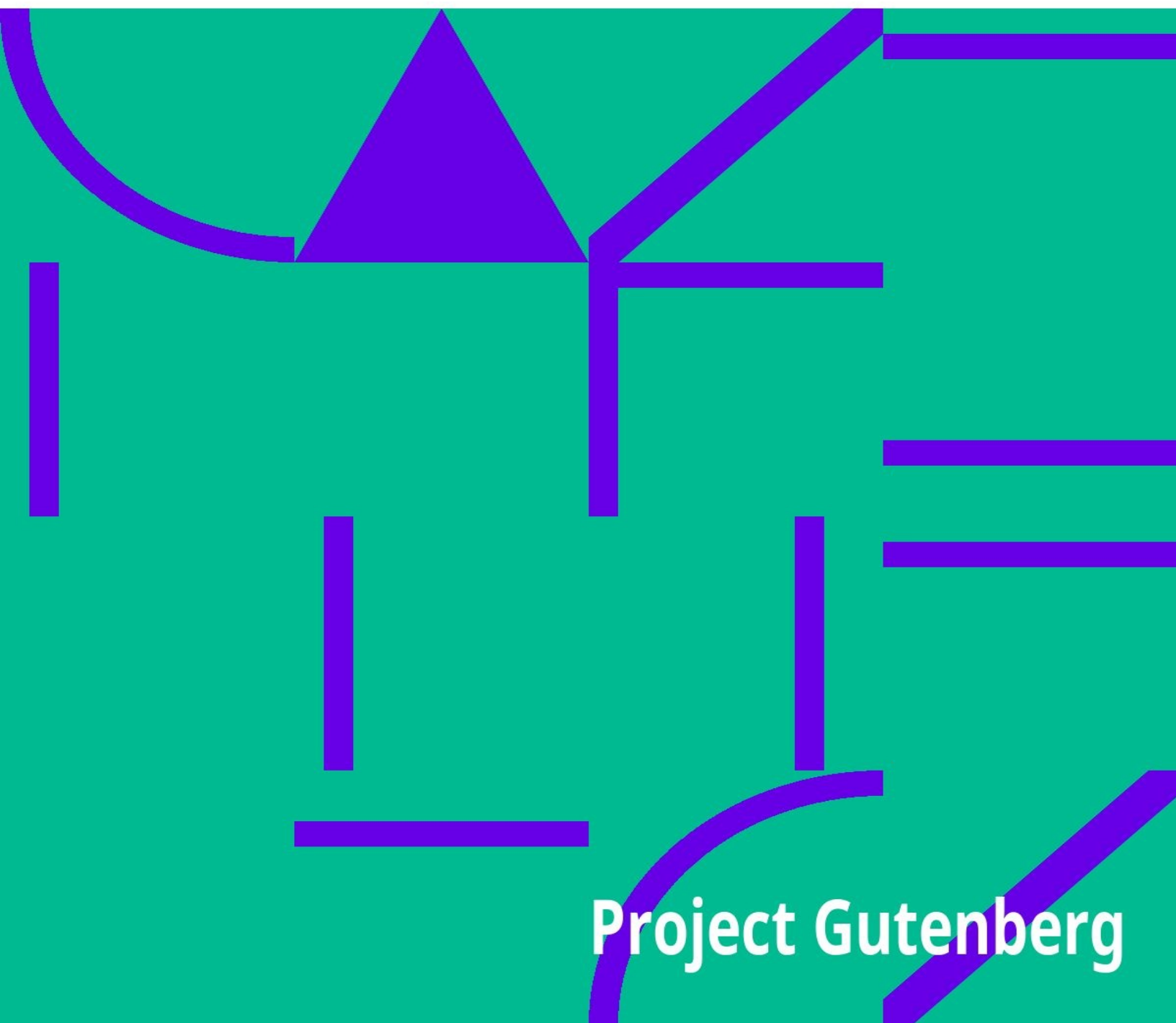


Janet of the Dunes

Harriet T. Comstock



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Title: Janet of the Dunes

Author: Harriet T. Comstock

Release Date: October 17, 2007 [eBook #22998]

Language: English

Character set encoding: ISO-8859-1

***START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK JANET OF THE
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JANET.

J A N E T .

Frontispiece

JANET OF
THE DUNES

BY
HARRIET T. COMSTOCK

AUTHOR OF
JOYCE OF THE NORTH WOODS,
A SON OF THE HILLS, ETC.

emblem

GROSSET & DUNLAP
PUBLISHERS :: :: NEW YORK

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LOVINGLY
I Dedicate this Book
TO
CARRIE LOUISE SMITH.

HER FRIENDSHIP WAS, AND ALWAYS WILL BE, A LIGHT TO
ME UPON MY WAY. THE CHART SHE SAILED BY
WILL GUIDE MY COURSE AND BRING ME, I
HOPE, AT LAST, TO THE HARBOR
WHERE SHE HAS GONE.

HARRIET T. COMSTOCK.

FLATBUSH, BROOKLYN, N.Y.
June 15, 1907.

PREFACE

In this story of the dunes, the Hills and the Light, I have not attempted any character drawing, although on the easterly shore of Long Island there are many people who have retained, together with the plain old English names which they brought with them by way of Connecticut and Rhode Island, a simplicity and sturdiness of character not to be found elsewhere, I believe, so near the great cosmopolis, and which is worthy a place in song and story.

It has been my good fortune to mingle for many summers with these kindly folk, and particularly with a little group of gentle, rather bashful and silent men forming a crew, with their captain, of one of the United States Life Saving Stations.

It is my hope that this story, if it does nothing else, will in some small measure enhance the not-too-strong interest in which the poorly paid, obscurely enacted heroism of the men in this service is held by the general public.

They have not the advantages, like our soldiers and firemen, of dressy uniforms and frequent parade before us. They would be greatly embarrassed by anything like public homage; yet how beneficent is their service! The lonely isolation of the Government Houses; the long, oftentimes dangerous patrols every night from sunset to sunrise; their detachment from home and social ties,—all speak for the dignified bravery of these men along our coasts, and should call forth from us a grateful and appreciative tribute.

HARRIET T. COMSTOCK.

FLATBUSH, BROOKLYN, N.Y.
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Janet of the Dunes

CHAPTER I

A sweeping curve of glistening beach. A full palpitating sea lying under the languid heat of a late June afternoon. The low, red Life Saving Station, with two small cottages huddling close to it in friendly fashion, as if conscious of the utter loneliness of sea and sand dune. And in front of one of these houses sat Cap'n Billy and his Janet!

They two seemed alone in the silent expanse of waste and water, but it in no wise disturbed them. Billy was industriously mending a huge fish net spread out upon the sands. Janet was planning a mode of attack, in order to preserve unto herself the very loneliness and isolation that surrounded them.

In Janet's hands Cap'n Billy knew himself a craven coward. Only by keeping his eyes away from the face near him could he hope for success in argument. And Cap'n Billy, with all the strength of his simple, honest nature, meant to succeed in the present course—if Janet would permit him!

It was yet to be discovered how beautiful was the girl, crouching upon the sands. So unlike was she to the young people of the Station that she repelled, rather than attracted, the common eye. Tall, slim, and sinewy was she, with the quick strength of a boy. The smooth, brown skin had the fineness and delicacy of exquisite bronze. Some attempt had been made earlier in the day to confine the splendid hair with strong strands of seaweed, but the breeze of the later morning had treated the matter contemptuously, and the shining waves were beautifully disordered. Out of all keeping with this brown ruggedness were Janet's eyes. Like colorless pools they lay protected by their dark fringes, until emotion moved them to tint and expression. Did the sky of Janet's day prove kind, what eyes could be as soft and blue as hers? Did storm threaten, a grayness brooded, a grayness quite capable of changing to ominous black.

Cap'n Billy, trained to watching for storms and danger, knew the signals, and

now, for safety, lay low.

The eyes were mild and sun-filled, the face bewitchingly friendly; but when Janet took to wheedling, Billy hugged the shore.

"You don't really mean it, Cap'n, now, do you?"

"I do that!" muttered Billy, and he pulled the twine energetically.

"What, send your own Janet off to the mainland to stay—except when she runs back?" This last in a tone that might have moved a rock to pity.

"Yes, that, Janet; and ye mustn't come on too often, nuther."

"Oh! Cap'n, and just when we've got the blessed beach to ourselves! Mrs. Jo G. and her kind gone; only the crew and us! Why, Cap'n, this is life!"

"Now, Janet, 'tain't no use fur ye t' coax. Ye're goin' on seventeen, ain't ye?"

"Seventeen, Cap'n, and eleven months!"

"It's distractin' the way ye've shot up. Clar distractin'; an' I ain't been an' done my duty by ye, nuther." Billy yanked a strand of cord vigorously.

"Yes, you have, Cap'n," Janet's tone was dangerously soft; "I'm the very properest girl at the Station. Look at me, Cap'n Daddy!"

But Billy steeled himself, and rigidly attended to the net. "Well," he admitted, "ye're proper enough 'long some lines. I've taught ye t' conquer yer 'tarnal bad temper—"

"You've taught me to know its power, Cap'n Daddy," warned Janet with a glint of darkness in the laughing serenity of her gaze; "the temper is here just the same, and powerful bad, upon provocation!"

A smile moved the corners of Billy's humorous lips.

"An' the bedpost is here, too, Janet. Lordy! I can see ye now as I used t' tie ye up till the storm was over. What a 'tarnal little rascal ye war! The waves of tantrums rolled over ye, one by one, yer yells growin' less an' less; an' bime by ye called out 'tween squalls, 'Cap'n Daddy, it's most past!'" There was a mist over Billy's eyes. "Ye 'tarnal little specimint!" he added.

"But, Cap'n, dear!" Janet was growing more and more dangerous; "I've been so good. Just think how I've gone across the bay, to the Corners, to school. My! how educated I am! Storm or ice, I leave it to you, Daddy, did I ever complain?"

"Never, Janet. I've stood on the dock and watched yer sail comin' 'fore the gale,

till it seemed like I would bust with fear. An' the way ye handled yer ice boat in the pursuit of knowledge-gettin' was simple miraculous! No, I ain't a-frettin' over yer larnin'-gettin'; it's the us'n' of the same as is stirrin' me now. With such edication as ye've got in spite of storm an' danger, ye ought to be shinin' over on the mainland 'mong the boarders!"

"Boarders!" sniffed Janet, tossing her ruddy mane; "boarders! Folks have gone crazy-mad over the city folks who have swooped down upon us, like a—a—hawk! Every house full of those raving lunatics going on about the views, and the—the artistic desolation! That's what those dirty, spotty looking things on the Hills call it. Cap'n, you just ought to see them going about in checked kitchen aprons, with daubs all over them—sunbonnets adangling on their heads, little wagons full of truck for painting pictures—and such pictures! Lorzy! if I lived in a place that looked like those—sketches, they call them—I'd—I'd go to sea, Cap'n Daddy—to sea!"

"But they be folks, Janet, an' it's a new life an' a chance, an' it ain't decint fur ye, with all yer good pints, t' be on the beach along with the crew, all alone!"

"Cap'n, I do believe you want to marry me off! get rid of me! oh, Daddy!" Janet plunged her head in her lap and was the picture of outraged maidenhood.

"'T ain't so! An' ye know it!" cried Billy. "But Mrs. Jo G., 'fore they sailed off, opened my eyes."

"Mrs. Jo G.!" snapped Janet, raising her head and flashing a look of resentment, "I thought so! What did she suggest—that I might come to her house and wait—wait, just think of it, Cap'n, wait upon those boarders?" She had suggested that, and something even worse, so Billy held his peace.

"It's simply outrageous the way our people are going on," the girl continued; "they are bent upon beggaring the city folks! Beggaring them, really! they have no consciences about the methods they take to—to rob them!"

"Janet, hold yer tiller close!"

"Oh! I know, Cap'n, but I do not want to take part in it all. I want to stay alone with you. Think of the patrols, Cap'n Daddy! I'll take them all with you. Sunset, midnight, and morning! You and I, Daddy, dear, under the stars, or through storm! Ah, I've ached for just this!"

Billy felt his determination growing weak.

"I've made 'rangements, Janet; Cap'n David he's goin' to board ye, an' ye can

look about, an' if ye see an openin' t' get a chance t' better yerself—not in the marryin' way, but turnin' a penny—why it will all help, my girl, an' ye ought t' be havin' the chance with the city folks, what all the others is havin'."

"Oh! you sly old Cap'n Daddy! And do you realize that Cap'n Davy's Susan Jane isn't any joke to live with? You don't hear Davy tattling, but other folks are not so particular. Daddy, dear, I just cannot!" And with this the girl sprang into the net, rolled over and over and then lay ensnarled in the meshes at Billy's feet, her laughing eyes shining through the strands.

"Ye 'tarnal rascal!" cried Billy.

"You think you've caught me!" whined Janet, "you think you've got me! Oh! Cap'n, I'm afraid of the city folks!"

"Fraid!" sneered Billy. "My Janet 'fraid o' anythin'!"

"Yes, honest true! I do not want to be near them. I scent danger; not to them, but to me!"

Billy, bereft of his hands' occupation, looked out seaward. He was well-nigh distracted. Always his duty to this girl was uppermost in his simple mind; but his love and anxiety mingled with it. He no more understood her than he understood the elements that made havoc along the coast and necessitated his brave calling. He waged war with the sea to save his kind; and he struggled against the opposing forces in Janet that he in no wise understood, in order that she, as a girl among others, should have her rights.

Wild little creature as she had always been, Billy had used all the opportunities at hand to tame her into a similarity to the other children of the Station; and when he had failed, he gloried in the failure, and grew more distracted. Braving opposition in the girl and the dangers of Nature, Billy had forced the child across the bay to the school at the Corners. What there was to learn in that primitive institution, Janet had learned, and much more besides in ways of which Billy knew nothing.

For years the quaint seaside village had lain unnoticed in its droning course. Ships, now and again, had been driven upon the bar outside the dunes, and at such times the bravery of the quiet crew at the Government Station was sung in the distant city papers.

Now and again the superiority of the Point Quinton Light would be mentioned. But Captain David never knew of it. He tended and loved the Light with a fatherly interest. It was his life's trust, and David was a poet, an inarticulate poet,

who spoke only through his shining Light. The government was his master. David thought upon the government in a personal way and served it reverently.

Then an artist had discovered Quinton-by-the-Sea. He took a painting of it back to the restless town, a painting full of color of dune, sea, bay, and hundred-toned Hills, with never a tree to stay the progress of the unending breezes. That was sufficient! The artist was great enough to touch the heart and Quinton was doomed to be famous! But it was only the beginning now. Every house in the village had opened its doors to the strangers; and every pocket yawned for possible dollars. Tents were pitched in artistic arrangement on the Hills, but the hotel was not yet. Managers waited to see if the fever would last. While they waited, the village folk reaped a breathtaking harvest. Mrs. Jo G., the only woman who had lived at the Life Saving Station in her own home, packed up and went "off," with baggage and children, to open the old farmhouse on the mainland and take boarders. Before going she left food for Billy to digest.

"This be Janet's chance," she said, standing with her hands on her hips, and her sunbonnet shading her fair, pinched face—nothing ever tanned Mrs. Jo G. "She can turn in an' help wait on table, or she kin take in washin'. It won't hurt her a mite. Washin' will have t' be done, an' the city folks will pay. Janet can make them fetch and carry their own duds. She can stand on her dignity; an' wash money is as good as any other."

Billy experienced a distinct chill at this last proposition. Why, he could hardly have told. During Janet's babyhood and early childhood he had assumed all household duties himself. Later he and Janet had shared them together over tub and table, but that Janet should wash for the boarders was harrowing!

"You think she's too good, Cap'n," sneered Mrs. Jo G., "but she ain't. She's wild, an' she ought t' get her bearin's. She ain't any different from my girls nor the others, though you act as if you thought so. You ain't as strong as you once was, Cap'n, an' come the time when you pass in your last check, who's goin' t' do for Janet? An' how's she goin' t' know how t' do fur herself? You ain't actin' fair by the girl. It's clear Providence, the way the city folks has fallen, as you might say, right in our open mouths. There'll be plenty of chances on the mainland fur Janet t' turn a penny, an' get an idea of self-support. But she ought t' be there, and not stuck here!"

