Tom looked at her. He saw the thrill, of life, adventure and youth shake her. He saw with an old, old understanding that because he was going away, alone, upon the road, he meant to her what he never could have meant had he remained."

And then Tom bent and kissed her. He could in all honour because something deep in his heart told him that he was indeed bidding her good-bye.

"When I come back," he was saying, while he felt far, far away, "we'll just try the road, Donelle. I know you'll do your part. And always keep this in mind: when I look back home I'll see you at the other end of the road, girl. Your eyes will have the yellow light in them that will brighten the darkest night I'll ever tramp through. I had to tell you that."

"Thank you, Tom."

"It wasn't the honest thing to marry you the way I did. I had no right."

"Yes, you had, Tom. Yes. Yes!"

"No. I think we could have found a better way, if we had taken time, but I was sort of blinded."

"And so was I, Tom, blinded and crazed."

"Donelle—"

"Yes, Tom."

"I've got to tell you something—now that I'm going. He—he came back that night. He came to me and he would not believe, until I let him look in the window to see you as you lay there asleep. He wanted to tell me something, and I wouldn't let him! But, Donelle, before God, I think we need not hate him and if he ever gets a chance let him tell you what he wanted to tell me."

"Tom, oh! Tom!" Donelle was weeping now in Gavot's arms. "Thank you, thank you, my own good Tom! And when you come back, I'll be waiting for you, no matter what I hear."

But Tom understood. Again he bent and kissed her pretty hair, her little white face, then gently pushed her toward Jo.

"Mam'selle," he said and smiled his good smile: "I'm going, with heaven's help, to make up to my mother."

"You have, Tom, you have!" Jo rushed to him. "You have by your clean, fine life and they have no right to take that young life; they have no right, no right!"

But Tom went away, smiling, with the little company of Point of Pines' men. The women watched the going with still faces and folded hands. Those boys going on, on to what, they knew not; just going! Some looked self-centred, proud, senselessly uplifted. Others looked grim, not knowing all, but sensing it.

Tom looked at his group, his father, Marcel, Longville, Jo, and Donelle, turned a last glance at the white, set face of Father Mantelle, and so said good-bye to Point of Pines.

Together Jo and Donelle returned to the little white house. It was like going back from a freshly made grave.

"I'll not help the bad business, no, not I!" vowed Mam'selle, the hard look still upon her face. Donelle looked piteously at her.

"It is a great evil, a damnable sin; no words can make it right. For us to work and forgive is but to help the sin along. I will not stand for the cursed wrong."

"Mamsey, it is all wrong, but it is not their wrong, Tom's and all the other boys. They are just doing what they have to: holding to that something that won't let go of us. Mamsey, we must go along with them. We cannot leave them alone. I don't quite see yet what we can do, but Mamsey, we, too, must hold on. See, here is the loom. Spin, spin, dear Mamsey."

"No, the loom stands still!" Jo shut her lips. But Donelle led her forward.

"Mamsey, it will save us," she said, "save us. We must work all the time; spin, weave, knit. We've got to. It is all we can do."

"Yes. And because we have always spun and woven and knitted, they are going off there, those boys! Donelle, I will not touch the loom!"

But Donelle was placing her fingers on the frame.

Suddenly, groping for the threads, Jo said, while her voice broke:

"Where's Nick, child?"

"He's following Tom as far as he can, Mamsey. I did not call him back."

At that Jo bent her head until it rested on the loom.

"That's all dogs and women can do!" she moaned; "follow them as far as they can."

"Yes, Mamsey, and catch up with them—somehow. We will, we will."

The two women clung together and wept until only grief was left, the bitterness melted.

And afar in Egypt Anderson Law heard the summons and saw the blackening cloud.

"I'm too old to take a gun," he muttered grimly, "but my place is home! Every man to his hearth, now, unless he can serve his neighbour."

It was October when Law reached New York. In his long-deserted studio lay much that claimed his immediate attention. Norval had had a key to the apartment and had seen that it was kept ready for its absent master. A mass of mail lay upon the table, among it a note from Norval himself.

ANDY, when you can, go to Point of Pines. If any man in God's world can mend the mischief I made there, it is you! I went innocently enough and at a time when I was down and out. I managed to evolve about as much hell as possible. I don't expect you will ever be able to excuse or, in any sense, justify my actions. I am only thinking of that little girl of Alice Lindsay's, the only love of my life.

Law was petrified. This was a letter Norval had written from Point of Pines, it had got no farther than New York, for Norval in his abstraction had addressed it there.

For an instant even the war sank into insignificance as Law read on:

The divorce that Katherine desired was about to be consummated. I reckoned without Katharine's sense of justice and duty, which got active just when I thought the road was clear. Well, Andy, you know how damnable truth can become when it is handled in the dark? Katherine came to Point of Pines; saw Donelle alone. Need I say more? Only this, Andy: I did not wrong the girl, I only loved her.

I've left a picture. I want you to see it before you leave for Canada. You'll find it by your north window.

I'm going to the Adirondacks with Katherine. She's developed tuberculosis, this is her only chance, and, short or long, I've sworn to go the rest of the way with her.

Law went across the room to his north window. With fumbling hands he uncovered the canvas standing there and placed it on an easel before he dared look at it.

A bit of paper was attached to the picture. Law read:

"Fairer than morning, lovelier than the daylight."

Then standing in his coldest, most critical attitude, Anderson Law feasted his eyes upon Donelle!

Not only the sweet, appealing beauty of the rare, girlish face held Law, but the masterfulness of the hand that had reproduced it, clutched his senses. Such colour and light! Why, for a moment it seemed almost as if there were movement.

"Good God!" muttered Law. "I stayed in Egypt too long."

It was like him, however, to make ready at once to go to Point of Pines. He did not write to Norval; how could he? Of course he disapproved heartily of what he knew and suspected. No man, he reflected, has a right to take chances at another's expense. Norval was a fool, a damned fool, but he was no merely selfish wretch. That he could swear to. But the girl—well, how could a man keep his senses cool with those eyes fixed upon him?

"That white-flame sort," mused the man in the still room, "is the most far reaching. There's so much soul along with the rest."

A week later the *River Queen*, rather dignifiedly, puffed up to the wharf of Point of Pines. The sturdy boat was doing her bravest bit that summer. She went loaded down the river; she panted back contemplatively, knowing that she must bear yet other loads away. Away, always, away!

"I want Mam'selle Jo Morey's," Anderson Law said as he was deposited, with other freight and bags on the dock. "She takes boarders?"

Jean Duval frowned.

"She took one," he replied, "but he ran away. I'm thinking the Mam'selle Jo is not reaching out for more."

"Then I will go to her," said Law in his most ingratiating manner; "she shall not reach out for me."

Jo was in the barn, but Donelle stood by the gate, her fair, uncovered head shining in the warm October light.

"I am Anderson Law!"

Donelle turned and her wide eyes grew dark.

"I have come late, I'm afraid, child," Law saw that his name was familiar to the girl, saw her lips quiver, "but I'll do my best now to mend the trouble. You must accept me for Alice Lindsay's sake."

Bluntly, but with grave tenderness, he put out his hand.

There are some people who come into the world for no other reason, apparently, than to lighten the burdens of others. The mere sight of them is the signal for the shifting of heavy loads. Weary, lost ones know their deliverers. Donelle gave a long, long look, her eyes filled with sudden and sadly-suppressed tears. All the weight she had borne since the time she had entered the Walled House cried out for support.

"Oh! I am so glad you've come. So glad!"

And Donelle's hands lay in Law's.

And so Mam'selle found them, clinging to each other like shipwrecked souls, when she came up with Nick wheezing at her heels. Nick wheezed now, there was no denying it.

"And, sir, you are——?" she said, standing with her feet astride, her hands reaching down to where her father's old pockets used to be.

"A boarder, Mam'selle, heaven willing."

"I can take no more boarders, sir. But I can hitch up Molly and drive you to Captain Longville's."

"Mam'selle Morey, I am Alice Lindsay's friend, Anderson Law."

Then Jo, who had always been a burden-bearer herself, scented another of her kind. She came a step nearer. Her lifted brows disclosed her wonderful eyes, the eyes of a woman who had suffered and made no cry.

Law held her by a long glance; a searching glance.

"Mam'selle," he said; "I half believe you will reconsider and take me in."

"I half believe I will!" Jo's lips twitched.

Her instinct guided her.

"The upper chamber is ready," she added, "and the noon meal is about to be set on the table."

"And I'll show you the way!" Donelle went on before Law, a new look upon her face, a gladder look than had rested there for many a day.

CHAPTER XXI
DONELLE AT LAST SEES TOM

"The greatest wrong Norval did was to leave you in the dark."

Law and Donelle sat in the wood-cabin, and the room was warm and bright. Norval's deserted pictures were hung in good light and now some of Law's own had also found a place on the rough walls.

"You are woman enough to have understood."

"Yes, I would have understood," Donelle replied from her seat near the window. She was knitting; knitting, always knitting.