Mrs. Jo G. had hardly turned the Point, after this epoch-making speech, before Billy was starting for the Light and the one friend of his heart.

"David," he explained, viewing his friend through a fog of thick, blue smoke, "I

want that ye should take my girl! Once Janet is here, she'll be mighty spry 'bout gettin' in t' somethin'. I don't want her t' take t' washin' or servin' strangers, 'less she wants t', but when 'sperience *an'* money is floatin' loose, my girl ought t' be out with her net."

"Course!" nodded David; "an' Janet's a rare fisher fur these new waters."

"Ye'll keep yer eye on her, David—knowin' all ye do?"

The furrows deepened on Billy's brow. David took his pipe from his mouth.

"God's my witness! I will that!" he said.

Thus things stood while Janet, coiled in the meshes, lay laughing up at Billy.

"What do you think of your haul, Cap'n Billy Daddy?" The man sighed. "You wouldn't let those dreadful old sharks—they *are* sharks, Cap'n—you wouldn't let them hurt your poor little fish, now would you?" The rippling, girlish laugh jarred Billy's nerves. He must take a new tack.

"See here, Janet, do ye mind this? Ye ain't jes' *my* child—Lord knows ye ain't—yer hers!"

"Hers?"

"Yes."

"Ah! you mean my mother." The net lay quite still. Having no memory of the mother, Janet was not deeply impressed. "I know, Cap'n; when you are in a difficulty you always bring—'her'—in,—what she would like, and what she wouldn't. It's my belief, Cap'n, she'd have done and thought exactly as we told her to."

"'T ain't so, nuther! She had heaps of common sense, an' as she got near port, she saw turrible clear, an' she talked considerable 'bout larnin', an' how it could steer yer craft better than anythin' else; an' she 'lowed if ye was gal or lad, after ye got larnin', she wanted ye should go out int' the world an' test it. She wasn't over sot 'bout the Station. She'd visited other places."

Janet sat up, and idly draped the net about her.

"I suppose if my mother had lived," she said, "I would have listened to her—some. But, Cap'n Daddy, I reckon she would have gone off *with* me. Like as not we would have taken boarders, but, don't you see, Cap'n, I would have had her?"

"True; an' it's that what's held my hand many's the time. Yer not havin' her has crippled us both. But a summer on the mainland ain't a-goin' t' swamp us, Janet.

With the *Comrade* tied to David's wharf, an' me here, what's goin' t' happen to a—a girl like you?"

Janet looked across the summer sea.

"What? Sure enough, Cap'n Daddy, just what? And I ought to be earning my keep."

"I'm goin' t' set ye up with some gal fixin's what I've saved fur ye. Yer mother's things! Ye ain't never seen them. S'pose we take a look now. A summer, with runnin's over t' the Station, will be real interestin', Janet. An' ye must tell me everythin'. There ain't no reason why ye shouldn't sail over every little while, but I do hope ye'll make yerself useful somehow. It will help bime by. An' I'm gettin' stiff." He arose awkwardly and strode toward the tiny house. Janet followed, trailing her fish net robe and humming lightly.

The house was composed of three small rooms with a lean-to, where of late years Billy had slept. From the middle room, which was the living room, a ladder, set against the wall, led to the loft overhead. The man slowly climbed upward, and Janet went after.

The space above was hardly high enough for an upright position, so man and girl sat down upon the floor, and it happened that a locked chest stood between them.

"Janet, ye ain't never seen these things, have ye?"

"No, Cap'n Billy." The mocking laugh was gone from the face.

"Ye ain't got no sense of curiosity 'bout anythin', Janet—not even yer mother. Most girls would have asked questions."

This seemed like a rebuke, and Janet kept silent.

"Ain't ye got no curious feelin' 'bout yer mother?"

"Cap'n Billy, you haven't ever let me miss anything in all my life. I s'pose that's why I haven't asked. I never knew her, did I, Cap'n Billy? You made up for everything."

This unnerved Billy.

"That's logic," he nodded, "an' it's good-heartedness, as well; but, Janet, I'm goin' to tell ye somewhat of yer mother." He took a key from his pocket, unlocked the chest and raised the lid.

"Them things is hers!" he said reverently. "Little frocks—" Three he laid out upon the floor. Cheap, rather gaudy they were, but of cut and fashion unknown

to the beach-bred girl. "And little under-thin's, an' a hat, an' sacque; shoes—just look at them, Janet! Little feet they covered, but such willin' little feet, always a-trottin' 'bout till the very last, so turrible afraid they wouldn't be grateful enough. Lord! but that was what she said." The pitiful store of woman's clothing lay near Janet, but she made no motion to touch it.

"And this is her!" Captain Billy took a photograph from the bottom of the chest, unwrapped it from its covering of tissue paper, and handed it to the quiet girl opposite. "This is her, an' as like as life! The same little hat on, what she set such store by! I ain't had the heart t' show ye this before." Janet seized the card eagerly. The light from a small window in the roof fell full upon it.

"Oh!" she breathed, "she was—why, Cap'n Billy, she was more than pretty! I think I should have felt her more if I had seen this."

"Maybe, Janet."

"Am—am I like her?"

"Like as not, if ye was whiter an' spindlin'er, there'd be a likeness." An uneasiness struggled in Billy's inner consciousness as he viewed the girl. "Ye're more wild-like," he added.

"I wish I had asked a lot about her," Janet whispered, and there was a mist in her eyes; "I have been careless just because I've been happy. It seems as if we had sort of pushed her away, and kept her still."

"Well, it's her turn t' speak now, girl, an' that's what I've been steerin' round t'. Ye're hers an'—"

"And yours, Cap'n Billy, even if you have taught me to say Captain, instead of Father."

"It was her word for me, child, an' ye added Daddy of yer own will. 'My Cap'n,' she use t' say. It sounded awful soothin'; an' her so grateful 'bout nothin'! Sho! An' she wanted ye to be a help long o' me. Them was her words. An' Lordy! child, I'm willin' t' work an' share with ye—but savin' is pretty hard when there ain't nothin' much t' save from, an' if this summer-boardin' business is goin' t' open up a chance fur ye, it ain't cause I want help, but she'd like ye t' have more things. Don't ye see? An' I jest know ye'll get yer innin's on the mainland."

"I have been a selfish girl!" Janet murmured, holding the photograph closer, "a human crab; just clinging and gripping you. Then running wild and fighting against you when you wanted me to learn to be useful! I think, Cap'n Billy, if

you had shown me—my mother, and talked more of her—maybe it would have been different. Maybe not,"—with a soft sigh,—"I reckon every one has to be ready for seeing. I don't just know *how* to—how to get my share from those—those boarders. But I'll find a way! I mean to be helpful, Cap'n. I can't bring myself to wait on them. Mrs. Jo G. doesn't seem to mind that, but I do. And I hate to see them eat—in crowds. But I'll find something to do. Put the clothes in the carpet-bag, Cap'n Billy Daddy; I may not wear them over there, but I'd like to have them. May I take the picture?"

"Yes, only be powerful careful o' it. An' don't show it round. Somehow she seems to belong to nobody but jest us two."

CHAPTER II

Captain David began to climb the long flight of iron stairs. It was his custom to start early, in order that he might stop upon each landing and take a view of the land and water on his way up. As David got higher and higher, his spirits rose in proportion. Below were duty and care; aloft was the Light, that was his pride and glory, and the freedom of solitude and silence!

When David began his climb—because it was the manner of the man to face life with a song upon his lips—he hummed softly:

*"I would not live alway,
No, welcome the tomb."*

He paused on the first landing and took in the satisfying prospect of his garden, edged around by summer flowers and showing a thrifty collection of needful vegetables.

"*And only man is vile!*" panted David, starting upward, and changing his song. By the time the third landing was reached care and anxiety were about forgotten and the outlook upon the rippling bay was inspiring.

"And we put three shots in the lobster pots,

Three cheers for the witches three"

Davy remembered only snatches of this song, but its hilarious tunefulness appealed to his state of feeling on the third landing. David chuckled, gurgled, and puffingly mounted higher.

"Looks like it might be a good crab season," he muttered, "an' I hope t' gum! the city folks won't trifle with the isters out o' season.

*'Brightly gleams our Father's mercy,
From His lighthouse evermore;
But to us—"*

puff, pant, groan!

"*He gives the keepin' of the lights alon' the shore!*" David had reached the Light! He always timed himself to the moment. When the sun dropped behind the Hills, David's Light took possession of the coming night!

He stepped inside the huge lamp, rubbed an imaginary spot off the glistening glass, turned up the wick and touched it with the ready match. Then he came forth and eyed the westering sun. That monarch, riding through the longest day of the year, was reluctant to give up his power; but David was patient. With hand upon the cloth covering he bided his time. It was a splendid sunset. Beyond the Hills the clouds were orange-red and seemed to part in order that the round sun should have a wide course for his royal exit. The shadows were coming up out of the sea. David felt, rather than saw, the purpling light stealing behind him, but he had, for the present, to do *only* with the day.

"*There was glory over all the land,*" quoted the man, "*a flood of glory.*" Then the sun was gone! On the instant the covering was snatched away, and David's Light shone cheerily in the glory that at first obscured it.

"Your turn will come!" comforted the keeper as if to a friend, "they'll bless ye, come darkness!"

With that he stepped out upon the narrow balcony surrounding the tower, to "freshen up."

From that point the dunes, dividing the ocean and the bay, seemed but weak barriers. The sea rolled nearer and nearer.

"Thus far and no farther," whispered David reverently; "the Lord don't need anythin' bigger than that strip o' sand to make His waters obey His will. No mountains could be safer than them dunes when once the Lord has set the limit.

That looks like the *Comrade* off beyond the P'int!" he went on; "I'll take my beef without cabbage, if that ain't Janet a-makin' for the Light, an' as late as this, too! Billy's told her 'bout the change, an' she wouldn't wait, once she was convinced. She might have stayed with Billy till mornin', the impatient little cuss."

The sailboat was scudding before the ocean breeze. Its white wing was the only one upon the bay, and David watched it with a new interest.

"Comin' over t' make her fortune," he muttered, "comin' over t' help fleece the boarders! By gum! I wonder, knowin' what Billy knows, an' havin' the handlin' of a craft like Janet, he didn't hold the sheet rope pretty snug as he headed her int' this harbor."

The boat made the landing without a jar. The girl sprang out, secured the *Comrade*, then shouldered a carpet-bag, boy-fashion, and came up the winding path toward the lighthouse. David watched her, bending over the railing, until she passed within; then he straightened himself and waited.

The purple gloaming came; the Light took on courage and dignity; the stars shone timidly as if apologizing for appearing where really their little glow was not needed. Then softly:

"Cap'n David, are you on the balcony?"

"Who be ye comin' on the government property without permission?" growled David. Janet came out of the narrow doorway and flung her arms around the keeper's neck.

"Cap'n Davy, I've come off to be adopted! I had to stop downstairs to make my room ready and pay Susan Jane two weeks in advance, but I've got business with you now. Bring out a couple of chairs, Cap'n, this is going to be a long watch."

David paused as he went upon the errand.

"The money is what sticks, Janet. Money atween me an' Billy is a ticklish matter. Don't lay it up agin Susan Jane, girl, the conniverin' in money ways an' the Holy Book is all that Susan Jane has, since she was struck."

"It's all right, Cap'n David, if it were only *my* money! And it soon will be, Davy; it soon will be. I've just waked up to the fact that I ought to be helping along, instead of hanging on Cap'n Billy. Seventeen, and only just waking up! I've come over to the gold mine, Davy, and I'm going to do some digging for myself."

David sighed and laughed together; it was a rare combination, and one for which

he was noted. Presently he came out with the chairs. The two put their backs to the Light. David took out his pipe, and Janet, bracing her feet against the railing and clasping her hands behind her head, looked up at the stars. Next to Captain Billy, this man beside her was her truest friend.

"Goin' t' help wait at some table?" asked David between long, heartsome puffs.

"Nope."

"Maybe, washin'?"

"Nope."

"Anythin' in mind, special?"

"Yep."

"What?"

"I'm going up to the Hills and learn to paint pictures!"

"By gum!"

"Yes. I can at least see things as they are. All I shall have to do is to learn to handle the brushes and mix the paint."

"By gum!"

"And, Cap'n David, I know what you all think. You think me a useless kind of girl, willing enough to hang on Cap'n Billy and take all he can give. And I know that you think him soft and, maybe, silly, because he hasn't been sterner with me. But you're all wrong! Cap'n Daddy and I haven't been wasting our time. We've got awfully close to each other while we've lived alone and had only ourselves. I've been thinking a long time of how I could help him best. I didn't want to come over and—and—what shall I say?—well, plunder the city folks. That's what every one is doing. Sometimes I'm sorry for them, the city folks. It seems like we ought to treat them more as visitors, than as ships that have been tossed up."

"Lord!" spluttered David through his smoke; "they know how t' look after themselves."

"Yes, and when I think of that, I'm afraid of them. They'll get something out of us for all the money they spend. And, Davy, I don't want them to get it out of me!"

"Get it out of you!" David struck his pipe on the railing and the sparks fell into

the night like a shower of stars. Janet nodded her head.

"Yes, get it out of me! All the same if I'm going to help make my living, this seems the only way, so I'm going in with the rest. But I want to choose my own path. Davy, did you ever see my mother? Of course you did! She was pretty, but I'm a lot better looking. Cap'n Billy's been telling me about her."

"Tellin' ye about her, all?" David asked faintly.

"Oh! I reckon not all; he was choking while he talked, and I hated to ask him particulars. How old was I when she died, Cap'n Davy?"

"Ye warn't no age at all, child; as yer little skiff hove int' sight, hers set sail. Ye didn't any more than hail each other in passin'."

"Oh! tell me more, Davy."

"'Twas an awful night ye chose, Janet. Wind off sea, an' howlin' like mad. Sleet an' rain minglin', an' porridge ice slammin' ont' shore! Billy had the midnight patrol, an' fore he started out, he 'ranged that we should keep one eye out toward his cottage,—I happened t' be on that night,—an' if we saw a light in the lean-to winder, I was t' rouse Mrs. Jo G. 'Long 'bout two, I saw the light, an' I made tracks for Mrs. Jo G.'s. The wind almost knocked us down as we set out for Billy's. I waited in the lean-to, an' Mrs. Jo G. she went int' the bedroom."

"Go on, Cap'n Davy. I wish I had known always about Mrs. Jo G. She didn't mind the storm? Somehow I never thought of her like that."

"'Twas only human, Janet, her an' yer ma was the only females at the Station. 'Long 'bout four, Billy came a-staggerin' in. He had seen the light shinin' in the winder. He was coated over with ice, ice hangin' to his beard an' lashes, but Lord, how his eyes was glitterin'! I couldn't say a blessed thin'. Gum! there wasn't a thing t' say. I just gripped him like a looney, an' he gripped me, an' thar we stood a-starin' an' a-staring! 'Why don't ye go in?' I asked."

"And why didn't he?" Janet was struggling with an inclination to cry, "why didn't he?" David, fearing he had ventured upon dangerous ground, muttered:

"He said he couldn't! Them was his own words. Billy was always queer. Just then Mrs. Jo G. came int' the living room. She had you—we didn't know it then, fur ye was just a round bundle—in her arms. Mrs. Jo G. always speaks to the p'int when she does speak," Davy continued, "an' all she said was, 'This is all that's left, Cap'n Billy—the mother's gone!'"

"Oh! my Cap'n!" murmured Janet; "and only to-night I have heard this!"

"Now don't take on, Janet!" David clumsily stroked the pretty head that had found a resting place upon the iron railing. "It was because Billy hated any takin' on that he kept mum. Him an' me an' Mrs. Jo G. we have always acted as if nothin' unusual had happened. Ye had a stormy voyage, child, an' Billy wanted that ye should have calm, while he was in control."

"Oh! Cap'n Billy, my poor old Daddy! And I've been a wild, uncaring girl, David. Never taking hold like the others! Just following Daddy about, and being a burden! And to think it was—it was boarders that aroused me! Oh! Davy, it makes me sick."

"Now see here, Janet!" David got up and walked twice around the little gallery. "I ain't a-sayin' but what ye ought t' be helpin' yerself an' takin' anxiety off o' Billy: but I do say that it ain't goin' t' ease Billy any, if ye go gallivantin' off to the Hills with any fool notion that good looks is goin' t' help ye."

"They always help, Cap'n David, always!" Janet's assertion came through a muffled sob. "You mustn't think I care for my looks myself. I'd just as soon be as peaked and blue-white as Mrs. Jo G.'s Maud, but I know pretty looks are just so much to the good—"

"Or bad!" broke in David.

"Well, have it that way. But it is according to how you use them. I'm going to use my good looks wisely!"

"By gum!" muttered David. This was his escape valve. When other words failed, "by gum" eased the tension. "Ye ain't much on looks, Janet, when ye come to that," he said presently. "Ye ain't tidy, nor tasty; ye ain't a likely promise fur what a handy woman ought t' be. Yer powerful breezy an' uncertain, an' yer unlike what folks is use t'."

"Davy!" Janet came in front of him and the light fell full upon her. "Davy, you just listen and see how wise I am! Do you know why the city folks have come to Quinton? We never, at least not many of us, saw anything very splendid about the Hills, the dunes and the bay, now did we?"

"The fact is, we didn't!"

"Well, these people are wild about them because they are unlike the common things they are used to. I am like Quinton, Davy; I know it way down in my heart. You won't catch me fixing up like city folks and looking queer enough to turn you dizzy. Quinton and I are going to be true to ourselves, Davy, and you'll soon see if my looks do not help!"

"By gum!" sighed David; and remembering his vow to Billy to watch over this girl, he sighed again and ordered her below in no very gentle voice.

CHAPTER III

Janet was aroused the next morning by hearing Captain David creaking across the floor of the living room with his daily burden in his arms. The girl was neither deep asleep nor wide awake. She was never uncertain of her whereabouts or identity, once she had crossed the border land.

The early sun was creeping into the east window of her tiny room on one side of the living room of the lighthouse; on the opposite side was Captain David's sleeping apartment, into which he carried his helpless wife every evening before he had to go up aloft, and out of which he bore her to the chintz covered rocker, every morning after he had come below.

For ten long years David had known this sorrow; and he knew that it was to be his until Death spake the final word.

"It seems to me, David," the querulous voice was saying, "that the sun, up your way, rose mighty late to-day."

"There, there, Susan Jane, 'tis the same old sun as rises an' sets fur all. Had a bad night, Susan Jane?"

"Bad night! that shows what sympathy you have for me, David. All my nights are bad. Bad as bad can be, unless they be worse!"

"Well, Susan Jane, let's hope that a bad night argers a good day. There! are ye fixed, reasonably comfortable? P'r'aps the pillers ought' be a mite higher. How's that? An' now, if you want t' read a bit I'll fix the brekfus. I sot some biscuits overnight."

"Give me the Bible, David, an' my money box! There, open t' the same old chapter. Thank the Lord, that chapter is all on one page! Since He thought wise to take the usefulness from my members, I'm glad He made folks print my

favorite chapter so there's no need of turnin' over. Land knows, who'd ever think of waitin' on me!"

"Come now, Susan Jane, I'm always willin', when I ain't on government duty."

"Government duty or sleep! Men is all alike. How would you feel if you was stricken like me?"

"Powerful bad, Susan Jane, powerful bad. Ye bear yer lot uncommon patient, Susan Jane; I'm never overlookin' that. But if ye put yer mind to it, wife, ye'll see that if I do my duty, I must sleep—some. Howsomever, Mark Tapkins will have his turn to-night, same as usual; an' I can set with ye this evenin'. The government is powerful generous, Susan Jane, t' give this every other night shift."

"Generous, umph! There, David, do get the meal. I guess if you had laid awake all night, you'd have considerable cravin' in yer stomach fur victuals. I've a real sinkin'."

"Sho! I must get a double wriggle on, Susan Jane." David stumbled over a stool on his way to the stove; he was dizzy from sleepiness, and he, too, had a sensation of sinking.

"Sho! I be gettin' monstrous awkward!" he muttered apologetically; "I hope I ain't waked Janet!"

"S'pose you had!" snapped his wife; "you think that more important than my nerves? I don't more'n half like Janet comin' here. If it hadn't been fur me, I know you'd taken her fur nothin'! No matter if I do have t' go t' the poorhouse on account of yer shiftlessness. I, stricken an' helpless! She can come here fur nothin'! I jest know, David, that it would be a real release fur a great, strong man like you to be rid of a poor stricken wife; but I guess you'll have to bide the Lord's will whether you want t' or no!"

At this point David spilled a kettle of water he was bearing from the pump, outside the door, to the range.

"By gum! Susan Jane," he said cheerily, "I guess no one but you could put up with a blunderin' old feller like me. Ye better reconsider an' stay t' see the game out. Two eggs, this mornin', wife, or one?"

"Two, David! You didn't think t' scrimp *me*, did you? If one egg has got t' be given, you'd better begin on yourself, or Janet!"

"Come, come, Susan Jane; there is two apiece, an' six fur company!"

"Company! David, have you had the heartlessness t' invite company here without askin' me?"

"Lord! Susan Jane, can't ye take a joke? I only meant eggs is plenty. The draught's good this mornin'; that's a sign of clear weather. The biscuits is riz fit t' kill, Susan, I never had better luck. That comes of havin' a handy wife t' train ye."

"I'm glad you can see some good in me, David!" Susan Jane was sniffing. "I think Janet is downright lazy an' triflin'. Lyin' in bed when a struck woman like me can have ambition enough to be up an' doin'."

"You're one in a hundred, Susan Jane, but then it ain't more'n fair t' state that Janet's a boarder, 'cordin' t' yer own placin'."

"Oh! that's right. Blame me fur miserliness, an' excuse her fur slackness! She's perfect: I'm the sinner!"

"Now, Susan Jane!"

"Oh! I can see through a person if he ain't *too* dazzlin'!" Susan Jane drank from the cup of coffee that David held to her lips. "I s'pose you'd like t' take a tray int' her, David?"

"Now, Susan Jane, don't be so amusin'! It's wonderful how ye keep yer spirits."

"Spirits! David, I s'pose you're speakin' sarcastic. You think my mind ain't right. You're treatin' me like a child!" The woman turned from the cup, weeping audibly.

Janet at this point noiselessly arose and made a hurried toilet. Sickness, physical weakness of any kind, was repulsive to the girl of perfect health and outdoor nature; but one thing she realized. While she stayed at the lighthouse she must share David's burden. Her sense of loyalty to David made this imperative. She must help him how and when she could; and she must be as silent as he in regard to it.

"Good morning!" she cried presently, going into the living room. "Here, Cap'n David, take your place at the table. I'll do the rest. You won't mind, Susan Jane, will you, if I boss a little? I'm so used to bossing my Cap'n Billy."

"'T ain't decent fur a great girl like you, Janet, t' call Billy in that fashion. Father seems good enough for the other girls around here."

"I like my way better;" Janet smiled over the plate of biscuits she was bearing

from the range. "I'm saucy and bossy, Susan Jane, but I've good points, too. Here, I'll spread your biscuits and fix your eggs. David, you finish your breakfast and go to bed. I'll feed Susan, and tidy up."

David cast a grateful look at her and Susan Jane turned to her breakfast with an appetite that was one of the few pleasures left to her stricken existence.

All that morning, to the accompaniment of Susan Jane's complaints, praise of herself, and disapproval of Janet's appearance and manners, the girl did the housework, prepared the midday meal, and thought her busy thoughts. At twelve o'clock, David issued forth from the bedroom. He was heavy-eyed from sleep and dishevelled as to looks.

"By gum!" he exclaimed, going out to Janet on the porch; "I s'pose ye wanted t' go up t' the Hills this mornin', an' peddle yer good looks. I clean forgot yer ambitions, I was that sodden with weariness."

"No, Davy, it's all right. I want to get my breath first. I'm going to Bluff Head this afternoon. I may not have many more chances. I hear Bluff Head is going to be opened, too."

"Yes: Mr. Devant sent word down to Eliza Jane Smith t' have the place ready, bidin' the time he might come. But seems like I heard that Eliza Jane ain't goin' t'-day. She's takin' washin' in fur the boarders an' makin' money out of it. Eliza Jane'll get top lofty if she finds she ain't naturally dependent on James B. It don't do fur some women t' know their wuth."

Janet laughed.

"It helps others!" she answered lightly.

When the dinner dishes were disposed of, Janet took her sunbonnet and started off for Bluff Head. The day was hot and the road dusty. The sunbonnet, as a feminine requisite of old Quinton, was desirable; but Janet swung hers from her arm, thereby satisfying Mrs. Grundy's demands and not interfering with her own rights. At one o'clock, in the Quinton of that day, the city boarders were eating *en masse*, and the Quintonites, in various capacities, were serving them; so the girl on the highway had the place to herself. The lighthouse rose red and gleaming from Cap'n David's garden spot; the bay, blue and rippling, spread in and out of its tiny sub-bays where the land stretched like five fingers of a hand, with the blue water in between. To the west lay the Hills in their "artistic desolation," and to the north of them The Bluff, with Mr. Devant's long-closed house gracing the summit. It mattered little to Janet whether Eliza Jane Smith

was in command of Bluff Head or not. The past would never have been as sweet as Janet knew it, had she depended upon Eliza Jane's movements to govern her ingress and egress to the place.

Going rapidly along, the girl presently came to the grounds of the big house. Years ago attempts at landscape gardening had been indulged in, while the master of the place fancied to pass his summers there, but years of recent neglect had all but obliterated the marks of culture. Wildness was over all, but it was the wildness of former refinement.

Past the sundial ran the girl, and around to the rear of the house. Then she burrowed under a dense rosebush and pushed her way through a basement window, almost hidden by the undergrowth, the sash of which swung inward at the familiar pressure.

It was but a moment's work to scramble through, and then run up the dark, disused stairway. The place had a mouldy smell, but it was neat and orderly, and the weekly airings, given by Eliza Jane, saved it from dampness. The silence and absence of human nearness might well have daunted one; but Janet, the only living thing, apparently, in the deserted house, felt no qualms. She went directly to the library: there was little else of interest in the place to her. For years this spot had been her secret treasure nook. When, as a little child, she had entered the place with Eliza Jane, it was not as other children, but with an inborn yearning to see and touch those wonderful rows of books. She was permitted to dust those she could reach, and her touch was reverent and gentle. The pictures had at first fascinated her; later, the district school teaching had given her power to understand the words; then had dawned the new heaven and the new earth. Like a miser with his gold, she guarded her joy. She discovered the unfastened window and timed her visits when she was sure of privacy; and so she had trod, undirected and like the wild creature she was, the paths of literature.

The Devant library, gathered through generations, was stored in the country house that had originally been built as a family home. But the sons of the race were rovers and often years would slip by without a personal inspection. James B. and Eliza Jane were the guardians, and there was little need of a master's anxiety while those two were in command.

Janet glanced about the library and her face grew radiant. She inhaled long breaths. The odor of the leather and old paper thrilled her. She mounted the little steps and took a book, with unerring touch, from the fifth shelf, then she sprang lightly to the floor and went with her prize to the shelter of a deep bay-window.

Softly she raised the sash and drew in the sweetness of the June day.

"It's good!" she murmured; "heavenly good!" Then she nestled among the cushions on the window seat, and, shielded by the heavy curtains from the emptiness of the room, she entered her paradise.

The key that opened the gateway was a rare edition of Shakespeare; the play, "Romeo and Juliet." A tiny scrap of paper marked the place of the last reading. The girl's eyes, blue now as the summer sky, fell upon the words of delight, and instantly Quinton was forgotten, Quinton, and all its familiar worries and small pleasures. Janet of the Dunes was Juliet of Italy.

A crunching of gravel upon the driveway startled the girl cruelly. "I believe I have a key, Saxton," said a deep, firm voice; "yes: here it is, I can let myself in. Drive back to the station and wait for the baggage train. See that everything is carefully loaded on the wagon from the livery. You can get me a bite when you return. Stop at the Corners and bring back enough food for to-night; to-morrow we'll set up housekeeping. I'll make myself comfortable. And oh! Saxton!"

"Yes, sir."

"Stop at the post office and ask for mail."

Janet's blood rose hotly.

"Caught!" she whispered; then she smiled feebly. She could not see the speaker; he was at the front of the house. She heard the wheels outside turn and go rapidly away. A grating of the lock of the long unopened front door sounded next: then a rapid stride brought the stranger to the library!

"Rather a quiet welcome home!" The man, believing himself alone, spoke aloud and laughed unconcernedly.

"There's always a feeling of companionship in books. Everything looks in good condition." He gave a comprehensive glance around the room.

This was no stranger, but the master of Bluff Head!

When Janet was six she had last seen this man, and he had changed less since then than had she. From her shelter she eyed him as he flung travelling coat, hat, and dress-suit case upon a divan and himself in a deep leather chair. He was tall, handsome, and elegant. The iron gray head pressing the chair-back was one to draw the second glance from a stranger as a matter of course. The clear, blue-gray eyes took in the walls lined with books. The white hands, clasped in front of the broad chest, showed nerve force and strength.

Janet, trapped and desperate, first contemplated a leap from the open window, but that method of exit was discarded upon second thought. It would definitely end all further expectation of reaching the world of books! While there was hope in other directions, she must choose more sanely. She ventured a cough. So slight a sound in that silence might well have shaken the strongest nerves. The man in the chair, however, did not move, but his eyes fell instantly upon the alcove. The parted curtains, now that the girl raised herself forward, gave a full view of the slight form and vivid face. The calm eyes from the chair wavered an instant and the nostrils twitched; then the man laughed carelessly.

"Won't you come out and be friendly?" he said.

"Thank you." Janet came forth, book in hand, with eyes full of amusement. There was an awkward pause while the man gazed steadily at her. Then Janet spoke.

"I, I suppose you've come now, to stay?" It sounded brusque and unmannerly, but it was the only remark that occurred to her.

"I had thought of making rather a stay,"—the eyes rested upon the bright face,—"however, possession is nine-tenths of the law. If you say the word I'll skedaddle!"

"Oh!" panted Janet, "I pray you pardon me!" The sentence sounded Shakespearean in the gathering confusion. "I only thought—do you not see? I suppose you are Mr. Devant and I knew you would end—end—"

"What, pray? I'm not uncompromisingly final. I've been known to let things run on."

"Why, you see, I've been in the habit for years of crawling in your cellar window, coming up here and—reading your books! I began it when I was a very little girl; it's come to be a kind of habit."

The man laughed with keen relish.

"You quite flatter me, Miss—Miss—?" he paused.

"Oh! Janet. Janet of the Dunes, you know, Cap'n Billy's Janet. You may not remember me, but I saw you once, years and years ago. I was at the Light, David's Light; you came visiting there. I called you Mr. Government!"

"Miss Janet, do take a seat! Permit me!" He arose and with courtly grace placed a chair for his companion. "I recall you perfectly. The mistake you made in my name came to be a joke and byword after I went home. You saw me snooping

around the Light and thought I was the Government, inspecting Captain David's domain. It all comes to me quite clearly. I remember, you put your back against a certain closet and intimated in no doubtful language that it was private property. You were a bewitching small child, Miss Janet, if you will pardon an old man's freedom of speech. I am delighted to renew our acquaintance." Janet flushed. "I presume, counting upon your memory of my inspection of the lighthouse, you felt free to inspect my house. Are the books to your taste, Miss Janet?"

"They have been my greatest joy in all these years." A serious tone and a sudden moisture of the blue eyes touched the man. He spoke in a sincerer manner, looking more sharply at the glowing face.

"You are a book-lover by nature, I see."

"Yes, I never see a book but I feel as I do when I stand by the sea on a foggy morning. I can see nothing, but I know that everything lies hidden in the fog. I wonder what kind of a day lies there, and what the day bears. So it is with a book, I open the covers,—and the fog slowly melts away!"

"Yes." A smell of the sea stole into the open window and the man took a long breath. "You have read wisely, I hope?" he said.