"Love is a thing you cannot always manage. I would have understood. Love just came to us and when it got hurt, I did wrong in going to Tom Gavot, my husband. But you see he had helped me before. It was wrong, but there did not seem to be any other way. I think I felt I had to make it impossible—for—for Mr. Norval to do anything."

"But, my child, of course—Norval wronged you by withholding the whole truth. Still, I wish he could have spoken for himself, not left it for me."

"You have done it beautifully, Man-Andy!"

The name fell lingeringly from Donelle's lips. Law had urged her to call him by it.

It was February now and still Law lingered. He could hardly have told why, but Canada seemed more homelike to him than the States. He was one of the first to resent his country's holding back from entering the terrific struggle that was sucking the other countries into its hellish maw.

"If I cannot bear a gun," Law often vowed in Jo's upper chamber, "I'll hang around close to them who are bearing them. The boys will be coming back soon, some of the hurt chaps, I'll lend a hand here in Canada."

So he remained and the little white house was happy in its welcome.

Law went among the people. He became a constant visitor in Father Mantelle's house; went with the old priest to the homes, already bereaved, because of the son or father who had marched away and would never come back. The war dealt harshly with the men of Canada who, counting not the cost, went grimly to the front and took the heavier blows with no thought of turning back.

"And, Man-Andy," Donelle was talking quietly while Law smoked by the fire, "I have often thought that Mr. Norval"—the stilted words were shy—"might have felt that I came first. He might have."

"I think he might." The cloud of smoke rose higher. "That would have been like him."

"But it wouldn't have been right. The big love we couldn't help, but he once told me that it was our part to keep it holy. If—if—he forgot for a minute, Man-Andy, it was for me to remember. I think I was afraid I might *not*, and that was why something drove me to Tom, my husband."

Law winced at the constant reiteration of the "husband." It was as if she were forcing him to keep the facts clearly in mind.

"I wouldn't have had my love be anything but what I knew him, Man-Andy. And now I am almost happy thinking of him doing what is right. It's better, even if it is hard."

"Yes, I suppose so!" And Law knew whereof he spoke.

"But you?" he lifted his eyes to Donelle's white, sweet face.

"I? Why, it is all right for me, Man-Andy. You see, there are many kinds of love, and Tom, my husband, why, I love him. He is strong, and oh! so safe. When his country does not need him any more, I will make him happy. I can. I am sure I can, for Tom is not one who wants all. He has had so little in his life that he will be glad, very glad with me. He has the big love, too, Man-Andy."

"You are quite beyond me!" muttered Law. "You and your Mam'selle, you are a pair."

"I love to think that. Mam'selle has been more than a mother to me. I am so glad you know all about us."

Law did know, from Father Mantelle.

"I feel, wrong as it may seem," the priest had once confided to Law, "like making the sign of the cross whenever I come in the presence of Mam'selle Morey."

"Well, crosses have apparently been quite in her line," Law laughed back, "she'd naturally take it as a countersign."

Law had a habit that reminded Jo of Langley, of Donelle and, indeed now that she reflected, of others besides, who knew her more or less intimately. He would sit and watch her while she worked and then, without rhyme or reason, smile. Often, indeed, he laughed.

"Am I so amusing?" she asked Law once.

"Not so amusing, Mam'selle, as consumedly comical."

"Comical, Mr. Law?" Jo frowned.

"No good in scowling, Mam'selle. I mean no reflection. The fact is, you've taken us all into camp, we might as well laugh."

"Camp, Mr. Law?" The brows lifted.

"Yes, you made us look like small beer and then you forgive us, and label us champagne!"

"Mr. Law, you talk!" Jo sniffed.

"I certainly do, Mam'selle."

"I do not understand your tongue."

"I'll wager a dollar to a doughnut that Donelle does."

"Umph! Well, then, Donelle, just you tell me what he means."

They were all sitting around the hot stove, a winter storm howling outside.

"I'm afraid I cannot very well, Mamsey. But I know what he means."

"Do your best, child. I hate to be kept guessing."

"Well, it is something like this:" Donelle looked at Law, getting guidance from his eyes, "some people, not as blessed as you, Mamsey, might not have forgiven all those years when no one knew! You were so big and silent and brave, you made them all look pretty small. And now when they do know, you somehow let them do the large, kind things that you make possible, and you stand aside, praising them."

"Nonsense!" Jo snapped. "Who's blowing my horn, I'd like to know?"

"Oh! Mamsey, it's your horn, but you let others think it isn't. Who was it that made Father Mantelle come out and compel his people to go overseas?"

"That's silly, Donelle. When he came to his senses, he saw he'd be mobbed if he didn't."

"Oh! Mamsey, you bullied him outrageously. And who sees to old Pierre?"

"You, child. You can't see your husband's father want, when it's rheumatism, not bad whiskey, that's laying him low."

"Oh! Mamsey! And who got Marcel little flags to put on—on those graves on the hill because it would make her feel proud?"

"Donelle you *are* daft. Marcel felt she had to do something to make it her war, too, and she's too busy to weave and knit. Why"—and here Jo turned to Law whose eyes were twinkling through the smoke that nearly hid his face—"in old times the people around here used to light fires on St. John's Day in front of their houses, to show there had been a death. I told Marcel about that and she herself thought of the flags. She would have given her children if they had lived; she's brought herself, like the rest of us, to see there is nothing else to do but give and give!"

Mam'selle choked over her hurried words and Law suddenly changed the subject.

"Mam'selle," he asked, "is there a chimney place behind this red-hot monster?" he kicked the stove.

"There is, Mr. Law, one about twice too large for the house."

"Let's take the stove down and have the chimney place!"

"Take the stove down?" Jo dropped ten stitches. "Take that stove down! Why, you don't know what it cost me! I—I am proud of that stove."

"Really, Mam'selle?"

"Well, I used to be prouder than I am now. It is a heap of trouble to keep clean, but it's going to stay where it is. When things cost what that did, they stay. It's like Nick and the little red cow ——"

"And me!" put in Donelle softly.

"You ought to be ashamed, Donelle," Jo turned indignant eyes upon her, "putting yourself beside stoves and dogs and cows."

"And other things that cost too much. Oh! Mamsey."

And still Law stayed on, the peace in his eyes growing each day deeper, surer. He felt, in a vague way, as Norval had, the sense of *living* for the first time in his life. The wood-cabin he called the co-operative workshop. In time he got Donelle to play there for him. At first she tried and failed. Weeping, she looked at him helplessly and put her violin aside.

"You have no right," he said to her with infinite tenderness, "to let any earthly thing kill the gift God gave you."

The philosophy that had upheld poor Law had given him courage to pass it on to others. It now drove Donelle to her duty.

Old Revelle had prophesied that suffering would develop her and her talent; and it was doing so. Her face became wonderfully strong and fine as the months dragged on and the Fear grew in waiting hearts. In forgetting herself she made place for others and they came to her faithfully. Her music was heard in many a hill cabin; down by the river, where the older men worked, while their thoughts were overseas. She taught little children, helped make the pitiful black dresses which meant so much to the lonely poor who had given their all and had so little with which to show respect to their sacred dead.

Jo watched her girl with eyes that often ached from unshed tears.

"It will be the death of her," she confided to Anderson Law. "She'll break."

"No," Law returned, "she will not break. She's as firm and true as steel; she's getting ready."

"Ready for what?" Jo's voice shook.

"For life. So many, Mam'selle, simply get ready to live. Life is going to use this little Donelle."

"Men have caused a deal of trouble for women," Jo remarked irrelevantly.

"Ah! there you have us, Mam'selle. The best of us know that we're bad bunglers. Most of us, in our souls, are begging your pardon."

"Well, you're all boys, mere children." Jo was clicking her needles like mad. "Sometimes I think it would settle the whole question if we could bunch all the men in one man and give him a good spanking."

Law's eyes twinkled.

"And after that, after the spanking, Mam'selle, what would you do?"

"Give him an extra dose of jam, like as not. We're fools, every last one of us, God help us!"

"Yes, thank God, you are!"

It was March when a letter came from Norval that sent Law to the wood-cabin and to his knees.

ANDY:

It's over! Poor Katherine! I'm going to leave her body here under the snow and the pines. It came quite suddenly at the last. She just could not stand it.

I'm glad I went the rest of the way with her. I never could have done it except that you showed me the path. You've been here with me close, old friend, all these months. I wonder if you can understand me when I say that I am glad for Katherine, for her alone, that she is safe under the snow? It is easier to think of her so, than to remember the losing battle she waged for her health. I'm sure my being here made her less lonely, and she grew so tender and generous, so understanding.

She begged me to return to Point of Pines. She never knew about Gavot.

And now, Andy, before you get this, I will be on my way over-seas to offer what I have to France. I'm strong, well, and have nothing to hold me back. I can do something there, I'm sure.

Law looked at the date on the letter, then noticed that the postmark was nearly a month later. There was no need to hurry back; Norval was gone.

Law did not tell Donelle or Jo of his news. Everything was being tossed into the seething pot; the outcome must be awaited with patience and whatever courage one could muster.