"I began with the pictures. Then I spelled out the words in the books on the bottom shelf; I've worked my way up. I'm on the fifth shelf by the door now. I do not seem to be able to get any further than this—" She passed the book to him. "I've been at this book three whole months! I sort of hoped—please forgive me, but I sort of hoped—I might get to the sixth shelf before you came back!"

"Shakespeare!" mused the master of Bluff Head, "and he's held you three months, Miss Janet, after you've waded through heaven only knows what?"

"Yes: he makes me forget everything. I cannot explain, only he sings to me, and he talks to me, and he makes me a hundred people all in one."

"Miss Janet, heaven forbid! that a mere master of Bluff Head should close the gates to this Genius' Eden to such a lover as you! Allow me." He handed out the key that had given him entrance to his home. "Permit me to give you royal freedom to what, surely, is more yours than mine. A cellar window has been honored enough; the doorway is not wide enough for so true a worshipper."

"I do not understand you! I fear you are laughing at me."

"Heaven save us! No, my child, I mean simply this. Come at your own sweet will and read to your heart's content. If you will graciously permit me, I most

gladly will wander with you through these—" He waved his hand toward the shelves. "I may be able to point out some new pleasure-paths; I am certain you can make me love old ones better. If I am absent from Bluff Head, I will leave orders that you are to be undisturbed while you honor this room! I trust my old friend of the Light is well?"

"Yes. But, oh! how can I thank you?"

"By returning, my dear child! There I hear Saxton, how the time has flown!" He arose and Janet slipped to her feet, and passed from the room. Devant called after her.

"Good bye, for the present, Janet of the Dunes!" For a moment the girl paused.

"Good bye, Mr. Government!" she replied, and was gone, leaving a trailing ripple of laughter as a memory of the strange meeting.

CHAPTER IV

"Janet, where you goin'?"

"Over to the Hills, Susan Jane."

"Everythin' rid up?"

"Everything."

"I never felt my powerlessness so much as I have since you come."

"I'm sorry, Susan Jane. It must be hard to see others active, if one is tied as you are. Try not to look at me."

"Not look at you? Huh! Gals need watchin'. I know it would suit more'n you, like as not, if I'd been struck blind as well as helpless. But I ain't blind. I see all that's goin', an' more, too!" Janet sighed. The atmosphere of the Light, below stairs, was depressing.

"What's Mark Tapkins hangin' round fur?"

"It was his turn at the Light last night, Susan Jane."

"Land sake! I know that. Didn't I hear David snorin' fit t' bust, till mornin'? But Mark didn't use t' lap his turn clear on t' the next forenoon. Janet, do you know what I think?"

"No, Susan Jane."

"I think Mark Tapkins is shinin' up t' you!"

"Do you, Susan Jane?" Janet was struggling with her hair.

"Yes, I do. An' I feel it's my place t' tell you that it ain't a bad chance fur you. Mark's a steady, slow fellow, but he ain't lackin'. You're dreadful giddy an' don't take t' house ways. Mark's father is the best housekeeper I know on. He's sort of daft; but all the sense he has left is gone t' cookin' an' managin' a house. He ain't old an' the soft-headed kind last longer than keener folks: it would fit int' your ways right proper. Mrs. Jo G.'s girl couldn't stand it. She is so brisk an' contrivin', an' Mrs. Jo G., being right here on hand, has hopes of workin' Maud Grace off on some boarder; but you ain't got nobody t' pilot you, Janet, an' you're queer an'

unlikely, 'cept in looks, an' some doubts the worth of them! As long as Mark is leanin' toward you, I think it my duty to head you toward him."

"Thank you, Susan Jane, but I'll pilot myself, please." The girl's face showed an angry flush. "Shall I open the Bible for you before I go?"

"Yes; you know the place?"

"It falls open to the page, Susan Jane."

"Thank you. An' please put the money box where I can see it. Was it one or two weeks you paid fur?"

"Two, Susan Jane. Now I must be off. Tell David not to wait dinner."

"Wait dinner!" sniffed Susan Jane; "well, listen t' them airs! Wait dinner! I'd like t' see any one, boarder or saucy jade, as would make me wait dinner!" Janet had fled before the rising storm.

"There she goes, sails set an' full rigged, an' Mark Tapkins followin' on ahind like a little, lopsided tug after an ocean steamer!"

Poor helpless Susan Jane looked after the two, all her irritable, action-checked misery breaking through her eyes.

"Lord!" she moaned, "I don't want t' live; an' yet fur all I know, this may be better'n nothin'! I don't want t' be nothin'! Jest lookin' on is better than that!"

Janet, striding along the wood-path beyond the Light, heard the shambling steps behind her. She turned and saw Mark. He was tall and lank. He leaned forward from the shoulders loosely, and his face had the patient, dull expression of a faithful, but none too fine breed, dog.

"Where are you going, Mark?" The girl turned.

"Long o' you, Janet. I've—I've got t' say somethin'!"

"Oh! please don't, Mark. I've been hearing things since sun-up, and you've been in the Light all night. You are in no condition to say things."

"Yes: I be, too, Janet. I always feel keener after a night awake. Since I've sot up in the Light I've been considerable spryer, or maybe it's you!"

Janet heaved a sigh. "Mark," she pleaded, "there isn't an earthly thing you can say that I want to hear this morning. I'm going to the Hills on business, and I must be as calm as I can!"

"It's them Hills, as has made me come t' the p'int. Them Hills is bristlin' with city

folks, men an' women! I've heard what you're aimin' at. Goin' up t' the Hills t' get a job of some sort! Yer innercint, an' yer a gal, Janet, an' I'm a man an' I've spent six months in the city an' I know its ways, an' I know men! Yer too good lookin', Janet, t' mix up with what's on the Hills."

The mixture of foolishness and wisdom, the effort to protect in man-fashion what was weak, moved Janet strangely.

"Mark," she faltered, "you need not be afraid. I know I do not understand, and that helps. If I thought I did, there might be danger. It's just the same as if I were James B. going up there to peddle—well—clams! You need not fear a bit more for me than for him."

Mark gazed stupidly at the glowing face.

"I guess I must love you!" he said at last. "Things come kinder slow t' me. I was allus one t' drift 'long with the tide; but when I plump int' a rock I get some jarred, same as others. I went t' the city that time t' see if I could get my bearin's at a distance; but when I come back I sorter lost the channel an' took agin t' driftin'. But this here Hills business has livened me up considerable. Did you ever think what I left Pa fur an' went t' the city, Janet?"

"I thought you wanted to see the world, Mark."

"Well, I didn't. Quinton is world 'nough fur me. I went t' see if I could git, off there alone, a proper sense of jest what I did want. I wanted t' choose a course fur myself, independent of Pa, but save us! I hankered arter Pa so, an' I came nigh t' perishin' fur his cookin'. I come nigher, though, t' perishin' frum tryin' t' get somethin' like it once, while I was away!" A gleam of thin humor crossed the dull face.

"What was that?" Janet asked, thankful for any side path that led away from the danger point.

"Crullers!" Mark laughed a rattling, unmirthful laugh. "Crullers. I got thinkin' of Pa's one day; an' I went to a pasty shop an' I says, 'Have you got crullers?' The gal behind the counter says, 'Yes: how many?' I, recallin' Pa's, an' feelin' weak in the pit of my stomach frum hunger, I answered back, 'Three dozen!' The gal leaped back a step; then she hauled out a bag 'bout the size of a bushel an' begins shovellin' in round, humpy things, most all hole in the centre but considerable sizable as t' girth. I was up t' city ways by then, an' I warn't goin' t' show any surprise if she'd loaded an ister boat full of cakes on me. So I paid up 'thout a word an' went out of the shop shoulderin' the bag. It took me 'bout a week t' get

rid of them crullers," groaned Mark; "an' I've told Pa since I come back, that he better learn to make city crullers fur the city trade this summer. Countin' holes an' puffy air, they pay better than Pa's solid little cakes."

Janet was laughing merrily.

"Why, Mark!" she said presently, "you've got an idea. Tell your father to make his crullers for the city trade. He'll make his fortune. Put a sign on your gate and teach the boarders what crullers really are!"

Mark was not heeding.

"I vum!" he went on presently, "while I was down t' the city, what with poor food an' not 'nough of it, an' homesickness fit t' kill, I thought I seed my course clear. I had a job openin' isters; an' I worked, I kin tell you! 'Bout all the city folks eat isters an' I seed a good bit of life down at my shop, an' I learned city ways an' badness! Then I got sick an' come home, thinkin' I was ready t' settle down, an' then I got t' driftin' an' so it went till now. An' when I heerd 'bout you goin' up t' the Hills an' knowin' what I do 'bout city ways, I just reasoned out that I must love you, else I wouldn't mind so much. I ain't no great shucks, but I can watch you, an' no one sha'n't harm you; an' Pa's more'n willin' t' see t' the house, an' cook, no matter who comes in as my wife; an' you kin run wild, an' no one will have the right t' hinder, an' I'll stand off an' watch, an' that's somethin'!"

"Oh, Mark, please, please don't!" The poor fellow's dumb effort to protect her was an added heartache to carry to the Hills. "You must not, Mark, dear. You don't want a woman to watch; you want one to watch with you, one whom you love and who loves you. Put that sign out for crullers, Mark, I know you can make money, and some day a good, helpful girl will come your way."

"No, Janet,"—Mark's patient voice sank drearily,—"if you won't let me watch over you, I'll watch without yer leave. I won't bother you none, but I thank God I've got city ways t' meet city ways! I'm plum 'shamed of the way our gals is actin' with the boarders. I'm a good watcher, Janet!"

They had come to the dividing of the ways.

"Can't I go on, Janet?"

"No, Mark, you must go home and sleep!"

"Good bye, Janet, till t'-morrer!"

"Good bye, Mark!" She watched the slouching figure out of sight.

"With all my watchers," she faltered, "I feel like a ship riding near the bar, with the crew's eyes upon it!" And then she went, less courageously, on the upward way.

The path ran up hill and down dale, with always a steady rise. The water of the bay lay blue and smiling roundabout the Hills: the scrub oak, the blueberries, the luxuriant wild rose, and variegated grasses made color so exquisite and rare, that the only wonder was that the Hills were not crowded with adoring Nature-worshippers. The never-ceasing breeze came caressingly over the flower-strewn stretches. Nothing stayed its course, and there was health-giving tonic in its breath.

Beyond, where Brown Brother raised its superior height, the artist colony had pitched its tents. Toward that settlement, with her daring request, Janet walked. As she neared it, her brave heart grew weak and weaker. How was she to word her proposition? What was she to offer in return for instruction that was to help her to fame and fortune? She feared every moment that she might meet a little wagon drawn by a sunbonneted, long-aproned woman, or a man not less picturesque. She sat down to consider; then, to make thought easier, she lay at full length, closing her eyes and dreaming luxuriously. The summer day lured her senses deliciously. Even the late experience with Mark was mellowed by the present delight. The memory of the recent encounter with the master of Bluff Head stirred her pulses to a quicker time. Ah, life was glorious! Life was full, in spite of all. It was like the sea in a fog or an unopened book. She had only to wait and smile and love, and life would expand into a perfect day.

Something drew the girl to a sitting posture; a nameless fear was upon her. She glanced around, and near her, upon a knoll, sat a man, a young man! No little wagon put its seal upon his calling, but the broad hat, set well back from the handsome face, had a distant but fatal mark of the artist colony upon it. The stranger had a board firmly placed upon his knees, and even as he gazed at Janet with a devouring intensity he was working rapidly with a long, slim brush.

"What are you doing?" The question was torn from the girl without reason or forethought.

"Painting a picture!" The voice was solemn, almost to absurdity.

"A picture of what?" Outraged imagination arose to the fore.

"The Spirit of the Dunes. Keep still a minute; then I'll let you see it if you want to."

"Yes: I do want to." Dignity of a new order was born within Janet at that instant.

This probably was a lesser being than the wagon-loaded geniuses. Their work was not unknown to the girl nor had it escaped her scorn. If this meaner devotee of art had mangled her into a hideous likeness of herself, she would resent it, and with reason. Slowly she arose and went up behind the man. What she saw stayed anger and all other emotions save wonder. Surely the Hills, with all their real color and outline, were ensnared upon that square of paper! Never was there a truer reflection of the bay. Janet could almost feel the breeze that swayed the scrub oaks and wild roses in the picture. But that marvel was the least. Who, what was that in the soft dimple of the little hill? A being of grace, of beauty, and of a wildness that was part of the Hills and wind!

In the final estimate of any picture two artists must bear part, the one who has wrought and the one who appreciates! These two looked now upon the exquisite sketch.

"How do you like it?" The man did not turn or raise his eyes, but his voice brought the quick color to the smooth, brown cheeks.

"Do—do—I look like that?"

"As near as mere man can reproduce you. If I had a magic brush and heaven's own paint pots, I believe I could have done better. I wish you had stayed a half hour longer, but thank God, I've at least caught a hint of you!"

"I—look—like—that!" Amazement thrilled through and through the low voice.

"You—look—like—that! And I am grateful for the best criticism I could ask. What's the matter? What in thunder is the matter?"

For Janet had sunk down beside him, hid her head in her folded arms, and was sobbing as if her heart would break.

"What—in—I say! Miss—Miss—What shall I call you? For heaven's sake, tell me what I've done?"

"Oh! you've dashed every bit of hope I had to—to earn money—and—and fame—for Cap'n Daddy and me!"

The young artist laid his sketch tenderly aside to dry. It was too precious to endanger, even in this disturbed moment. Once it was safe, he stood his full height of six feet two, put his hands in his jacket pockets, looked down upon the heaving body of the Spirit of the Dunes, and said firmly:

"You've got to explain yourself, you know. I don't want to use force, but really you must look me in the face and try to make me understand."

Janet lowered her hands at once and gazed upward with her eyes full of distress and apology.

"I do not know what you will think of me! I'm ashamed, indeed I am. But, well, you cannot understand. I never minded so much when I saw the things—the others did! Their pictures didn't look like anything real—anything like our dunes and the Hills, and I thought I could learn, at least, to do such pictures as theirs, and get money! But you've shown me—another kind! I can never, never learn to make such pictures as that!" Her sorrowful gaze fell upon the sketch, drying near by. "And, you—you seem to be taking something away from us. Something that is ours, not yours at all! What right have you to take the Hills—and *me*, without paying well for the privilege?"

During this harangue the man had stood motionless, gazing in growing astonishment upon the radiant uplifted face which was swept by passion's clouds, as the June sky was swept by softer ones.

"By Jove!" he muttered at last; and a smile broke upon his handsome, browned face. "You Quintonites make us pay well for all we get. You swoop down upon us like a cloud of vultures, or witnesses; but it's driving the bargain pretty hard, when you set a price upon what we see in it all, and what heaven meant should be free. As for you—" he paused, and threw himself full length upon the sand and laughed good humoredly, "I beg your pardon. I really had no right to put you in the picture without your permission. I thought, as true as heaven hears me, that you were like—well, the other girls of the place, and they coax to have themselves 'taken' as they call it. Now that I hear you speak, I see that you are different, and I beg your pardon, 'pon my word, I do. And what's more, the sketch is yours, unless you give me the right to keep it. I'm afraid I cannot make you understand my position, but the temptation to put you in the picture was too much for mortal painter-man!"

Janet's face cleared slowly.

"If you mean I'm different from the other girls, because I speak differently," she said slowly, "I can tell you that it is simply because I've listened and read more. I hate to use words badly, when they sound so much better right. I practise, but I'm just a Quinton girl."

"Oh! I see. You have higher aspirations? That is why you wanted to learn to paint?"

"No! At least, that isn't the real reason. I want money!"

"Great Scott!"

There was mockery and a new pleasure in the man's voice now. He was open to revelation in regard to Quinton characteristics, and he sensed an original type before him.

"You to tell me in this brutally frank manner that you want money! You with *that* face!"

A flush tinged the bronze of Janet's cheeks again.

"Yes: I want money!" she said defiantly. "Some get it by waiting on table. Some feed you and wash for you. I cannot do those things, I just cannot!"

"Heaven forbid!"

"But there must be some way?"

The frank, almost boyish tone disarmed the listener. His smile fled and when he spoke the mockery had departed. His better nature rose to meet the blind need in the girl's desire, and his artistic sense guided him to a possible path.