When spring came the little *River Queen* came regularly to the dock. She came quietly, reverently, bearing now her children home: the sick, the tired, the hopelessly maimed, the boys who had borne the brunt of battle and had escaped with enough mind and body to come back. Some of them had news of others; they had details that waiting hearts craved. Under the soft skies of spring they told their brave stories so simply; oh! so divinely simply. The bravado, the jest were stilled; they had seen and suffered too much to dwell upon glory or upon the tales of adventure.

Poor old Pierre went from one to another with his question:

"Tell me about my Tom."

Tom had been transferred here, there, and everywhere. Only an occasional comrade who had left home with him had been near him overseas. But one or two had stories about Tom that soon became public property.

"Old Tom was always talking about being afraid," said one. "In the trenches, while we were waiting for orders, he'd beg us to see that if he were a coward his home folks might not know the truth. He always expected to be the cur, and then, when the order came, up the old duffer would get and scramble to the front as if he was hell-bound for suicide. It got to be a joke and the funny part was, when it was over, he never seemed to know he'd done the decent thing. He'd ask us how he had acted. He'd believe anything we told him. After awhile we got to telling him the truth."

Marcel wept beside her little row of graves after hearing about Tom and wished, at last, that a son of her own could be near that poor Tom of Margot's.

Jo's eyes shone and she looked at Donelle. She felt the girl's big heart throb with pity, but she knew full well that even in his tragic hour of triumph Tom had not called forth Donelle's love.

Sometimes she was almost angry at Donelle. Why could not the girl see what she had won, and glory in it? What kind of reward was it to be for Tom to have her "keep her promise?"

"Women were not worthy of men!" she blurted out to Anderson Law. "Think of those young creatures offering all they have to make a world safe for a lot of useless women!'

"They ought to be spanked, the useless women," Anderson remarked solemnly.

"That they should!" agreed Jo.

"Ah, well, Mam'selle," Law's face grew stern, "we are all, men and women, getting our punishment alike. But what has the rebel, Donelle, now done?"

"She will not see Tom Gavot, her husband, as he is! She only sees him as a brave soldier. Instead, he is a man!"

"Ah! Mam'selle Jo, wait until he comes home and *needs her*. Then she will give him the best she has to give. Is that not enough?"

"No!" Jo exploded. "No! it is not. She ought to give him, poor lad, what she has not in her power to give."

Then they both laughed.

It was full summer when the word came that Tom Gavot had made the supreme sacrifice.

Law brought the official announcement, the bald, hurting fact. He had, on his way past Dan's Place, rescued Pierre before he had begun drinking.

"Come to Mam'selle Morey's," he commanded calmly. "I have news of your boy."

"And he is still brave? It is good news?"

Gavot shuffled on beside Law.

"He's still brave, yes."

"That's good; that's good. Tom was always one who began by trembling and ended like iron."

Jo was at her loom, Donelle at her knitting, when the two men entered the sunny home-room of the little white house.

"This has come," said Law, and reverently held up the envelope.

They all knew what it was. In Point of Pines the bolt had fallen too often to be misunderstood. By that time every heart was waiting; waiting.

"It's Tom?" asked Donelle and her face shone like a frozen, white thing in the cheerful room.

Law read the few terrible words that could not soften the blow, though they tried hard to do so.

"The war office regrets to announce——"

Pierre staggered to his feet.

"It's a lie!" he said thickly, "a lie!" Then he began to weep aloud like a frightened child.

Law went to him and shook him roughly.

"Stop that!" he said sternly. "Can't you try to be worthy of your boy?"

"But—but I wanted him to know how I have been trying, even when I couldn't quite make it. And now——"

"Perhaps he does know," Law spoke more softly, "perhaps he does."

Jo did not move, but her eyes seemed to reflect all the misery of her stricken country.

"Mam'selle, can you not help us?" Law spoke from his place beside the groaning Pierre.

"I—I'm afraid not, Mr. Law. Not just now." Poor Jo; for the first time in her life she was overpowered. "I somehow," she spoke as if to herself, "I somehow thought I understood how it felt when I saw the others. But I didn't; I didn't." Then she turned to Donelle. "Where are you

going?" she asked.

"Mamsey, I'm going down to—to Tom's hut. It seems as if he will be there."

Then Jo bent her head.

"Go, child," she said with a break in her hard voice. "Go."

And later Law found Donelle there in the little river-hut. She was sitting by the open door, her face, tearless and tragically white, turned to the river whose tide was coming in with that silent, mighty rush that almost took away the breath of any one who might be watching.

"Dear, little girl!" said Law soothingly, taking his place at her feet, "I wish you would cry."

"Cry? Why, Man-Andy, I cannot cry."

She was holding an old coat of Tom's, the one he had discarded for the uniform of his country.

"I wish we could have known just how he went—my Tom!"

"We may some day, child. But this we both know: he went a hero."

"Yes, I'm sure of that. He would be afraid, but he would do the big thing. He was like that. I think such men are the bravest. Listen, Man-Andy!"

Law listened. The strange, swift, silent, incoming tide filled his ears.

"I have been thinking," Donelle whispered, "thinking as I sat here of a wide, shining road and a great many, many men and boys rushing along it making the sound of the river. I think it is that way with the many boys who have died so suddenly; so soon. They are hurrying along some safe, happy road; and oh! Man-Andy, it seems as if it were Tom's road. All the afternoon as I have been sitting here in the only place he ever knew as home," Law glanced back into the pitiful, plain, empty room, "I have seen Tom at the head of the great crowd going on and on. He seems to be leading them, showing them the way over the road he loved."

The water was covering the highest black rocks, the rushing, still sound was indeed like the noise of boyish feet hurrying eagerly home.

Law stood up and took Donelle in his arms. She frightened him by her awful calm.

"Little girl," he whispered, "try to cry. For God's sake, try to cry!"

"But, Man-Andy, how can I? If only I could have kissed him just once so he could have remembered——" And then Donelle broke down. She relaxed in Law's arms; she clung to him sobbing softly, wildly.

"Why, Man-Andy, I'm going to remember always that I couldn't give him what he deserved most in all the world."

"My dear, my dear! You gave him of your best, he understands that now as he could not before."

"And oh!" here Donelle lifted her tear-stained face, "I'm so thankful I did not bar the door against him."

Law thought her mind was wandering.

"What door, child?" he asked.

"This door, the night we were married. He—he knew, I am sure he knew, as he watched outside, that I trusted him."

Law's eyes dropped.

"Your husband was a big man," was all he said.

CHAPTER XXII
NORVAL COMES BACK

Anderson Law was sawing wood behind Mam'selle's little white house. He was mighty proud of his success in manual labour; to help Jo with her wood pile was a delight, altruistically and vaingloriously.

The summer with its heart throbs had made people indifferent to the winter on ahead, but the days were growing colder and shorter and even the most careless were aware that some provision must be made at once if one were to escape needless suffering.

Law was thinking as he worked, and occasionally wiped the perspiration from his brow. There were so many things to think about in Point of Pines; to think about, smile about tenderly, and grieve about.

There was old Pierre, the Redeemed, he was called now. Since Tom's going the wretched father had ceased drinking, was housed by Father Mantelle, and had fallen into a gentle, vague

state that called forth pity and tolerance.

Early and late he was on the highway with his shovel or rake making the road easy for the feet of his boy!

If any one came over the hill into Point of Pines the wandering, bleary eyes would be raised and the one question would break from the trembling lips: "Have you seen my Tom?"

If any one went away over the hill, Pierre had a message:

"Tell my Tom I'm filling in the ruts. He won't find it such hard travelling when he comes back."

Anderson Law often kept old Gavot company—for Tom's sake. Even Mam'selle had forgiven him and, quite secretly, helped the priest in his generous support.

The Longvilles, the Captain at least, had forsaken Pierre. Marcel, poor soul, gave what, and when, she could.

As Law bent to his task at the wood pile, the priest hailed him from the road.

"I go now," he explained as he declined the invitation to enter, "to pray for rain. The forest fires are bad, but until the crops were in I would not pray."

So simply did the curé say this that Law refrained from smiling, but he did say, looking afar to where the heavy smoke-cloud hung above the trees:

"Ah! well, Father, now that the harvest is in, you had better give the Lord a free hand or there will be a sad pay-day on ahead."

"I go to pray," Mantelle rejoined and passed on.

Amused and thoughtful, Law looked after the tall, thin, bent figure. He recalled how the patient old soul taught and encouraged the children, held the older ones—children too, in their simplicity and superstition—to the plain, common paths of life with what success he might; remembered how day or night he travelled near and far to watch with the dying or comfort those from whom death had torn their sacredest and best.

"At such," Law thought, "one cannot scoff."

And just then a fragrant odour came to Anderson Law. Pleasant and welcome it was. He looked up and, at a little distance, saw Mam'selle at her outdoor oven, pushing into its yawning mouth a tray of noble loaves of bread.

Down went Law's saw, out came his sketching pad; Jo before that oven was a sight for the reverent.