"I wish you would give me some name to call you by," he said. "You have mentioned Cap'n Daddy, am I to understand that your name is—is—"

"My Captain's name is Morgan: I'm Janet."

"Thank you, Miss Janet. I haven't a card, but Mr. Richard Thornly presents his compliments."

The humor of the situation began to dawn upon the girl.

"We are all captains down here," she explained, "we each have our captain. Mine is over at the Station on the beach. I'm staying just now with Captain David at the Light, while I'm looking for something to do."

"Miss Janet, I have a business proposition!" Thornly folded his arms. "I've had an inspiration. During the three-quarters of an hour that you lay upon the sands, I saw you, not only as I saw you then and caught you, but I saw you flitting through several pictures. I even named the pictures, Spirit of the Dunes. I advise you for your own good, Miss Janet, do not struggle to learn to make daubs! It never pays. It's hard enough to make the best go. But you can help me, and together we'll create some pictures that will set the town gaping. What do you say?"

"I do not understand."

"Well, sit for me; be my model! Let me put you in my pictures. I'll pay you well, and if I sell the pictures, you'll have a kind of fame to offer your Cap'n Daddy that no girl need be ashamed of. Have you caught my meaning?"

"You mean, if I sit here upon the Hills—"

"Sit, stand, or lie among them," Thornly explained.

"You'll paint me, and pay me, and then take your pictures to the city and sell them?"

"Try to," Thornly laughed easily. "I'm one of the few fortunate devils who has sold a picture or two. My hopes for the future are good."

"I'll do it!" cried Janet. "It's about the easiest way to get the boarders' money I've heard of yet!" The laugh that rang out made Thornly stare.

"I did not know any one could laugh in quite that way," he said. "It sounded—well, it sounded like part of the air and place. Miss Janet,"—he spoke slower, feeling his way as he went,—"I'm going to ask you to keep this business arrangement private. The other artists would be quick enough to filch my prize if they could."

"No one else shall paint me," Janet assured him. "If I see a little wagon, I'll pull down my bonnet."

"Thank you. And those on your side, too, Miss Janet! Your Cap'n Daddy, and that Captain of the Light, I'd like to surprise them by and by. Is it a go?"

"Oh! yes!" The frank innocence in the girl's face again stirred Thornly. "It's a go, if my watchers do not interfere."

"Your watchers?"

"Yes. I'm considered rather a—well, something like a ship that's likely to be wrecked. I don't know why folks are always thinking I may go on the bar, but they do. And several of them have an eye on me. I can almost feel Daddy's eye way over from the Station; and there's Davy! I shouldn't wonder now, if he were looking at me as he hauls the oil up to the lamp; and Susan Jane, chair-ridden as she is, has eyes that go out like a devilfish's feelers; and then there is Mark Tapkins! I'm afraid you'll have trouble with Mark's eyes!"

Thornly was laughing uproariously. "You open a vista of human possibilities that makes me about crazy," he said. "Your associates must all be Arguses; but I like

not Mark! Just where does Tapkins come in?"

"Most everywhere!" Janet joined in the care-free laugh. She felt perfectly at her ease with this stranger now. Born and reared where equality and good-fellowship existed, she knew no need of caution. To dislike a person was the only ground for suspicion. To like him was an open sesame to heart and confidence. And Janet liked the stranger immensely.

"Mark comes in 'most everywhere," she repeated. "You'll have to look out for Mark."

"He loves you, I suppose?" Thornly forbore to laugh, and he searched the frank face near him.

"Now whatever made you guess that? He is not quite sure himself. He's never sure of anything, and I never suspected it until lately—you're rather keen."

"Well, we'll escape Tapkins's eagle eye. Forewarned is forearmed. Now see here, partner, can you blow this whistle?" Thornly took a small golden watch charm from his fob. It seemed a toy, but when Janet placed it to her lips and blew, it emitted a shrill, far-reaching call that startled her.

"I'll prowl in these parts every day, when it doesn't pour cats and dogs," Thornly explained; "and when you can escape the watch,—come to the Hills, blow the whistle and presto! change! I'll be on the scene before you can count twenty. Miss Janet, fame and fortune yawn before us—actually yawn. And now may I keep this?"

He picked up the sketch and came close to the girl, his shoulder touching hers, as they looked at the picture together. "Yes!" Janet said softly, the beauty of the thing holding her anew, "yes! You've made them your very own, the Hills, and me, and the sky and the water! It's very wonderful. I never saw anything like it. If you only forget, it is easy to imagine that this is a reflection!"

"Thank you!" Thornly moved away. "Thank you! That's about the greatest praise I've ever had. This is only a water sketch, too; wait until you've seen it in oil! I've a shanty over there—" he pointed below them, where a hollow, opening toward the bay, held a tiny building in its almost secret shelter, "I'm generally there, when I'm not tramping the open. Would you, eh—well, would you mind letting me pose you there some day?"

"Oh, no!" Janet beamed delightedly, "I'd love to see the inside of your shanty. I dare say it's enchanted, and besides,"—she showed her white teeth deliciously,—"I do not believe Mark could watch me there!"

She rose and picked up her sunbonnet. "The sun has passed noon," she said ruefully, "and I've a good three miles to walk. Good bye, Mr. Thornly, it's been a wonderful morning." She started rapidly down the hill. Thornly waved to her as she went, until a friendly hillock hid her.

CHAPTER V

"Well, my boy! To think of you drifting down here. Have a cigar, and put your feet on the railing. I tell you, you may travel the world over, and there isn't an easier posture known, than the Yankee one of 'feet higher than head.'"

John Devant and Richard Thornly sat upon the wide veranda of Bluff Head; and Thornly, being thus given the freedom of Yankee position, planted his feet upon the high railing, tipped back his broad-armed chair, and inhaled the smoke of his host's good cigar.

"You've caught the language of the place already I see, Mr. Devant. Had we met anywhere else, another word would have done; 'drifting' applies here. No one 'runs down' to Quinton, or 'happens' down; one just naturally 'drifts.' It's a great place."

"You like it, eh?" Mr. Devant let his eyes rove over the wealth of color and wildness, and puffed enjoyably.

"It's immense! Strange, isn't it, how a place can lie slumbering for generations, right at our doors, and no one has sense enough to look at it? And after all, it is while it is sleeping, or beginning to stir, that it charms. Two years from now, when the rabble get onto the racket, the glory will be gone. Think of picnics on the Hills! Imagine a crowd rushing for the dunes, and the bay thick with sails! No! Let's make the best of it while we may."

Mr. Devant laughed. "I'll give it five or ten years," he said. "My grandfather had a vision of its future prosperity. He bought acres here for a mere song. He built this house, hoping the family would find it comfortable for the summers. My father liked it so well that he settled the library and general fixtures for a home,

living winters at a hotel in town. But the old place was too lonely for me in the past. I'm just beginning to have visions, like my forebears. I'm sick of travel. Town life ought never to charm a natural animal except during the months of bad weather. My boy, I believe I'll settle down at fifty and take to land speculation! I'll buy up round here, keep the grip of the rabble off, and preserve this spot for the—pure in heart and them who have clean, hands!"

"T would be a missionary work," Thornly rejoined lightly.

"Who turned your eyes hitherward, Dick?"

"Why, John Mason. He saw Chatterton's famous picture and came down and discovered this garden spot. Poor old Mason! With his money pots and his struggling love for beauty and simplicity, he is sore distressed. He wanted to build a cabin on the dunes and live here summers, but Madam and the girls almost had hysterics. They have just built a gingerbread affair at Magnolia, and so Mason added a den to the structure. A huge room overlooking the sea! It has space left on the wall for a big picture, and Mason gave me an order. 'Go down to that heaven-preserved spot,' he said, 'get the spirit of the place, and put it in my den. I don't mind the price. Stay down all summer, but get it!'"

"Do you think you can?" asked Devant. Thornly's gaze contracted.

"I think I have," he replied, slowly flicking the ashes that had accumulated upon his cigar.

"Good! That means more glory. In this sordid age, and with an uncomprehending public, you've had rare fortune in getting rid of your work, Dick. Your pictures are sellers, I hear. How proud your father would have been! My old friend was one of the few men I have known who set a price upon genius above money."

"Yes: I wish father and mother could have known. It's often a bit lonely."

"But there is Katharine. At least, I suppose, there is still Katharine?"

"Yes," slowly, "there is still Katharine; and our relations are the same. She's watching my stunts in art."

"She's proud of you?"

"She's proud of my success." Thornly smiled. "There's a difference, you know."

"Oh! yes. But Katharine is young. I'd like to see the child again. Is she as pretty as her childhood promised?"

"She is very handsome."

"Full of life and dimples?"

"Oh! she's giddy enough. Superb health, and undiminished scent for pleasure! Katharine is an undoubted success."

"I must have her down. My sister is coming at the month's end. I'll write to Katharine to-night and plead my friendship for her parents. Where is she? And I'll tell her you're here."

"She's at South End, with the Prescotts."

For some moments the older and the younger man smoked in silence. The sun set in due time and Captain David's Light appeared.

"What a living thing a lighthouse is!" said Thornly; "that and an open fire have the same vital, human interest."

"I believe you are right. When I find myself bad company, I always have a fire built if the temperature is below seventy. Since I came here I've taken to this side of the veranda, late afternoons, and I grow quite chummy with Cap'n Davy's Light."

Mr. Devant got up, stretched himself and took to pacing the piazza slowly.

"You know David of the Light?" asked Thornly.

"As a boy I knew the characters roundabout here, somewhat. I'm trying to reinstate myself in their good graces. This place produces strange and unexpected types."

"Yes, I found a pimpernel flower on the Hills to-day," said Thornly irrelevantly. "Even the flora is startling."

"You found what?"

"A pimpernel. It's a common wild flower in some sandy places, but a strange enough little rascal to be seen just here. It's called the poor man's weather glass. Where it grows most common, it is not especially noticeable; but it almost took my breath this morning. It's in keeping with the surprises of the surroundings."

Devant laughed.

"Well," he said presently, "it must be a relation, same family, you know, of a pimpernel of a girl I've discovered here."

Thornly again contracted his brows.

"Solitary flower? Shutting up at approach of storm, and all the rest?" he asked.

"Solitary flower, all right," Devant rejoined. "I'm not up on plant-ology, but I've studied humans, off and on, and I cannot account for this one. I don't know whether, in my position as friend to you, I should bring this odd specimen to your notice, but I'd like to have you, as an artist, pass judgment upon her beauty."

"I might have the storm's effect upon this pimpernel of yours," Thornly put in, "make her hide within herself."

"I fancy storms would not daunt her. I don't know but that she would rather enjoy them."

Thornly yawned secretly.

"Handsome, is she?"

"Not only that," said Devant, "I suppose she is wonderfully handsome. She has grace, too, and a figure, I should say, about perfect. But it is her mental make-up that staggers me. She talks in one way and thinks in another. She clings to her g's, too, in spite of local tradition. She hasn't a passing acquaintance with 'ain't,' or the more criminal 'hain't.' Her English is good, she reads like a starved soul, for the pure pleasure of it; and she thinks like a child of ten. By Jove! she was here in my library, the day I arrived. She had a secret method of getting into the house by a cellar window,—had done it for years. She almost froze my blood when I saw her. I thought I'd struck a ghost for certain. She was reading Shakespeare! Said she hadn't been able to get beyond him for three months. She began to read when she was little, at the bottom shelf, and has worked her way up to the fifth. And yet with all that, she's a simple child, Dick. Smollett and Fielding and heaven knows who else are on the third shelf!"

"Lord!" cried Thornly, and laughed loudly; "who is this pimpernel?"

"Janet of the Dunes. Cap'n Billy's girl! Been brought up like a wild thing! Sails a boat like an old tar! Swims like a fish! Motherless—old Billy, a poor shote, according to the gossip! The women have a sort of pitying contempt for him; the men keep their mouths shut, but you can fancy the training of this girl. I'm always interested in heredity and I'd like to know the girl's mother. Something ought to account for my pimpernel." Thornly was rising.

"I'll try to account for my flower, Mr. Devant," he said. "I dare say some untoward wind bore it from its original environment; it may be that the same reasons exist in the case of this flower of yours. Good night!"

"Stay to late dinner, Dick! You know you don't want to go back to a dish of

prunes and soggy cake. Better stay."

"No. Thank you, just the same. I'm going to bunk out in my shanty to-night. I've got a chafing dish there. The prunes were undermining my constitution. Good night!"

Devant watched him until the shrubbery hid him.

"I'll get Katharine down as soon as I can," he mused; "and for his father's sake, as well as his own, I'll try to keep him and the pimperlup apart until then. His engagement to Katharine is a safe anchor."

But while Davy's Light shone friendly-wise upon Bluff Head, it also did its duty by a lonely little mariner putting off from Davy's dock.

It had been a hard day for Janet. Susan Jane, with almost occult power, had seemed to divine the girl's longing to get away.

"Boarder or no boarder!" the helpless woman had snarled, "I reckon you've got somethin' human 'bout you. If you can't stop an' do fur me, I'll call David. I've had a bad night an' I ain't goin' t' be left t' myself. There's stirrin' doin's goin' on; but no one comes here t' gossip."

"I'll stay," Janet had sighed, remembering David's worn, patient face when he staggered toward the bedroom an hour before. "But I cannot gossip, Susan Jane, I don't know how; and all the other folks are busy cooking, feeding, washing for, and waiting on the boarders. City folks come high, Susan Jane."

"Well, if you can't gossip, Janet, there is them as can. Thank God! when He took the use of my legs an' arms, He strengthened my eyes an' ears. I can see an' hear considerable, though there is them who would deny me that comfort if they could. What ails you an' Mark Tapkins?"

"Nothing, Susan Jane."

"Yes, there be, too. He's more womble-cropped than ever. They say his Pa is makin' a mint of money sellin' them crullers of his'n. Who would have thought of Mark's bein' smart enough to set his Pa on that tack? The way these city folks eat anythin' that is give them is scandalous. They must have crops like yaller ducks. Have you heard 'bout Mrs. Jo G.'s Maud Grace?"

"No, Susan Jane." Janet stirred the cake she was making by Susan's recipe energetically.

"You're deaf as a bulkhead, Janet! I bet you're envious."

"Envious, Susan Jane, envious of Maud Grace?"

"Oh! you have had yer eyes open, eh?"

"You just asked me about her, Susan Jane."

"Did I? Well, it's simply amazin' how Mrs. Jo G. is developin' a business talent. Actually keepin' her girl dressed up t' entertain the boarders, evenin's! She's got some one t' help wait in the dinin' room, an' she cooks. Jo G. sails the boarders, when they pay him enough, an' that girl just sparks around an' acts real entertainin', evenin's. I shouldn't wonder, with such a smart ma, if she caught a beau. I do wish, Janet, since you ain't got no one but Billy,—an' every one knows he's got 'bout as much gumption as a snipe,—I do wish you could land one of these boarders. They must be real easy from what I hear."

"I don't want them!"

"Course you don't! An' you don't want t' work fur your livin', an' Mark ain't good enough fur you. You'd better look out, Janet, I tell you fur your good, it ain't safe fur you t' trust yer leanin's too far."

So the day had passed. The afternoon had brought Mark Tapkins with his gloomy face, too, so Janet had been obliged to give the Hills a wide berth and only darkness brought relief.

Susan Jane was bewailing her woes in David's patient ears,—it was Mark's night in the Light,—so, unseen and unsuspected, Janet loosed the *Comrade*, unfurled the white wing before the obliging land breeze, and made for the Station.

It was a glorious summer night; full moon, full tide, and a steady west wind heavy with the odor of the Hills.

As the little boat darted ahead, Janet's spirits rose as poor David's did, when once he parted company with the burden of Susan Jane's peevish egotism. She looked back at the Light and thought, with a little sigh of weariness, that she was free from the watchfulness of the three within its walls.

"Only the Light has an eye upon me! Kind, good Light! Cap'n Daddy and I do not need you to-night, but, come storm, then God bless you!"

It was not the girl's intention to run up to the Station dock. She knew that Cap'n Billy had the midnight patrol, going east; so she planned to make for the little cove, midway between the Station and the halfway house, and take Billy by surprise and assault.

She chuckled delightedly as she constructed her mode of attack. She was hungry to feel the comfort of Billy's understanding love and trust. The more she had to conceal from Billy, the more she yearned to be near him.

The *Comrade*, responding to the steady hand upon the tiller, shot into the cove. The girl secured the boat and ran lightly over the dunes to the seaward side; then she lay down among the sand grasses and waited.

She seemed alone in God's world. The moon-lighted ocean spread full and throbbing before her. The sky, star-filled and blue-black, arched in unbroken splendor. The waste and solitude held no awe for this girl of the Station. They had been her heritage and were natural and homelike to her. Under summer skies and through winter's storms she knew the coast's every phase of beauty or danger. It was hers, and she belonged to it. A common love held them together. She crouched close to the sandy hillock. The night was growing old, the tide had turned, and still she sat absorbed in thought and tender memory. How beautiful the world and life were! She took from her bosom the tiny whistle, which had been for five long, delicious weeks her power of summoning unlimited joy to herself. What a new element had entered into her existence! How powerful and self-sufficient she felt as she recalled her part in those wonderful pictures that were growing day by day in the shanty on the Hills!

Her blood rose hotly in her young body, as she lived again, under the calm sky, those weeks of perfect bliss.

Suddenly the girl sat upright, put the whistle in its hiding place, and strained her eyes toward the Station.

Yes: there came Billy! He was striding along; head bowed, except when conscientiously he gazed seaward, scanning with his far-sighted eyes the bar where danger lay, come storm or fog. But could there be danger on such a night as this?

Billy, faithful soul, had not a nature attuned to the glory of the night, but he had a soul sensitive to a brother's need. If he gave heed at all to the summer beauty, it was merely in thankfulness that all was well.

"Help! help!" Billy stopped suddenly and raised his head. "Help! help! Here's a poor, little brig on the bar!"

A smile of joy overspread the man's face, a smile that drove all care and weariness before it.

"Ye little specimint!" he called, "what ye mean by burrowin' in the sand an'

scarin' one of the government officials clar out o' common sense? Come here, ye varmint!"

"My Cap'n!" The strong young arms were about the rugged neck. "You were just going to send up a Coston light, now weren't you, Daddy?"

"No. I war not! I don't waste nary a Coston on a wuthless little hulk like ye. Come on, girl, I've been takin' it easy. I ain't as young as I once was. We must make the halfway in season. 'T ain't the fust time we've took the patrol together, is it, Janet?"

He held the girl's hand in his, and she accommodated her step as nearly as possible to his long, swinging gait.

"Kinder homesick?" he asked presently.

"Kind of you-sick! I wanted to be near you. I wanted—you," Janet whispered.

"Durned little cozzler!" chuckled Billy. "I know what yer up t'. Ain't got nothin' t' do yet, over on the mainland; just a lazy little tormint; an' ye want t' cozzen yer Cap'n Billy. Why can't ye jine the army that's plain fleecin' the city folks? They be the easiest biters, 'cordin' t' what I hear, that has ever run in t' these shoals. Reg'lar dogfish one an' all."

"Oh! I pick up a penny now and then;" Janet pursed her pretty mouth and set her head sideways. "I made enough to pay Susan Jane for last week and this. Susan's an old leech, Cap'n Billy. It's simply awful to see her greed in money matters. Sitting in her chair, she can manage to want more, strive to get more, and make more fuss about it, than any other woman on the mainland. You have to live with Susan Jane to appreciate her. Oh! poor Davy. We never really knew what a hero he is, Daddy. He's splendid!"

It had been necessary, unless Susan Jane was to receive double pay for her boarder, that Janet should inform Billy as to her money-getting; but once the fact was stated, the girl hurried to other thoughts, in order to divert Billy.

"How'd ye get yer money, Janet?" A serious look came into the man's face. "It's uncommon clever of ye t' help yerself on; if the money only comes in a God-fearin' way!"

"Cap'n Daddy!" Janet drew herself up magnificently. "Do you take me for Maud Grace?"

"No, I don't, I'm takin' ye fur *my* gal, an' it's my duty t' see that ye don't furgit yer trainin' over on the boarder-struck mainland! But what's wrong 'long o' Mrs. Jo

G.'s gal?"

"Nothing. Except she keeps dressed up to entertain the boarders, and takes tips. That's what she calls them."

"Tips?" Billy wrinkled his brows.

"Yes. Money for doing nothing. Cap'n Daddy, I *work* for my money."

"Doin' what?" Billy's insistence was growing vexatious.

"Daddy, don't you ever tell!" Janet danced in front of him and walked backward as she pointed a finger merrily.

The moonlight streaming upon the girl showed her beauty in a witchlike brightness. It stirred Billy in an uneasy, anxious fashion.

"There ain't no call t' tell any one," he said, "you an' me is enough t' know. Us an' them what pays ye!"

"Cap'n Daddy; I'm—a—model!"

"A modil—what?"

Janet's laugh rose above the lapping water's sound.

"Why, Daddy! Don't you think I'm a model everything?"

"No," Billy shook his head; "I ain't blind, gal, ye ain't what most folks would call a modil, I'm thinkin'!"

"Well, the artists think I am!"

"The artists? Them womin in bonnets and smutchy pinafores? Gosh!"

For a moment Janet's truth-loving soul shrank from deceiving Billy, but her promise to Thornly held her. She stopped her merry dance and came again beside him, clasping the hard hand tenderly within her own.

"What do they think ye a modil of?" asked the man, and his face had lightened visibly.

"Oh! just what their silly fancy tells them. Only don't you see, Daddy, dear, they don't want any one to know until the pictures are done. It would spoil the—the—well, I cannot explain; but they want to spring the pictures upon folks by and by."

"Cordin' t' what Andrew Farley tells," grinned Billy, all amiability now, "no one will be likely t' know ye from a scrub oak stump when the picters is done."

Andrew says when he thinks of all it costs t' paint a boat an' then sees the waste of good, honest paint up on the Hills, it turns his stummick sick. Well, long as it is innercent potterin' like that, Janet, I don't know but as yer considerable sharp t' trade yer looks fur their money. It rather goes agin the grain with me t' have ye git the best of them. But Lord! as the good book says, a fool an' his money is soon parted, an' so long as they're sufferin' t' part with theirs, I don't know but what ye have a right t' barter what cargo yer little craft carries, as well as others what have less agreeable stores on board." Janet laughed merrily.

"Mark Tapkins was on yisterday," Billy continued; "he says Bluff Head's open an' Mr. Devant an' a party is there. Must be quite gay an' altered on the mainland." Janet's face clouded.

"Cap'n Daddy," she faltered, "I'm going to tell you something else."

"Yer considerable talky, it seems t' me." Billy eyed the girl.

"Cap'n Billy, have you ever wondered why I talk better than most of the others at the Station?"

"I don't know as I would allow that ye *do*," Billy replied; "ye talk differenter, somewhat, but I don't know as it's better."

"Well, it is. And it isn't all the teachers' doings either, Daddy, for Maud Grace and the rest never changed much; but for years, Daddy, I've been crawling in the cellar window of Bluff Head, when no one on earth knew, and I've read five shelves of books! I've thought like those books, and talked like them, until I seem to be like them; and, Daddy, the day Mr. Devant came home, he found me in his library-room, reading his books!"

"Gawd!" ejaculated Billy, and stood stock still. "Did he fling ye out, neck and crop?" he gasped at last.

"Daddy! he's a nice old gentleman!"

"Old? He ain't dodderin' yet. An' he use t' have a bit of pepper in his nater. What did he do?"

"Do? Why, he gave me the key to his front door. He reads with me and tells me what to read. We're great friends!"

"Yer 'tarnal specimint!" Billy was shaking. "I see ye've caught the mainland fever, eh, gal? Ye don't want t' bide on the dunes 'long o' old Billy, now, eh?"

"You blessed old Cap'n!" Janet struggled to hold her prize. "I'm perfectly happy!"

And I had to come over here to-night and tell you."

"Janet,"—Billy's eyes were dim,—"I keep wishin' more an' more that ye had a ma. I ain't never thought openly on it fur years, not since ye was fust borned. But as ye grow int' womanhood, ye seem as helpless as ye did then. I wish ye had a ma!"

The little halfway house was in front of them. Andrew Farley, who served on the crew at the Station beyond, was in the doorway.

"What ye got in tow, Billy?" he called jovially.

"Jest a tarnal little bit of driftwood, Andy." Billy rallied his low spirits.

"Hello, Janet!" Andrew recognized her. "How comes ye kin leave the mainland? I thought every one who could, stuck there t' see the show. By gracious! Billy, ye jest oughter see how things is altered." The two men exchanged the brass checks, then, before returning to their stations, they stood chatting easily.

"Been up to the Hills lately, Janet?" The girl flushed.

"Not very," she replied. "Come on, Cap'n Daddy, I'm going to stay on and sleep in the cottage to-night."

"Them artists," Andrew continued, turning slowly in his own direction, "them artists is smudgin' up the landscape jest scandalous. One of them wanted t' paint me, the other day, an' I held off an' let her. Lord! ye should jest have seen wot she done t' my likeness! I nearly bu'st when she showed me. I ain't handsome, none never accused me of that crime, but I ain't lopsided an' lantern-jawed t' the extent she went. She said I had a loose artistic pose; them was her words, but I ain't so loose that I hang crooked."

Janet slept in the cottage on the dunes that night; and when the men rose to go through the sunrise drill, she ran down the beach, across the sand hills, and set her sail toward the mainland. She had had her breakfast in the Station with the men and, recalling her difficulty in escaping Susan Jane the day before, she headed the *Comrade* away from the Light and glided toward the Hills.

Mark Tapkins, turning down the wick as the sun came up, saw the white sail set away from home; and something heavier than sleep struck chilly upon his heart. He knew from past spying where Janet was going!



CHAPTER VI

Janet, used as she was to the keen, sweet air of the Hills, stood, after securing her boat, and drew in deep breaths of the fragrant morning. She had taken off her shoes and stockings, for the dew lay heavy upon the ground; and these, wrapped in a fish net, were flung across her shoulder. There was a good half mile to tread before the little hut could be reached bodily, but the whistle's call, going on before, would open the gates of Paradise if Thornly were there! The girl did not put her doubt to the test just yet. There was bliss in dallying with the joy, the bliss of youth, innocence, and unalloyed faith.

Thornly might have stayed, as he generally did, at his own boarding house or at Bluff Head. Janet had learned of his intimacy there, although she had never imagined Mr. Devant's ingenuity in trying to keep them, at first, apart. If Thornly were away from the shanty, Janet knew the hiding place for the key; she could enter at will and the secrets of the treasure house were not hidden from her.

"Lock the door after you, whether you are in or out," was Thornly's command. "No one must know, until the very last!" And the girl would have cheerfully defended the place with her life. Over sandy hillocks she went gleefully. The artist in her was throbbing wildly, she had a new inspiration for Thornly's brush! She led his fancy in riotous joy. Where his genius grew slack, hers urged him to renewed effort.

The morning came up ruddily from the sea; it came with a south-wind playfulness, which tossed the girl's glistening hair with free touch and kissed the glowing face into richer beauty.

Presently the little, secluded hut came into view; the very next hollow held it! Janet stood upon the last hill, drew out her whistle and with smiling lips, that with difficulty formed themselves to the task, sent forth her call. The musical note penetrated the stillness. A bird rose affrightedly from a near-by bush; but it, and the waiting girl, seemed to have the Hills to themselves.

"So much the better!" murmured Janet, sparkling with excitement. "It will be all the more surprising." She ran rapidly forward, secured the key and opened the door. Then she obediently locked it again and stood within the room gazing

tenderly at every beloved object. It was just as Thornly had left it. He had waited all day for the girl; he had wanted her to pose in the open, but she had failed him and he had evidently devoted himself to the picture he was painting, as he had told her, for his own private use. "My Pimpernel," he called it, and rough as the work was at that stage, it was full of beauty and promise. It was Janet, little more than sketched, to be sure, but a startling likeness; and the wreath of pimpernel flowers, on the glorious sun-touched hair, had evidently been the artist's last work.

The throne-like space, with the cushions and low divan upon which the girl posed, was in full view, with Thornly's jacket and pipe lying carelessly upon it. The curtain, which always hung over the picture for Mr. Mason, was drawn aside. Apparently the man had had less reason to hide that from any chance visitor. Janet walked over to the table and raised the cover of the chafing dish.

"He ate at the boarding house," she whispered, "else I'd have to wash this. He's scandalously untidy!" She picked up a glass and sniffed.

"Wine!" she announced, "wine for a party,—and cracker crumbs! Company! I wonder who? One, two, three, four wineglasses. Bluff Headers!" Then the smile trembled before the memory of Mr. Devant's proud, haughty sister and the young lady unlike any one the dune-bred girl had ever seen before. Not even the most gorgeous boarder in the least resembled her. She was so icily cold, so calmly beautiful; so exquisitely dressed in white, white always, with a dash of gold to match her smooth, shining hair! No power could draw Janet to Bluff Head after the one visit during which the two ladies had frankly and condescendingly taken stock of her, evidently in consequence of remarks made by the master of the house.

For the first time in her life, Janet had felt the resentment of being "looked down upon." Had she a particle of malice or suspicion in her nature, the resentment might have rankled and grown into hate, for the girl had all the pride and independence of the place. As it was, she had withdrawn into herself, like the flower to which she had been likened, and had vanished from sight.

"I won't wash the glasses!" the laugh rang merrily like the laugh of a child; "let her wash her own glass, and soil her pretty frock."

But this declaration of independence did not prohibit a general tidying in other respects. The north window shade was rolled up and the sash raised; the easel drawn out into place before the low stool; and the jacket and pipe arranged conveniently at hand for the master when he should appear.

"And now," rippled the girl, "I'll give him a surprise and a shock!" First, she went outside, relocked the door and hid the key; then nimbly entered the hut by the north window. Once inside again, she closed the window and, trembling with excitement and hurry, ran to the posing platform and flung herself among the cushions. Then she spread her hair loosely over the sea-green pillows that rose around her. The net was caught up and draped about the slim, graceful body. Eyes and small brown feet showed between the meshes; the conceit was deliciously bewildering!

When all was arranged, she cautiously let fall the shielding curtain and waited.

"He'll come early!" she whispered, "oh! very early. And I wonder what he will call this picture?"

The night's patrol, and the mastering of Billy, had tired the girl. The couch was sleep-enticing, the pillows dream-bringing, and the day was yet young; so Janet slept, a vision to touch any heart, one to stir an artist to holy rapture.

How long she slept Janet never knew, but the grating of the key in the lock awakened her. Her heart beat wildly and the blood ran riotously in her veins. The door opened, some one spoke; and then, as if before a north blast, all the glow and glory of Janet's joy froze within her!

"Wasn't I clever to watch where he hid the key, Mr. Devant? And how utterly good of you to enter the conspiracy and help me find him out! I know he has an immortal picture somewhere here! He wants to spring it upon you and me along with the herd, by and by. But we wish to be partakers in the pleasure of preparation, do we not, Mr. Devant?"

The musical voice had a ring in it not altogether lovely. "Stand aside, Mr. Devant! See, he must have brought his work out after we left yesterday. It was orderly enough then; but look at it now! Let us examine this upon the easel. But first, open the door. I smell stale wine. The untidy fellow has not washed the glasses!"

Mr. Devant opened the door and said with a half laugh, "I'm not quite sure how Dick will like this, Katharine. But while the cat's away—"

"Ah!" The word came sharply. "Mr. Devant, look here!" The two were standing before the easel.

"Good Lord!" cried the man. "The Pimpernel! Katharine, this Dick of ours has prepared a surprise for us sure enough!"

"He evidently had reasons for holding us at bay, Mr. Devant." A thinly veiled sneer was in the low, even voice. "He has been using that wild, odd, young creature of yours as a model! And he has never told you? I greatly fear our sly Dick has been—well, deceitful!"

"Oh! my dear girl!" Devant reassured her, "you do not understand. Dick has probably had to procure such a model upon terms of secrecy, not on his own account, but hers! You do not know these people. They are not above taking money, but they make their own terms."

"Terms?" Again the scornful tone.