"Eighteen loaves!" called Mam'selle, not realizing that she was becoming immortal, "eighteen loaves at a lick, Mr. Law, and but a drop in the bucket. The boys, whatever else was knocked out of them over there, managed to keep their stomachs. There's no filling the lads up, but the good Lord knows that it's little enough for us to do, trying to fill them."

"To-morrow will be Friday," cried a cheery young voice from the highway, "so we must fish to-day, Mam'selle. I'm off to the river, but I swear I cannot get past the smell of your oven. And I wanted to tell you, I have my old job back. Hereafter I swing the light from the dock."

Law and Jo turned. A boy in the garb of a great country stood leaning on his crutches, smiling; smiling, but with that look in his eyes that was never to depart. The look the trenches had put there; the hall mark of the world's wrong to its young.

"Ah! it's that nice boy, Jean," laughed Jo eagerly. "Wait, son," the wounded and sick were all "sons" to Mam'selle now, "wait, here is a large, brown, hot loaf. Take it along to munch while you catch your fish. And it's glad I am about the job, Jean. No one ever swung the lantern as you did. The *River Queen* will perk up when she sees you back."

Jean laughed and patted his hot loaf of bread.

"Ah! Mam'selle. And to think I used to run from you when I was a silly lout of a kid. I did not know your great heart then, Mam'selle," he said.

The boyish eyes were lifted to Jo's face as she pressed the crisp loaf in his bag.

"It's my turn to run after you now," she said softly. "It is worth the run, though, son. You're good sorts, the lot of you."

Law was watching and listening. Jo affected him strangely. Lately he was aware of a glow whenever he got to thinking of her. If he meant ever to escape from Point of Pines he had better make a hasty retreat. That was what the glow meant. As if to challenge this state of mind Jo now came toward him.

"It's a noble pile you've cut, Mr. Law," she said. "For a painter-man you're not the useless truck one might expect. Mr. Law, I'll think of you often when I burn this wood. And now that I'm rather soft in my feelings for your sex—those hurt boys have pleaded for you—I might as well tell you that I'm going to put my stove in the outhouse and open up the chimney in the living room."

"Mam'selle! This is surrender indeed! A triumph of soul over matter!" cried Law.

"This winter you can think of me toasting my shins and shivering up the back, Mr. Law." Jo smiled broadly.

Anderson Law threw his head back and laughed. Jo's plain, unvarnished Anglo-Saxon was like a northwest wind to his mind.

And just then the postman jogged in sight, reading the postcards with relish and letting his old horse find his own way along the road.

"Where is Donelle?" Law was asking as the mail man paused at the gate. Jo's eyes darkened.

"Knitting and thinking down in the river-cabin. Nick's with her. Mr. Law, there are times when I think that dog has a soul."

"I never doubt it, Mam'selle. One look in his eyes is enough. But what, now, about Nick?"

"When he thinks the child has been alone long enough he goes after her. She says he tugs at her skirt until she follows. He cries if she holds back. Mr. Law, I fear Donelle is—is—taking to Tom's road."

Poor Jo turned away.

"Nonsense, Mam'selle."

Law often thought this, too, so his denial was doubly intense.

"We'll find a way yet to get Donelle on the road that belongs to her. Ah! a letter," he broke in, seeing the postman waving an envelope from the cart.

Law went forward and took the letter, tore it open, and read the few words enclosed. It was from his lawyer. For a moment Anderson Law could not speak. The bright day seemed suddenly to darken. Then he said slowly, though his thoughts were swift:

"Mam'selle, Jim Norval is back in New York. He's not able to see just now; something's gone wrong with his eyes, and his legs, too. There's hope, but I must go." Then, as if inspired, "Mam'selle, I must take Donelle."

"No!" Jo sprang back as if Law had hit her.

"Mam'selle, I must take Donelle. Have these hurt boys, here, not taught you a lesson?"

"But, Mr. Law, this is not decent."

"Norval's wife died last summer, Mam'selle. He went abroad because there was nothing else for him to do. Now may I have Donelle?"

Jo reflected.

"But it will kill her," she said half-heartedly, "the strangeness. And what may happen."

"It will cure her," Law went on; "no matter what happens. She's part of it all; she must bear what is hers."

"Mr. Law——"

"Ah! Mam'selle," and here Anderson Law took Jo's hand, "there is so little, after all, that we older ones can do for them. May I have Donelle?"

"Yes. God help us all, Mr. Law." And poor Jo bowed her head.

"Thank you, Mam'selle. The conventions have all crumbled, we're all stripped down to our bare souls. We cannot afford to waste time looking forward or back. Keep that fire burning on the opened hearth, Mam'selle. Some of us will come back to you, God willing, soon. We must hurry. See! there is the child coming up the Right of Way, Nick clinging to her skirt. Donelle!"

Law called to her and went to meet her.

"Child, I'm going to take you to the States with me. Norval needs you!"

Just for an instant the white face twitched and the yellow eyes darkened.

"When do we go?" was all the cold lips said. Never a doubt; never a pause.

"What did I tell you?" Law turned to Jo. "Conventions be damned!

"To-day we start, Donelle. And, Mam'selle, just you 'tend to that fire!"

When Norval had been landed in New York he was taken to a hospital—to die. But he did not die, though he tried hard enough, and gave no end of trouble to his doctors and nurses.

"Whom shall we send for?" he was asked when, helpless and blinded, he lay in the small, quiet, white room.

"Am I going west?" The phrase clung like an idiom of a foreign language.

"Good Lord, man, no! You're getting on rippingly." The young house doctor was tireless in his service to this stricken man.

"Then send for no one. I'm not eager to have a chance acquaintance gaping at my useless legs and sightless eyes."

"But you're going to come around all right. It's the effect of shock, you know. How about your relatives?"

"Haven't got any, thank the Lord." Norval's chin stiffened. The young doctor gripped the clasped hands on the counterpane.

"I wish you'd try a bit to buck up," he said.

"What for?"

"Well, just for your country's sake."

"My country! Why isn't my country where I have been, helping to lower the temperature of hell?"

The bitter tone rang through the words. Norval was glad for the company of this young doctor; glad to have someone, who, really did not matter, share with him the moments when the memory of horrors he had witnessed overwhelmed him.

"Our country is going to be there soon!" The doctor's voice was strained. "A big country like this has to go slow."

"Slow be damned! This is no time to put on brakes. Are they, are they actually steaming up, Burke? You're not saying this to—to quiet my nerves?"

"No. Your nerves are settling into shape. Yes, our country is heaving from the inside."

"Thank God!" Norval sighed.

"And you bet, Mr. Norval, I'm going on the first ship if I have to go as a stoker. If there's one blessed trick of my trade that can help fellows like you, lead me to it!"

"Burke, you're a devilish good tonic."

A week later Norval had young Burke again to himself.

"Old man, I feel that I am not going west. It's rotten bad form for me to be holding down this bed any longer. I suppose I could be moved?"

"Yes, Mr. Norval. It would do you good, I think you ought to make an effort.

"I don't see why, old chap, but—here goes! Send for this man," he named Law's lawyer. "There is only one person in God's world I care to have see me now. Let them send for him."

So the lawyer came to the hospital, viewed Norval with outward calm; felt his heart tighten and his eyes dim, then wrote the short, stiff note that reached Anderson Law by Mam'selle's wood pile.

From that moment events moved rapidly. Taken from the still place where death seemed to have crushed everything, Donelle aroused herself slowly. She simply could not realize the wonderful thing that was happening; the marvellous fact that life still persisted and that she was part of it.

"He—he will not die?" she asked Law over and over again, apparently forgetting that she had put the question before.

"Die? Jim Norval? Certainly *not*," vowed Law with energy born of fear and apprehension.

"And," here Donelle's eyes would glow, "he did his duty to, to the last! I am so glad that he stayed with her, Man-Andy, until she needed him no longer. Then I'm glad he went over there to help. There will be nothing to be sorry for now. It was worth waiting for. And does he know about Tom, my husband?"

The word husband seemed to justify the rest.

"He does not, Donelle. And see here, child, we've got to go slow. Norval is going to come around all right and God knows he needs you, though he may not know it himself."

"But why, Man-Andy? And what is the matter with him, exactly? You have not told me."

There had been so much to say and do that details had been artistically eliminated.

"Well, his legs are wobbly." Law sought for the least objectionable symptoms.

"Wobbly? But he *has* them, hasn't he?" Donelle thought of the boys of Point of Pines who—had not.

"Legs? Jim Norval? Well, I should say so! But they've rather gone back on him for the moment. And his eyes——"

"His eyes?" Donelle clutched Law. "What about his eyes?"

"Now, see here, Donelle. I'm taking you to Norval because I believe you alone can cure him; make him want to live, but you've got to behave yourself. My girl, I don't know much myself, they've simply sent for me."

The river steamer was nearing New York. It was early morning and the gray mysterious mists were hiding the mighty, silent city. It was like a dream of a distant place. A solemn fear that strengthened and hardened Donelle rose in her at Law's words. She groped for, found, and held his hand like a good comrade.