"Yes, my dear! Why, what do you think would happen if I called my cook Eliza instead of Mrs. Smith? Starvation, my dear, actual starvation! And I carry my own laundry to Mrs. Abner Snow's,—carry it and fetch it. This girl now might be willing to pose, and you must admit that she is a raving beauty, but she would hold Dick to a cast-iron vow never to let any one know. What's more, I can take my oath, knowing these people as I do, that the girl never sets her foot in Dick's shop without a body guard of at least one captain, perhaps three or four!"

"Let us see if he has any more secrets!" There was relaxation in the clear voice. "Let us hurry; Dick may be here at any moment, and I do so want to get ahead of him just to punish him for his underhand methods!"

Janet heard the two turn; she knew they were coming directly to the platform.

"Once,"—the slow, fine voice had regained its smoothness,—"once in New York I dropped in at Dick's studio when he did not expect me. I wanted him to take me out to luncheon; and I had the oddest experience! Oh! Mr. Devant, look at that bit, pinned to the wall! That is really exquisite! Well, as I was saying, I stole in upon Dick. I called from the outer room that it was I—I wished afterward that I had not!—and then I ran into the studio. As quick as a flash, Dick dropped a curtain, just like this, between me and his easel! I was determined to see what he had been painting, but he positively forbade it. He said it was a painter's prerogative to warn even—love from that holy of holies. I often wonder what was behind the curtain. I realized from that moment that if you want to see a great artist's best work, you must override his modesty and secretiveness—and tear the screen from his altar!"

With a light laugh, the girl now drew aside the sheltering curtain with playful, dramatic force, and lay bare the secret that it hid!

Janet did not move. Her great, startled eyes, dark, intense, and passion-filled,

stared helplessly at the two, who, transfixed, returned the stare in frozen silence. So rigid and deathlike the model lay in the meshes of the net, so beautiful and graceful in her motionless pose, that for an instant the intruders could not trust their senses. Then the woman found voice and action.

"I fear," she said slowly, coldly, and distantly, "I fear we really have intruded where we have no right, Mr. Devant." Then she laughed a rich, rippling laugh. "And the captains! where are the captains, my dear Mr. Devant? They seem to have omitted the captains to-day. Pray let us go at once. I would not interfere with Dick's future fame for all the world! I can quite understand why artists hide their best work at times!" Without a word, Mr. Devant dropped the curtain.

Janet heard them go out, heard them lock the door, and realized that they hid the key. She tried to get up, but the intention was only mental and died without an effort. A physical sickness and bodily weakness held her. To lie still was the only course possible, but the thoughts rushed madly through the awakened mind. In that hour womanly instinct was born, the instinct that armed itself against suspicion and another's contempt. Shame, for what was not real but suggested by a coarser mind, hurt and blinded her. The child in Janet had been killed by that white, cold woman, and what arose was more terrible than the slayer could have imagined, for this new creature scorned the innocence and weakness of that lately crushed childhood. It held in contempt the poor, vain, cheap thing that had offered, actually offered, itself to a being that came from a world that knew and had power to despise.

Wave after wave of torment engulfed the poor girl as she lay without a struggle in her net. The apple of understanding had been forced between her lips by the refined cruelty of another woman. Instinctively, Janet found a sort of dumb comfort in the memory of the look she recalled in Mr. Devant's eyes, but while life lasted her soul would shrivel at the memory of the glance which that proud, beautiful girl had cast upon her.

The lovely face upon the sea-green pillows paled and flushed as the flood of growing knowledge gathered force. The eyes grew dark and terror-racked, and misery claimed the newborn woman.

Then again the key grated in the lock. Strengthened by the perception that was now hers, the girl sprang to a sitting posture and drew her feet beneath the shelter of the coarse red skirt. The net ensnared her further and so she sat, caught fast in the meshes and in the terror of her condition.

Thornly entered the room, closed and locked the door. Then he opened the

windows wide. His eye and ear would warn him of intruders, and the breath of the summer day he must have! Janet heard him stop before the easel; then his laugh, contented and youth-filled, rang clearly in the little room.

"Beauty!" he muttered. "Great heaven, what almost weird beauty! My Pimpernel, you'll make me famous!" Then he whistled gayly, hung up his coat and hat—did not the listening girl know every movement?—drew on the old paint besmirched jacket, and filled his pipe.

"Dirty wineglasses!" he muttered, "bah! how the stale wine befouls this air! Outside you go to await your purification!" The glasses were set jinglingly upon the window ledge. Then Thornly came to the curtain and flung it heedlessly back.

"Good Lord!" he ejaculated, and staggered away. The panic-stricken face, that met his, paralyzed him for the moment; then he laughed.

"Pimpernel!" he drew nearer; "dear child, you are as full of surprises as this glorious day and the Hills. You've brought me a new sensation, a heaven-sent inspiration. What a partner you are! God bless you!"

"Don't you—touch—me!" Janet warned off the extended hands. Her arms were free, and they must serve her now.

"Janet! What ails you, child?"

"I do not know. I cannot think. Only I know you must not touch me; and—and I'm not a child any more!"

Then tears came, a wild, remorseful flood. The girl swayed upon the couch, torn by the emotions that lashed her cruelly. Thornly stood apart. Something undefinable held him to his place. He recalled the first day he had met this strange girl upon the Hills and her tears then; but these were different. In a subtle, unspeakable way he realized that something startling had brought about this changed condition from yesterday's Eden-like life.

"I wish you could tell me what is the matter," he said pityingly and quietly. He did not move toward her, but his tone, with its sympathetic reserve, did the one thing he longed to do; it drew the girl's trust and confidence. The storm of sobs lessened. The hidden face was raised and the burden of fear and distress lifted slowly.

"They—have been here!" The words came upon the crest of the last sob.

"They—who?" Thornly's eyes contracted.

"Mr. Devant and the one he calls Katharine."

"Great heavens! And you let them in?"

"They found the key and came in." Thornly muttered something inaudibly. "They wanted to see your pictures; they saw everything, and me!" Again the misery spread over the vivid face. Thornly was unable to take his eyes from that pitiful gaze, but for a moment his own position in this play held part.

"What did they say?" he asked at length.

"Mr. Devant said nothing! I cannot remember what she said—but whatever it was, it made me know that she thinks me—oh! what can I say?—something too awful to bear! And you, you knew what women like her might think! That is why you made me promise not to tell; that is why you kept the door locked! You knew how the people like her would scorn me! and yet you would not save me! Oh! I know it was because of your pictures! You would let folks like her think what they wanted to, so long as you got what you wanted!" The brief confidence in him was gone.

There was a power in this fury that shook Thornly as he listened. The blazing face of outraged womanhood confronted him, and the accusation brought truth and torment with it.

"Get what I wanted?" he groped blindly in his soul for an honest answer as to what he had wanted.

"Yes. What you wanted! You wanted my face, because it is beautiful; because I was like this place, the Hills and dunes! You thought me like them, just a thing to put upon your canvas to make you rich and famous! But I am a girl, like that girl up at Bluff Head! I am as good as she!"

"My God!" Thornly looked at the bowed head, that sank again beneath the waves of passion. His eyes grew dim and his face paled. His soul had answered and had passed judgment that gave him grace to breathe freely!

"Janet," he said gently, "my poor girl! I am going to wait by the door until you get out of the net and into your shoes; then come to me. I have much, much to say to you." He did not offer, by thought or motion, to assist her. He turned and sat guard by the open door, puffing vigorously at his pipe.

Janet disentangled herself and put on her stockings and shoes. Then, shod and with a strange dignity, she crossed the room and stood beside the man, leaning against the jamb of the door for support.

Thornly looked up and smiled; then he shook the ashes from his pipe, placed it in his pocket, and offered Janet his stool. She shook her head.

"I'll sit on the sand," she said, and sank down outside the door.

"My poor Janet," Thornly began, "I do not know what to say. I want to make you understand and I am afraid I may make further mistakes. I see I have wronged you. In a sense, I've been a bungling fool; but as true as God hears me, I didn't want you upon my canvas for any low or mean reason. I swear that as truly as I ever spoke. It seemed my right to make live what I saw in you. Maybe it was not my right—I begin to fear it was not—but it seemed so at first. I don't know how to say it, but somewhere I have read a thought like this. When an artist enters his studio he hangs up his passions with his coat and hat. You won't understand that. No woman can, perhaps, and not many men; but it's true as surely as heaven hears me! and it accounts for a deal of good as well as bad! That is the way I felt. I was greedy to catch you as I saw you. I wanted no one to share the triumph. I never thought of women like Katharine or men like Mr. Devant. I did think of the Quinton folks, and that is the only reason I locked the door! Please try and believe that, my dear girl! If I had one unselfish thought, it was for you and for your people, not for the others like those at Bluff Head. I could have told them all about it when my pictures were hung at the Academy; and that would have ended it."

The girl upon the sands sat with hands clasped around her knees. Her dark, clear eyes never wavered from the speaker's face, and Thornly saw trust and a growing calm rising in them again.

"If I had gone far enough in thought," he continued, "I might have hoped that such beauty and power as you have would have made you great and strong enough in nature to want to help make these pictures, in spite of everything! I believe in a slow, dull way I did think that about you once in a while. I know I never meant to harm the woman in you, Janet; believe me, I swear that!"

His eyes met hers and never faltered. The girl drew a long breath. Then she shivered slightly and sighed again.

"I—I think I see, a little, what you mean," she quivered; "you thought I was better than I am. Higher, nobler than some folks, because I am so—so beautiful?" Not a shadow of common vanity rang through the words. "You thought I would be glad to help in your pictures and never care what others might think, others who cannot understand? You are a great artist, and you thought me an artist—but in a different way? Oh! it comes to me just as Davy's

Light comes of an early morning, when the fog lifts. What a mean, wretched thing I have been to let stings hurt, when that splendid picture—waits—for—me!" A radiance spread over the wistful face. Thornly was dazzled and could only stare helplessly.

"See," she had arisen, and stood before him in all her strong, young beauty; "you need me? Without me you cannot make your splendid picture?"

Thornly shook his head.

"It is not the money you want, nor just the fame, but you want to give the world a great joy."

"Yes, yes! As God is my witness, Janet, that is my desire."

"Then I will help. Oh! forgive me! Come, please, come, only"—here she smiled pitifully—"please leave the door open! It shall never matter again; nothing can change things now."

Thornly staggered to his feet and half extended his hand to draw the girl in; then something stayed him.

"I cannot paint to-day, Janet," he whispered. "Something is changed. Perhaps the old longing will return, but I must not trust myself until I know. Go, little Pimpernel, you are the greater artist of us two!"

"I'm very sorry the day is spoiled," she returned brokenly; "if I had only known more, it would have been different. It seems as if I cannot ever forgive myself."

She turned, and went sadly over the hills with never a backward look. And Thornly gazed after her with yearning eyes. She was taking with her—what? Inspiration? Yes, but something deeper and more vital was passing with that vanishing form. What was it? What had occurred to change the summer sunlight to drearest gray?



CHAPTER VII

Late August hung heavily over Quinton. The city folks, who counted their year's playtime by two weeks' vacation, had come and gone, in relays. The artists, never tiring of the changing charms of this new-found beauty-spot, gave no heed to the passing season. Only cold, and acute bodily suffering could attract their attention. Good, poor, and indifferent revelled in the inspiration-haunted Hills and magnificent sweep of shore.

The natives counted their gains with bated breath and dreamed visions of future summers that made them dizzy.

Poor Susan Jane was the only woman, apparently, upon the mainland, who had swung at anchor through all the changed conditions. Susan, who once had been the ruling spirit of the village and Station! Susan, whose sharp tongue and all-seeing eye had governed her kind! Susan had been obliged to gather such bits of driftwood as had floated to her chair, during the history-making season,—and draw such pleasure from it as she could. The strain had worn upon the paralyzed body. The active mind had stretched and stretched for material until the helpless frame weakened. The sharp tongue was two-edged now, and gossip that reached Susan Jane assumed the blackest color. Her searching eyes saw through everything, and gripped all secrets.

David's songs, as he mounted the winding stairs, took on a soberer strain. Sometimes he omitted, even at the top, his hilarious outburst to the "lobster pots;" and his sigh and laugh combination was an hourly occurrence.

Janet noticed it all. She was alive to the atmospheric chill of the village, though in no wise understanding it. She was troubled and fretted by many things, but she went her way. The money she had earned by posing she dealt out in miserly fashion to Susan Jane; while at the same time she assumed many household cares to ease David, whom she loved.

There was no more money coming to her now, for after the scene in the hut upon the Hills Thornly had gone away for a week, and upon his return he had told Janet he would send her a message when again he needed her. The man's tone had been most kindly, but it seemed a rebuff from which the girl had not been able to recover. Once or twice she had stolen to the hut, when she was sure the master was away; always the key was in its hiding place. Softly she had gone in and stood in the sacred room. The same picture stood ever upon the easel, the same beautiful unfinished picture! Upon one visit the girl had taken a rare pimpernel blossom she had found in a lonely hollow and laid it on the empty stool before the canvas. It was still there when she went again! Faded and

neglected it lay before the shrine, and the message never came that was to call her to the Hills.

The people of the village, too, were different. They were busy and took small notice of the girl. Business, Janet thought, was the only reason. Mrs. Jo G. in particular was changed, but it had been a hard summer for Mrs. Jo G., and when, after many attempts to secure Janet as waitress, she had failed, she turned upon the girl sharply.

"You might be doin' worse things!" she snapped, "you're growin' more an' more like yer ma, an' it ain't t' yer credit!" That was the first inroad the oncoming wave of sentiment had made in the bulkhead of local reticence.

Janet started. "What do you mean?" she asked.

"What I say. An' what's more, Janet, if you can't turn in an' be useful t' them as was good enough fur you before, you can stop away from us altogether. I don't want Maud Grace t' get any fool notions in her head."

Once Janet would have turned upon such an attack, but somehow the spring of resistance was checked. After all what did it matter? But she took her mother's picture from the carpet-bag that night and hid it in her blouse with the long-silent whistle! More and more she remained at the lighthouse. Seldom, even, did she sail over to the dunes and never unless she felt strong enough to leave a pleasant impression upon Billy. Over all this, Mark Tapkins watched and brooded, and he slouched more dejectedly between the Light and his father's little home.

"I tell you!" he often confided to his inner self, "city life is blightin'! When I was there, it took the breath out o' me, an' now it's come t' Quinton, it's knocked a good many different from what they once was!" With this oft-repeated sentiment Mark reached his father's door one day and through it caught the smell of frying crullers. Old Pa Tapkins was realizing his harvest from the boarders by acting upon Janet's suggestion to Mark. From early sunrise until the going down of the sun, Pa, when not necessarily preparing food for three regular meals, was mixing, shaping, frying, and selling his now famous cakes. People, in passing, inhaled the fragrance of Pa's cooking and stopped to regale themselves and take samples to friends who were yet to be initiated. Pa and his crullers were becoming bywords, and they often helped out, where meals at the boarding place failed and conversation lacked humor.

As Mark stepped into the kitchen, not only his father, but Captain Billy hailed him.

"Hello! Cap'n Billy," cried Mark, "come off fur a change, have ye?"

"Yes, yes," Billy replied through a mouthful of cruller, hot enough to make an ordinary man groan with pain. "Yes, yes; I've come off t' see the doin's."

"Well, there is considerable goin's on," Mark nodded, and calmly helped himself to a cake that was still sizzling; "there don't seem t' be no signs of lettin' up on us!"

"Now, Markie!" purred Pa from the stove, "that ain't puttin' the case jest as it is. Looked at from some p'int, we are the clutchers."

Pa was a mild little man with a round, innocent face, and flaxen hair rising in a curly halo about it. His china-blue eyes had all the trust and surprise of a newly awakened baby. Life had always been to Pa Tapkins a mild series of shocks, and he parried each statement and circumstance in order that he might haply recognize it if he ran across it again, or, more properly speaking, if it struck him a smarting blow again. Pa never ran at all. As nearly as any mortal can be stationary, Pa was; but in the nature of things, passing events touched him more or less sharply in their progress.

"It ain't all their doin's, Markie, now is it?"

"Like as not it ain't, Pa. Sold many crullers t'-day?"

"I've sold all I've made, up t' this batch, Markie, an' I've been putterin' over the heat since the mornin' meal."