"Whatever it is, Man-Andy," she whispered, "I'm ready. If—he never walks again, I can fetch and carry. If—if his dear eyes can never see the—the things he loved, he shall use my eyes,

always."

Law then understood that the girl near him drew her strength and force from hidden sources. He knew that he could depend upon her. He tightened his clasp of the little hand.

"And now," he explained, gulping unvoluntarily, "you'll understand why I cannot take you right to Norval."

"Yes, Man-Andy." The white face grew set.

"I'm going to have him moved from the hospital to my studio. I've got plenty of room and he'd like it there."

"Yes, have him moved, have him moved." Donelle said the words over as if learning a lesson. She was trying to visualize the helpless man.

"As for you, little girl, I'm going to send you to Revelle. He's waiting for you. I telegraphed from Quebec. There's a nice young body keeping house for him, a Mary Walden, who once mistook love of art *for* art. She got saved and is now making a kind of home for—well, people like you and old Revelle. She's found her heaven in doing this and you'll be safe and happy with her until you can come to Norval."

"Yes. Quite safe and happy, Man-Andy."

And through the days that followed Donelle made no complaint; no demands. She kept near Revelle; listened to his music with yearning memories; grew to love Mary Walden, who watched over her like a kind and wise sister.

Law came daily with his happy reports. Norval was gaining fast; had been overjoyed at the change from hospital to the studio; had borne the moving splendidly.

But still there was no mention of Donelle going to him, and the girl asked no questions.

At last Law was driven into the open. He was in despair. He'd got Norval to the studio, but there he seemed to find himself up against a wall.

He took Donelle into his confidence.

"Perhaps if we could get him to Point of Pines," she suggested, her own longing and homesickness adding force to the words. The noise and unrest of the city were all but killing her.

"No," Law shook his head. "I touched on that but he said he'd be hanged, or something to that effect, if he'd be carried like a funeral cortege to Point of Pines."

"Doesn't he ever speak of me?" The question was heavy with heartache and longing.

"No, and I wonder if you can get any happiness out of that? You ought to."

The deep eyes were raised to Law's.

"Yes. I see what you mean," Donelle smiled. Then: "Man-Andy, there are times when I think I must go to him. Fling everything aside and say 'here I am!'"

"There are times when I've wished to God you could, Donelle, but I asked the doctor and he said a shock would be a bad thing. No, we must wait."

Then he turned to Mary Walden, who was quietly sewing by the window. The plain, comfortable little woman was like a nerve tonic.

"Mary," he said, "I'm going to ask you to do something for me."

"Yes, Mr. Law." The voice in itself restored poise to the poiseless.

"I'm tuckered out, I want you to come for two or three hours each day and read to Norval. My voice gets raspy and he absorbs books like a sponge. Besides, I want to paint. I've got an idea on my chest. Revelle can take care of Donelle while you are with me."

And then, so suddenly that Law fell back before the onslaught, Donelle rushed to him.

"Why can't I go?" she demanded. No other word could describe the look and tone. "He could not see me!"

"But, good Lord, he still has his hearing, devilish sharp hearing."

"I could talk like Mary Walden! Why, Man-Andy, always I could act and talk like others, if I wanted to. Mamsey could tell you. I used to make her laugh. Please listen——"

And then in a kind of desperation Donelle made an effort, such a pitiful one, to speak in the calm, colourless tones of Mary Walden. They all wanted to laugh, even Revelle who, at the moment, entered the room, but the strained, tense look on the girl's face restrained them.

But a week later Donelle made a test. From another room she carried on quite a conversation with Law and, until she showed herself, he could have sworn he was talking to Mary Walden.

"Now, then!" Donelle exclaimed, confronting him almost fiercely, "you've got to let me try. Mary Walden and I have worked it all out. I'm to wear a red wig and a black dress with white collar and cuffs. If the bandages should slip, and he happened at that moment to see, he wouldn't know me. My voice is—is perfect, Man-Andy, and besides," here Donelle quivered, "I'm going to him, anyway!"

"In that case," and Law shrugged his shoulders, "I'll surrender. You're a young wonder, Donelle."

Then Law laughed, and laughs were rare treats to him those days.

And that night he broke the plan to Norval in the following manner:

"See here, boy, I'm willing to go on with this job of getting you on your feet provided I have my usual half holidays."

"I know I'm using you up, Andy. Why not put me in a home for incurables?"

"Nothing doing, Jim. They'd discover you even in this disguise."

"It's a sin not to have a law that permits the demolishing of derelicts." Norval's chin looked grim.

"So it is, but there you are!"

There was a pitiful pause. Then Law brought forth his suggestions as to a certain Mary Walden.

"She could read you to sleep while I daub, Jim."

"She? Good heavens! What is it, a pretty young female thing yearning to do her bit?"

"On the other hand, she's as plain as a pipe stem and is an equal wage advocate. She's red-headed," Law had seen the new wig, "dresses for her job, and is warranted to read without stopping for three hours at a stretch."

"Good Lord." Norval moved uneasily.

"Shall we corral her, Jim?"

"Yes, run her in mornings, I can smoke and snooze afternoons, and the evenings are your best times, Andy. You're almost human then. Yes, engage the red head."

So Donelle, after a few days of further practice in mimicking Mary Walden's calm, even voice, went to Norval.

CHAPTER XXIII
BOTH NORVAL AND DONELLE—SEE

When Donelle stood on the threshold of Anderson Law's studio and looked within, her courage almost deserted her. There, stretched on the steamer chair, was Norval, his eyes bandaged, his helpless legs covered by a heavy rug. He was very still and his long, thin hands were folded in a strange, definite way that seemed to say eloquently, "Finis."

The tears rose to Donelle's eyes, overflowed, and rolled down her white cheeks. She stretched out her empty, yearning arms toward the man across the room. Law, standing by, shook his head warningly. He feared the beautiful, dramatic plan was about to crumble, but in another moment he realized that the strength of Donelle lay in her depths, not her surfaces.

"Jim," he said, "here's Miss Walden."

Norval was alert on the instant. Making the best of things, as both Donelle and Law saw, he smiled, put out a hand, and said:

"Glad to see you, Miss Walden. It's awfully good of you to spend hours making life a little less of a bore to a fellow."

Donelle tried her brand-new voice:

"One has to make a living, Mr. Norval. This is a very pleasant way to do it."

Mary Walden had framed that speech and had coached her pupil. Then:

"May I go in the inner room and take off my hat?"

"Law, show her, please. You see, Miss Walden, I'm a squatter. This is Mr. Law's place."

In ten minutes Donelle was back, red wig, trim gown, white collar and cuffs, a demure and tragically determined young person.

Law began to enjoy the sport now that he knew Donelle was not going to betray him.

"I'm going over to the north end of the room," he said, "and daub. There's a book on the stand, Miss Walden, that Norval likes. There's a cigarette stump between the pages where we left off."

"Reading will not disturb you, Mr. Law?" Donelle was reaching for the book when suddenly Norval started up as if an electric current had gone through him. Donelle shivered, that cigarette stump had made her careless.

"What is the matter, Mr. Norval?" she asked in Mary Walden's most casual and businesslike tones.

"Oh! just for a moment, please excuse me, but you made me think of someone I once knew. The blind are subject to all sorts of fancies. Law, did you notice——" but Norval stopped short and Anderson Law waved frantic hands at Donelle.

She did not let go of herself after that for many days; not until her assumed voice became so familiar to Norval that those undertones lost their power over him.

Donelle read tirelessly, her practice with Jo stood her in good stead. Books, books, books! Greedily Norval demanded them, motionless he lay upon his couch, and listened while Law at the north window painted and dreamed, and then painted his dreams. He got Jo at the oven on canvas for the spring exhibit. Donelle silently wept before it, kissed the blessed face, and gave Law a bad half hour painting off the kiss!

Always while life lasted Donelle was to look back upon those studio days as a sacred memory. Life was using her and she was ready to pay—to pay. New York, until years later, meant to her only three high notes: terror of its bigness and noise, patience while she waited with Mary Walden until she was used, glory as she served the man she loved.

The flights through the city streets grew to be mere detail. She neither saw nor heeded the bustle and unrest. She was like a little, eager soul seeking, unerringly, its own.

There was to be a time when Donelle would know the splendour and meaning of the City, but not then. She was conscious at that time only of the crude joy of existence near her love.

He depended upon, watched for her; the maternal in her was so rapidly developed that at length Norval, from his dark place of helplessness, confided in her!

"Your voice is tired," he said one day; they had been reading Olive Schreiner's "Dreams."

"Oh, no, I'm not tired, only the little Lost Joy sort of filled me up." That was an expression of Jo's.

"But it's infernally true," Norval went on, "these 'Dreams' are about as gripping as anything I know of. If we cannot have exactly what we want in life, we are as blind as bats to, perhaps, the thing that is better than our wishes." Then, so suddenly that Donelle drew back in alarm, he asked:

"Are you a big young person, or a little one?"

"Why, I'm thin, but I'm quite tall." The voice was sterner than Mary Walden could have evolved.

"You think me rude, presuming?"

"Oh! no, Mr. Norval. I was only wishing I was, well—rather nicer to talk about."

Law, by the north window, went through a series of contortions that lightened the occasion.

"You know, here in the dark where I live now, one has to imagine a lot. Lately I've wanted to know exactly—exactly as words can portray, just how you look. Andy?"

"Yes, Jim. What's up?"

"Come here."

Law came forward, smudgy and dauby, pallette on thumb.

"Tell me how Miss Walden looks. I want to place her. She has a ghastly habit of escaping me when I'm alone and thinking her over. I can't seem to fix her."

"Well," Law stood off and regarded Donelle seriously, "She's red headed and thin. She ought to be fed up. I don't believe she can stand the city in summer. She doesn't walk very well, she's at her best when running."

"Oh! Mr. Law." Donelle found herself laughing in spite of herself.

"Well, you are. I've caught you running two or three times on the street. You looked as if you had your beginnings in wide spaces and could not forget them."

"I—I am a country girl," the practical young voice almost broke. "I hate the city. Maybe I do run sometimes. I always feel that something is after me."

"What?" asked Norval, and he, too, was laughing.

His old depression seldom came now when his faithful reader was present.

"I cannot describe it. I read a child's story once about a Kicker. It was described as a big, round thing with feet pointing in every direction. One didn't stand a chance when the Kicker got after him. The city seems like that to me. The round thing is full of noise, noise, noise; it just hurls itself along on its thousands of feet. I do run when I get thinking of it."

Norval leaned his head back with a delighted chuckle.

"Law," he asked presently, "does Miss Walden ever remind you of any one?"

Law looked at the red wig.

"No," he said contemplatively, "she doesn't."

A week after that, it was a warm, humid day, the windows of the studio were open.

"I suppose you'll go away when summer comes?" Norval asked.

"And you?" Donelle laid down her book.

"No. I'll stay on here. I mean to get a man to look after me. I'm going to send Law on an errand."

"I wish," Donelle's eyes were filled with the yellow glow so like sunlight. "I wish, Mr. Norval, that you would try to walk. Your masseur says you are better."

"What's the use, Miss Walden? At the best it would mean a crutch or a cane. I couldn't bring myself to that. A dog would be better, but I never saw but one dog I'd cotton to for the job."

"Where is that dog, Mr. Norval?"

"The Lord knows. Gone to the heaven of good, faithful pups, probably."

"Mr. Norval?"

"Yes, Miss Walden."

"I wish, while Mr. Law is out every morning for his airing, that you would try—you could lean on my shoulder—to walk! Just think how surprised he'd be some day to find you on your feet by the north window."

"Would that please you, Miss Walden, to act the part of a nice little dog leading a blind man?"

"I'd love it! And you must remember, your doctor says your eyes are better. Mr. Norval," here the words came with almost cruel sternness, "I think it is—it is cowardly for you not to try and make the best of things. Even if you can't see very well, or walk very well, you have no right to hold back from doing the best you can! It is mean and small."

Ah! if Norval could have seen the eyes that were searching his grim face.

"You may be right. I begin to feel I am not going to die!" Norval drew in a deep breath, his lips relaxed.

"The shock is passing," Donelle's voice softened. "You will recover, I know you will—if you are brave."

"The shock! Good God, the shock! It was like hell let loose. For months I heard the splitting noise, the hot sand in my face——!"

It was the first time Norval had spoken of the war, and the drops of perspiration started on his forehead.

"Don't talk of it, Mr. Norval. Please let me help you to your feet. Just a few steps."

Donelle was afraid of the excitement she had aroused.

In self-defense Norval let her help him. He would not lie still and remember. His self-imposed silence, once broken, might overpower him. Something dynamic was surging in him.

"I cannot stand," he said weakly. "You see?"

"Of course the first time is hard. You may fall halfway, but I'll catch you, and I—I won't tell."

Norval laughed nervously.

"You're a brick," he faltered.

"Now then, Mr. Norval. Put your hand on my shoulder, the other hand on this chair. Why, you're not falling. Come on!"

Two, three steps Norval took, while the veins stood out on his temples.

"Good God!" he muttered under his breath, "I'm not crumbling, that's a sure thing."

The next day he did a little better; the tenth day he reached the north window with the aid of the chair and the little shoulder, that felt, under his hand, like fine steel. They kept their mighty secret from Law.

"What's on the easels?" Norval asked on the morning of the fourteenth day when he felt the breeze from the north coming in through the half-opened window.

"One easel has a girl on it; a girl with a fiddle."

Norval breathed hard, then gave a laugh.

"Fairer than morning, lovelier than the daylight," he whispered.

"Yes. Why, yes, Mr. Norval. Those words are on a piece of paper hanging from the frame. How did you know?"

"Miss Walden, I painted that picture. You may not believe it, but I did. It is a portrait of about the purest soul I ever met."

"Can you tell me about her?"

"No, she's not the kind to tell about."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Norval." But Donelle's face was aglow.

"And the other easel?" Norval was asking. "What's on that?"

"Such a dear, funny woman. She's standing by a big oven, an outdoor oven; she's got loaves of bread on something that looks like a flat spade."

Norval's face was a study.

"Where do they use those ovens?" Donelle asked.

"Oh! somewhere in Canada."

"Did you ever know this dear, funny woman, Mr. Norval."

"She's not the kind one *knows*. I've seen her, thank heaven! I'm glad to be able to recall her when I'm alone."

"Yes—she looks like that kind." Donelle threw a kiss to the pictured Jo.

Another week and then the chair was discarded. Quite impressively Norval, his hand on the small, steady shoulder, did the length of the studio.

"It's great," he said like a happy boy. "Miss Walden, you ought to have the cross, iron, gold, or whatever it is they give to brave women."

"I have," Donelle whispered delightedly; "I have."

"What is it made of, Miss Walden, this cross that you have won?"

"You'll have to guess."

"You're a pert young secretary if that is the title your job goes by. Aren't you afraid I'll bounce you?"

"I'm going to bounce myself."

"What!" The hand on the shoulder tightened. "You're going away?"

"Yes, I cannot stand a summer in the city. That Kicker almost caught me this morning."

"You treat me like a spoiled child, Miss Walden. Amusing me, coaxing me; you'll be bringing me toys next."

"You're a strong man, now, Mr. Norval, that is why I'm going away. Soon you will not need me. The doctor told Mr. Law yesterday that surely you would see."

"Did he? Don't fool me, Miss Walden. I do not want to be eased up. Did he say that?"

"Yes, I heard him."

A growing excitement stirred Norval and that afternoon he met Law halfway across the room! Not even the little shoulder aided him. He stretched out his hand and said:

"Andy, here I am!"

For a moment Law reeled back. Of late he feared that Norval would defeat all their hopes by his indifference.

"You—you've done this?" he said to Donelle, who stood behind Norval, her trembling hands covering her quivering lips.

"No, he did it quite by himself, Mr. Law. He's been so brave," she managed to say, the tears in Law's eyes making her afraid that she might lose control over her own shaking nerves.

"Lord, Jim!" Law was gripping Norval's hand. "I feel as if—well, as if I'd seen a miracle."

The next day the specialist confirmed what Donelle had said about the eyes.

"You're going to see again, Norval," was the verdict. "You'll have to go slow, wear dark glasses for awhile, but most of all, forget what brought this about. Your nerves have played the deuce with you."

"Yes," Norval replied, "for some time I've had that line on my nerves, ever since Miss Walden bullied me into walking."

The afternoon of that same day Norval surprised Donelle by announcing that he was dead tired of reading.

"I want to talk," he said. "Where is Law?"

"He went to—to see Professor Revelle. He said he wanted some music; that you," the pale face broke into a pathetic smile, "that you had got on his nerves. Unless he got out he'd be——"

"What, Miss Walden? What, exactly?"

"Well, he'd be damned! That is what he said, exactly."

"He's beginning to treat me like a human being, Miss Walden. I love Law when he's at his worst. I suppose I've been a big trial, moping here. Have I injured your nerves?"

"No—o! Not for life."

"You're a comical little codjer. Excuse me, Miss Walden. There are times still when you remind me of someone to whom I once dared to speak my mind."

Then, quite suddenly:

"Where are you going this summer?"

"I have not decided yet, Mr. Norval. Why?"

"Nothing, I was only thinking, but I'll have to speak to Law first. One thing is sure, I'm not going to be an ass much longer. See here, Miss Walden, you're a sturdy sort; you've stuck it out with me at my lowest. I'm going to repay you for the trouble I've made you by making more for

you. I'm going to go away this summer, too. I've wanted to go lately. I've got to dreaming about it. I'm going to a little place hidden away in Canada. I have something to do there."

"Yes?" The word was a mere breath.

"For a time I couldn't contemplate it; I was too proud to show my battered hulk. Now it seems that I have no longer any right to consider myself. I was going to ask Mr. Law to carry a message for me to a young girl there; the girl on that canvas by the window. Instead—I'm going to carry it!"

Donelle's hands gripped each other. She struggled to keep her voice steady, cold.

"I think you ought to carry your message yourself, if you can. You have no right to consider only yourself," she faltered.

"I wasn't, entirely." This came humbly from Norval. "The girl to whom I am going is the sort who would be deeply sorry for me; she'd go to any lengths to make up to me, if she could. Of course, you understand, I would not let her, but I'd hate to make life harder for her."

"Perhaps she has a right to—to judge for herself." Donelle was holding firm.

"Well, I don't know, Miss Walden. Such a woman as you might judge wisely—even for yourself. She wouldn't. She's the kind that risks everything; she's what you might call a divine gambler."

"Poor girl!"

"Yes, that's what I often say of her—poor girl!"

It was twilight in the quiet studio; there was no one to see Donelle's tears.

"I'm going to tell you something," Norval said suddenly, "something that has been troubling me lately. At first it didn't seem vital, it seemed rather like a detail. I'm wondering how a woman would consider it."

"I'd love to hear unless you'd rather have me read to you, Mr. Norval."

"No, for a wonder, I'd rather tell you a story."

CHAPTER XXIV
THE GLORY BREAKS THROUGH

And then Norval told Donelle about Tom Gavot.

"You see that girl in Canada is married—was married, I mean; the young fellow is dead. He lies under French earth in a pretty little village that's been battered to the ground. Some day it will rise gloriously again. I like to think of that Canadian boy sleeping there, waiting.

"He was a surveyor and, before a dirty sniper got him, he used to prowl about the desolated country and lay out roads! In his mind, you know. He was a fanciful chap, but a practical worker.

"I ran across him one day; I had known him before. He had never liked me when I knew him in Canada, but most anything goes when you're over there. He got to—to rather chumming with me at last, and many a laugh I've had with him over the roads he saw through the hell about us.

"Once we had silently agreed to ignore the past—and the poor fellow had something to forgive in it, though not all he had supposed—we got on famously. We really got to feel like brothers. You do—there. He was a queer chap through and through. He always expected he was going to do the white-livered thing and he always did the bravest when the snap came. He did his thinking and squirming beforehand. At the critical moment he just acted up like—well, like the man he was.

"Why, he would talk by the hour of what a good idea it was of the Government's to let the families of men, shot as traitors, think them heroes who had died serving their country. He often said it didn't matter, one way or the other, for the man who got what was coming to him, but for them who had to live on it was something to think the best, even if it were not so.

"Then he'd write letters and cards, to be sent home in case he should meet a traitor's death. Poor devil! I have some of those letters now."

A throbbing, aching pause. Then:

"Miss Walden, does this depress you too much?"

"No, it—I—I love it, Mr. Norval. Please go on; it is a beautiful story."

Donelle sat in the deepening shadows, her eyes seeming to hold the sunlight that had long since faded behind the west.

"Well, there isn't much more to tell and the end—unless one happens to know how things are over there: how big things seem little, and little things massive—the end seems almost like a

grisly joke.

"We had got to thinking the French place where we were billeted was as safe as New York. I wasn't a trained man, I was doing whatever happened to be lying around loose. They called it reconstruction work. Good Lord! My special job, though, just then was driving an ambulance. Well, quite unexpectedly one night the enemy got a line on us from God knows what distance, and they just peppered us. There was a hospital there, too. They must have known that, the fiends, and, for a time, things were mighty ticklish. The boys knew their duty, however, and did it magnificently. Those Canadians were superb; given a moment to catch their breath, they were as steady as steel. By morning the worst was over, the shelling, you know, and they began to bring the boys in; back from the fight, back to where the hospital used to be. Out in the open doctors and nurses were working; the ones who had escaped I never saw such nerve; they just worked over the poor hurt fellows as if nothing had happened.

"I was jumping about. There was plenty to do even for an unskilled fellow who could only drive an ambulance. I kept bringing in loads—such loads! And I kept an eye open for the chap from Canada that I knew best of all.

"About noon a giant of a fellow who, they said, had fought like a devil all night, came up to me blubbering like a baby. It seems my man had been fighting beside this boy, doing what one might expect, the big thing! The two of them had crawled into a shell-hole and worked from that cover where they were comparatively safe. In a lull—and here comes the grim joke—a poor dog ran in front of them with a piece of barbed wire caught about his haunches. The brute was howling as he ran and my—my chap just went after him, caught him, pulled the wire out, and—keeled over himself. A sniper had done for him!

"He wanted me; had sent his comrade to find me. I got there just before the end.

"'You've heard?' he asked, and when I nodded he whispered that I was to tell his wife; he knew she would understand. He was quite firm about my telling her, he was like a boy over that, and I promised. He only spoke once again.

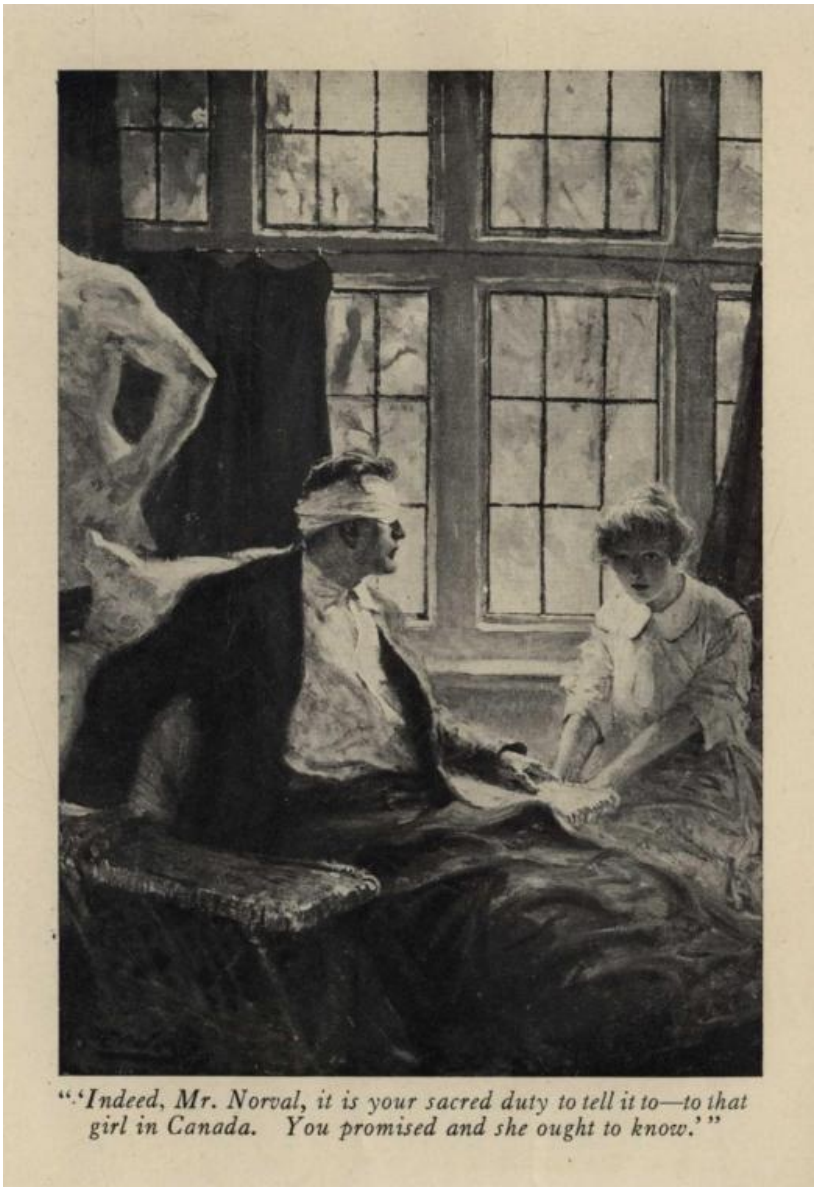
"'It paid!' he said, and with that he went over to his rest.

"Are you crying, Miss Walden?"

"Yes, yes, but oh! how glorious they are, those boys!"

"I should not have told you this story."

"I thank God you have! And indeed, Mr. Norval it is your sacred duty to tell it to—to that girl in Canada. You promised and she ought to know."



"'Indeed, Mr. Norval, it is your sacred duty to tell it to—to that girl in Canada. You promised and she ought to know.'"

"'Indeed, Mr. Norval, it is your sacred duty to tell it to—to that girl in Canada. You promised and she ought to know.'"

"You, a woman, think that? Don't you think it might be better for her if she didn't know?"

"How dare you! Oh! forgive me, Mr. Norval. I was only thinking of—of—the girl."

"Well, lately, I've been wondering. You see, Miss Walden, soon after I saw my friend safe, I got my baptism shock—gas and the rest. It flattened me out, but now I am beginning to feel, to suffer. Using my legs has brought me to myself."

"And you will go and keep your promise, Mr. Norval, you will?"

"Yes, that is what I've been turning over in my mind."

"You see," Donelle was holding herself tight, "that, that girl in Canada might be thinking, knowing her husband, that he had not played the man at the last. The truth might save so much. And don't you understand how he, that poor boy, had to save the dog? It was saving himself. Another could have afforded to see the folly of exposing himself, but he could not. Had he stayed in the hole he might have been a coward after!"

"I had not thought of that, Miss Walden. The deadly absurdity of the act made me bitter. I saw—just the dog part, you know."

"I believe the girl in Canada will see the man part." The words came solemnly. "Yes, it did pay; it did!"

"You have convinced me, Miss Walden. I must go and keep my promise.

"To-morrow they are going to make a big test of my eyes. After that I will start. I want you and Law to come, too."

"Oh! I——"

"Couldn't you do this just as a last proof of your good heartedness, Miss Walden?"

Donelle struggled with her tears. Her heart was beating wildly; beating for Tom and for the

helpless man before her. She, sad little frail thing, stood between the dead and the pitiful living.

"Yes, I will go," she said at length.

"Thank you, Miss Walden."

Norval smiled in the darkness.

The next day the test came—the test to his eyes. Norval meant that his first look should rest upon Miss Walden!

He heard her moving about, getting books and tables out of the doctor's way. He heard Law excitedly directing her, and then—the bandages fell away. There was a moment of tense silence.

"What do you see, Norval?" the doctor asked.

Norval saw a slim, little black-robed back and a red head! But all he said was:

"I see Andy's ugly mug!"

The words were curiously broken and hoarse. Then:

"Andy, old man, get a hold on me; it's almost too good to be true!"

In July they went to Canada. By that time Norval could make quite a showing by walking between Law and Miss Walden. He wore heavy dark glasses and only had periods of "seeing things." At such moments Miss Walden was conspicuously absent.

The *River Queen* swept grandly up to the dock in the full glory of high noon. Jean Duval was there on his crutches; he was at his old job, grateful and at peace.

"Where are we going?" Norval asked. He had hardly dared put the question.

"Mam'selle Jo Morey is going to take us in," Law replied. "At least she'll feed us. It's a cabin in the woods for us, Jim."

"That sounds good to me, Andy." Norval drew in his breath sharply.

"The pines are corking," he added. Then: "Miss Walden, how do you like the looks of the place?"

Donelle, under a heavy veil, was feasting her eyes on Point of Pines; on a blessed figure waiting by a sturdy cart.

"It looks like heaven!" replied the even voice of Mary Walden.

Jo Morey came to the gang plank, and found her own among the passengers. Then her brows drew close, almost hiding her eyes.

"Those are my boarders!" she proclaimed loudly, seizing Donelle. "This way, please."

Law was the only one who spoke on the drive up. Jo sat on the shaft, the others on the broad seat.

"I miss Nick," he remarked.

Mam'selle turned and gave him a stern look. Could he not know, the stupid man, that Nick would have given the whole thing away? Nick had a sense that defied red wigs and false voices. Nick was at that moment indignantly scratching splinters off the inside of the cow-shed door.

There was a sumptuous meal in the spotless and radiant living room. There was a gentle fire on the hearth, though why, who could tell?

And then, according to orders when the sun was not too bright, Norval announced that he was going to take off his "screens."

"I'm going to look about for a full hour," he said quietly, but with that tone in his voice that always made Donelle bow her head.

"Mam'selle!"

"Yes, Mr.——" Jo wanted to say Richard Alton, instead she managed the Norval with a degree of courtesy that put heart in the man who listened.

"Mam'selle, I haven't noticed Donelle's voice. Where is she?"

"She'll come, if you want her, Mr. Norval."

Want her? Want her? The very air throbbed with the want.

"She's upstairs," added Jo, looking grimmer than ever.

"I—I have something to tell her about Tom Gavot—her husband." Norval smiled strangely.

"I'll call her, Mr. Norval."

Then they all waited.

Law walked to the window and choked. In the distance he could hear the howling demands of the imprisoned Nick and the swishing of the outgoing tide.

Mam'selle stood by the foot of the little winding stairs. She was afraid of herself, poor Jo, afraid she was going to show what she felt!

Norval sat in the best rocker, his hands clasped rigidly. He had not removed his screens, he did not intend to until he heard upon the stairs the step for which he hungered.

And then Donelle came so softly that the listening man did not know she was there until she

stood beside him. She had put on a white dress that Mam'selle had spun for her. The pale hair was twisted about her little head in the old simple way; the golden eyes were full of the light that had never shone there until love lighted it.

Law and Jo had stolen from the room.

"Here I am!"

Then Norval took down the screens and opened his arms.

"My love, my love," he whispered, "come!"

"Why——" Donelle drew back, her eyes widened.

"Donelle, Donelle, do you think you could hide yourself from me? Why, it was because I saw you that I wanted to live; wanted to make the most of what I had.

"Child, the day you got me out of the chair I was sure! Before that I hoped, prayed; then I knew! I drew the bandage off a little and I saw your eyes."

"My beloved!"

And Donelle, kneeling beside him, raised her face from his breast.

"I am going to kiss you now, Donelle," he said, "but to think that such as I am is the best that life has for you, is——!"

"Don't," she whispered, "don't! Remember the dear Dream of First Joy, my man. I never lost our First Joy. God let me keep her safe."

From across the road came the wild, excited yelps of the released Nick. Slowly, for Nick was old, he padded up the steps, into the room, up to the girl on the floor beside the chair. Donelle pressed the shaggy head to her.

"Nick always has kept First Joy, too," she whispered. And oh, but her eyes were wonderful.

"And you'll play again for me, Donelle?" Norval still held her, though he heard Law and Mam'selle approaching.

"Sometime, dear man, sometime I'll bring the fiddle to the wood-cabin. Sometime after I get strings. The strings, some of them, have snapped."

Late that evening, quite late, nine o'clock surely, Law and Jo stood near the hearth where the embers still glowed.

"Where are the children?" Law asked as if all the mad happenings of the day were bagatelles.

"Out on the road, the road!" Jo's face quivered. "The moonlight is wonderful, the road is as clear as day." She was thinking of Tom Gavot while her great heart ached with pity of it all.

"Queer ideas that young Gavot had about roads," Law said musingly, "Jim has told me."

"Poor boy, he got precious little for himself out of life," Jo flung back.

The bitterness lay deep in Mam'selle's heart. Almost her love for Donelle, her joy in her, were darkened by what seemed to Jo to be forgetfulness. That was unforgivable in her eyes.

"I wonder!" Law said gently; he was learning to understand the woman beside him.

"If this were all of the road, you might feel the way you do. But it's a mighty little part of it, Mam'selle. To most of us is given short sight, to a few, long. I would wager all I have that young Gavot always saw over the hilltop."

"That's a good thing to say and feel, Mr. Law." Jo tried to control her brows, failed, and let Law look full in her splendid eyes.

"Life's too big for us, Mam'selle," he said, "too big for us. There are times when it lets us run along, lets us believe we are managing it. Then comes something like this war that proves that when life needs us, it clutches us again.

"It needs those two out there on the road in the moonlight, one groping, the other leading; on and on! Life will use them for its own purposes. No use in struggling, Mam'selle; life has us all by the throat."

"You're a strange man, Mr. Law."

Jo was trembling.

"You're a strange woman, Mam'selle."

There was a pause. Out on the road Donelle was singing a little French song, one she had brought with her out of the Home at St. Michael's.

"You and I," Law continued, "have learned some of life's lessons in a hard school, Mam'selle. Many of our teachers have been the same; they've made us *hew* where others have molded, but I'm thinking we have come to know the true values of things, you and I. The value of labour, companionship on the long road, a hearth fire somewhere at the close of the day."

And now Law held out his hand as a good friend does to another.

"I wish, Mam'selle," his voice grew wonderfully kind, "I wish you could bring yourself to—travel the rest of the way with me."

The door was wide open, the fair moonlight lay across the porch, but Jo was thinking of another night when the howling wind had pressed a warning against the door and Pierre Gavot defiled the shelter she had wrung from her life battle—Pierre the Redeemed!

"Are you asking me to marry you, Mr. Law?" Jo's deep eyes were seeking an answer in the look which was holding her. She was dazed, frightened.

"Will you honour me by bearing my name, Mam'selle? Will you let me help you keep the fire upon the hearth for them?"

Nearer and nearer came Donelle and Norval, Donelle still singing with the moonlight on her face.

"I have fought my way up from lonely boyhood, Mam'selle. I've lived a lonely man! And you, Mam'selle, I know your story. When all is said and done, loneliness is the hardest thing to bear."

Tears stood in Jo's eyes—tears!

"You are a strange man," she repeated.

"And you a strange woman, Mam'selle."

But they were smiling now, smiling as people smile who, at the turn of the road, see that it does not end, but goes on and on and on.

THE END

THE COUNTRY LIFE PRESS
GARDEN CITY, N. Y.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK MAM'SELLE JO ***

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg™ License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg™ work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

> This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg™ website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that:

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, “Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation.”

- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.

- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.

• You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you ‘AS-IS’, WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™’s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see

Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations ($1 to $5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate.

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: www.gutenberg.org.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.