"Well, I'll lay the things on fur the noon meal, Pa, you tend t' business."

"But you ain't slept, Markie. Up all night an' no sleep nex' day! 'T won't do, Markie, now will it?"

"I'll sleep, come night time." Mark seized his third almost boiling cruller and turned to Billy.

"You ain't seen Janet, hev you?"

Billy looked guilty. "No, an' I ain't a-goin' t' this trip. Mark, how is things at the Light?"

"Squally as t' Susan Jane. Seein' others spry while she's chained by the stroke ain't addin' t' Susan Jane's Christian qualities."

"Stormin' at Janet?"

"Janet comes in fur her share, but David gets the toughest blasts. I don't see how

Davy weathers it, an' still keeps a song an' a smile."

"An' him doin' another man's stint, too," Pa put in, dropping a brown ring on the floor, spearing it adroitly again, and flipping it upon the paper-covered platter. "If William Henry Jones hadn't gone down in that squall thirty years ago, an' if Davy hadn't thought it was his duty t' carry out his mate's plans, I'm thinkin' Susan Jane might have been different an' Davy might not have had sich tormentin' experiences. Least, that is how it struck me thirty year back, an' it strikes me so yet."

Billy nodded appreciatively.

"'Tain't always wise t' tackle somebody else's job," Mark joined in, "that's what come t' me in the city. City jobs ain't fur you! that's what I said t' myself. Salt air was in my nostrils, the sound of the sea in my ears, an' I couldn't any more hear t' the teachin' of city ways, than the city folks can learn of us here on the coast."

Again Billy nodded. He felt his spirits rising as he looked upon this man of the world and knew him as a friend.

"Draw up, Pa and Cap'n Billy!" Mark had collected a large and varied repast. "Have some cold fowl, Cap'n, an' a couple o' 'taters. Lay hold of a brace o' them ears o' corn. Over half a yard long an' as near black as purple ever is. Inside they're white an' milky enough. Have some blackberry pie, 'long with yer fowl, Cap'n. 'T ain't every day you can get Pa's cookin'; an' I bleve in mixin' good victuals. It's what Nater does."

Billy took everything suggested and ate it indiscriminately, and this example was ably followed by his hosts.

"Mark!" Billy after a long but significant silence sat back in his chair and wiped his mouth on the back of his hand, "Mark, I'm goin' t' ask ye t' jine me in a rather shady job. Do ye happen t' know the particular women painters as is usin' Janet fur a—modil?"

Mark strangled over a kernel of corn and stared, teary-eyed, at Billy.

"Modil?" he finally gasped, "modil? Why, Cap'n, that ain't no word t' tack ont' Janet. Modils ain't moral or decint. I learned that in th' city from a painter-chap as use t' come in t' the shop an' eat isters when he could afford it."

Billy's face lengthened.

"'Tis 'mong friends I speak?" Billy dropped his voice. Both men nodded. "Well, Janet is a modil t' some of them dirty-aproned women painters! An' I want t' see

just how they've took her, an' what they calkerlate t' do with the picter! Andrew Farley has been modilin' fur them, an' Andy's 'count of how he looks in paint ain't pleasant. I don't know as I want Janet shown up in the city kinder on sightly."

During this explanation Mark's countenance had assumed an expression of intense suffering. Bits of gossip arose like channel stakes in the troubled water of his misery. Like the bits of red cloth which marked the stakes in the bay, Susan Jane's emphasis of such gossip fluttered wildly in this hour. Through the channel, clearly set by these signals, was a wide course leading direct to a certain hut upon the Hills of which silent, watchful Mark knew!

"She ain't no modil, Cap'n, don't say that!" he finally managed to get out; "that's jest scandalous gossip."

"She told me herself!" Billy brought his tilted chair to the floor; "an' I got t' keep this visit secret. But, since the gal ain't got no mother, I've got t' do double duty. Knowin' how up in city ways ye are, Mark, I thought maybe ye'd pilot me on this trip. I'm turrible clumsy with strangers, specially women, an' I want t' do what's right."

"Tain't—a—woman!" This declaration was wrung from Mark.

"What's that?" Billy sprang from his chair.

"Now, Markie, do be keerful!" cautioned Pa, "don't make no statement ye can't stand by. Nation! that fat is burnin'!"

"I said, 'twarn't no woman painter as done Janet. If she has been a modil—an' 'twere you as said that—she's been one to a man!"

The horror on Billy's face was pitiful.

"Can you locate him?" he asked in trembling tones. Mark nodded.

"Come on, then!"

In silence the two departed. Pa hardly noticed them; the burning fat claimed his entire attention.

Mark strode ahead toward the Hills and Billy, with the swing of the lonely patrols, brought up the rear.

It was the dining hour and Quinton was almost deserted in the hot August noon.

"Don't let's get het up," advised Mark presently; "city folks is powerful clever 'bout keepin' cool inside an' out."

"I'm already het!" panted Billy.

"Let's take it easier;" Mark paused in the path, and wiped his streaming face. They did not speak again until Thornly's hut was almost at their feet. Billy's face was grim and threatening, but Mark's showed signs of doubt and wavering. His recollections of city calm and coolness were not uplifting in this emergency. Folks in town had always outwitted Mark by their calmness.

Thornly's door was set open to strangers and whatever air was stirring. He, himself, was sitting inside, his back to his coming guests and his eyes upon the unfinished picture upon the easel.

Remnants of a chafing-dish meal were spread upon a small table, and silence brooded over all. It was only when Mark and Billy stood at the door that Thornly turned. The look of expectancy died in his eyes as he saw the weather-beaten countenance of Billy, and the shamefaced features of Mark.

"I do not want any sitters, thank you," said he.

"We don't want t' set," Billy replied firmly and clearly.

"I beg your pardon," Thornly smiled pleasantly, "you see nearly all of them do. Won't you come in?"

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"The two men stood spellbound before the easel." Page 117

"It's cooler outside," ventured Mark.

"There isn't much difference," said Thornly, rising courteously.

"I'm Cap'n Billy Morgan!" This statement appeared to interest Thornly immensely.

"I'm glad to meet you," he answered.

"Are ye a painter-man?" asked Billy.

"I've been dubbed that occasionally." Thornly laughed. "What can I do for you?"

"Did you ever have a—modil?" Mark broke in breathlessly, feeling he must help Billy out, no matter what his own feelings were.

"I've even been guilty of that!"

"Did ye ever have my Janet?"

Poor Billy's trouble, knowing no restraint of city ways or roundabout methods, rushed forth sharply.

Thornly changed color perceptibly.

"Come in," he urged, "the glare is really too painful."

The two awkwardly stepped inside. Then Mark's eyes fell upon the canvas.

"Cap'n!" he groaned, "look at this!" The two men stood spellbound before the easel, and Thornly watched them curiously.

"It's her!" muttered Billy, "it's her! Poor little thing! she's jest drifted without a hand upon the tiller." The visitors forgot Thornly.

"I didn't think I had more'n the right t' watch, Cap'n." Mark's voice was full of tears as he said this.

"Ye had the right t' shout out a call t' me, lad. You'd have done the like fur any little skiff you'd seen in danger." Then he turned upon Thornly. "What right hev ye got t' steal my gal's looks? An' what tricks hev ye used t' git 'em, an' her happiness 'long with 'em?"

Thornly winced. "Her happiness?" he asked helplessly, not knowing what else to say.

"Yes. Her happiness! Don't ye s'pose that I, what has watched her since she came int' port, watched her an' loved her, an' sot hopes on her, don't ye think I know the difference 'twixt her happiness an' the sham thing?"

"Good Lord!" breathed Thornly, "are you speaking truth?"

Billy drew himself up with a dignity Thornly shrank before.

"Thar ain't anythin' but the truth good enough t' use, when we're talkin' of my little gal!" he said quietly. He felt no need of Mark, nor knowledge of city ways.

Mark was still riveted before the picture. Slow tears were rolling down his twitching face. The calamity that had overtaken Janet was like death, and this lovely smiling face upon the canvas was but the dear memory of her!

"I never meant to harm her," said Thornly presently. "I cannot hope that you will understand; it has only recently come to me, the understanding. I have always thought the artist in me had a right to seize and make my own all that my eye saw that was beautiful. Lately the man in me has uprisen and shown me that I have been a fool—a fool and a thief!"

"That's what you are!" blubbered Mark, "that last's what you are! You've taken Janet's good name, you've taken her happiness—and you've taken her frum us!"

Thornly's color rose, but a look at the speaker's distorted face hushed the angry words he was about to utter. He turned to Billy as to an equal.

"Captain Morgan," he said quietly, "I have done nothing to harm your daughter's good name, in the eyes of any man or woman! That I swear before God. In that I yearned to make her wonderful beauty add to my reputation, I plead my blind selfishness; but above all I wanted to give to the world a pleasure that you can never realize, I think, and I believe your daughter is great enough to give all, that I ruthlessly took without asking, to help me give the world that picture!" His own eyes turned to the pure, exquisite face.

"Like as not she would!" Billy replied, "like as not she would. Was there ever a woman as wasn't willin' t' fling herself away, if a man was reckless enough t' p'int the path out t' her? An' do ye think I'm goin' t' let ye take my Janet's dear face int' that hell-place of a city; an' have folks starin' at her, folks what ain't fit t' raise their eyes t' her? Ain't ye done her enough wrong without takin' her sacrifice, if she's willin' t' make it?"

"Good God, man! I'm willing to do all I can. That picture is worth hundreds of dollars to me and untold pleasure to many besides, but I am willing to do with it just what you think best."

"Then cut it open, Mark!" Billy's tone rose shrilly. "Slash it top an' bottom an' don't leave a trace o' Janet."

Mark drew from his pocket a huge clasp knife. He trembled as he opened it and stood back to strike the first blow.

"Stop!" Thornly sprang between him and the canvas. "Stop! I could easier see some savage devastate the beauty of these Hills. Wait! I swear to leave it as it is. I swear that no eyes but ours shall rest upon it; but you shall not destroy it!"

Command and power rang in Thornly's voice. Mark wavered. Billy hung his head.

"Arter all," he groaned, "we ain't none o' us got the final right. Janet's my gal, but her beauty is hers, an' God Almighty's. Keep the picter till such time as my Janet can judge an' say. The time will come when she'll get her bearin's, with full instructions, an' then she'll judge among us all!"

The two rough men turned toward the door. "When she tells ye," Billy paused to say, "she'll be wiser than what she is t'-day, poor little critter!"

Thornly watched the men, in stern silence, until they passed from sight; then he

went back to the easel.

"Pimpernel," he whispered brokenly, "poor little wild flower, out of place among us all!" He drew a heavy cloth over the radiant face, and with reverent hand placed the canvas against the wall in the darkest corner of the room.

Late that afternoon Billy's boat put off for the Station in the teeth of a rising gale and amid ominous warnings of thunder.

Susan Jane grew more irritable and nervous as the storm rose. She feared storm and lightning.

"Janet, ain't that Billy's sail crossin' the bay?" she said. Janet came to the window.

"Yes, it is," she faltered; "and he's going on!"

"Well, what do you suppose? Ain't he got t' get back by sundown? 'T would be a pretty pass if he'd come off at sundown."

"But he's been off all day, likely as not!" Janet's lip quivered.

"Well, s'pose he has. Are you goin' t' be one of them tormentin' women who is always naggin' a man about what he's doin' an' what he ain't a-doin'? Where's David?"

"He's gone up into the Light, Susan Jane."

The woman turned anxiously toward the window. "It's an awful storm risin', Janet. Wind off sea, but changin' every minute. Draw the shade. I'm fearin' the ocean will rise high enough fur us t' see the breakers over the dunes! I ain't seen the ocean fur thirty odd years, an' I ain't goin' t' now!" Her voice rose hysterically, like a frightened child's. "I jest won't see the ocean!" Janet pulled the green shade down, and hid from her own aching eyes the vanishing sight of Billy's struggling boat, but her loving heart went with it as, spurning the wind and darkness, it made for the dunes and duty!

"All day!" the girl thought; "all day, and not to let me know! Oh, Cap'n Daddy, what mischief have you been up to?" The quivering smile rose over the hurt, but anxiety lay deep in the troubled heart.

A crash of thunder rent the air! A blinding flash of lightning turned the black bay to a molten sea. Janet could see it through the glass of the outer door in the entry.

"Janet!"

"Yes, Susan Jane."

"Come away from the draught! I think you might know, how if you got struck by lightnin' I couldn't do a blessed thing but look at you." Janet came into the darkened room.

"Light the lamp!" Susan commanded. "I ain't goin' t' save oil, when I'm in this state. Oh! Janet,"—a splintering crash shook the house,— "did you ever hear the like?"

"It's pretty bad, Susan Jane!" But the girl was thinking of the little boat struggling on the bay, the strong hand upon the tiller, and the faithful heart, fearless in the midst of danger.

"Janet, since you ain't got no nerves, can you read t' me an' sort o' drown the storm? I'm powerful shaken. I can't run if the house is struck; I can't do nothin' but jest suffer." The woman was crying miserably.

"I'll read to you, Susan Jane; and the storm's passing. I can count now."

"How many? How many, Janet?" A blinding flash showed around the green curtain's edge and dimmed the light of the kerosene lamp.

"One—two." The awful crash stilled the word.

"'Tain't fur enough off, Janet, to trust any! Oh! God help me! If I could only put my hands over my ears!" But the poor, helpless hands lay white and shrivelled in the woman's lap.

"Here, Susan Jane. Shut your eyes tight and lean your head upon my shoulder. There! Now when I see the flash I will cover your ears. That will help."

"Janet,"—a mildness stole into the peevish, whining voice,— "Janet, times is, when I see that Billy warn't all wrong in his bringin' of you up. He's sort o' left the softness like a baby in you." The hidden eyes did not see the glare, but the thin form quivered as the girl's firm hands were pressed over the sensitive ears.

"It's kinder muffled-like," panted the woman. "In between, Janet, can you say any of it?"

"Your chapter, Susan?"

"Yes. David knows the most of it, an' nights, bad nights, he says it when he ain't so plumb sleepy he can't."

"I'll say what I can, Susan Jane." The gray head nestled close to the strong young shoulder. The nagging woman rested, breathing deep. The fierce storm was

rolling away; darkness was giving place, outside, to the sunset glow which, during all the terror and gloom, had lain waiting.

"And I saw a new heaven, and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away and there was no more sea." Janet's voice repeated the words slowly, tenderly. Their beauty held her fancy.

"Davy explains that"—Susan's muffled words came dully—"this way. He says the old happy time, when William Henry an' me was young an' lovin', you know about that?"

"Yes, Susan Jane."

"Well, that was the first heaven an' earth fur us, an' it's passed away!" The woman was sobbing as a frightened child sobs when fear and danger have passed and relief has opened the flood gates.

"I don't know how William Henry is goin' t' bide a new heaven without any sea, Janet; he sot a lot by the sea! Always a-goin' out when it was the wildest an' trickiest! He use t' say, he'd like t' go to glory by water, an' he did, he did! I wasn't none older than you be, Janet, when he went down, an' the cruel waves kept him, kept him forever!"

"There, there, Susan Jane, you know they did not keep the part you loved. That part is safe where there is no more sea!" Solemnly the girl spoke as she smoothed the throbbing head.

"Yes! Like as not you're right, Janet. An' he'll find other comfort in that heaven. He was the patientest, cheerfulest body; an' never a quick word fur me. Janet, don't you ever tell, but I'm afraid t' see the ocean! I'm afraid, because I'm always a-thinkin' his dead white face might come up t' me—on a wave!"

"Poor Susan Jane! It will never come to harm you. I would not fear. I love the sea. If it had been my William Henry, I should have watched for his face shining in the beautiful curly waves, and had I seen it, I would have stretched out my arms to him, and we would have gone away—to glory together!"

"Not if the face was a—dead face, Janet!" A horror rang in the words.

"Somehow," the girl replied, "I could never think it dead, if it came that way. 'And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.'"

"That's it, Janet," Susan Jane's voice trailed sleepily; "the former things are the

things what has the tears, an' the pains, an' the hurts; an' they must pass away before there can be any kind of a heaven that's worth while. I wonder—" drearily, "I wonder how it will seem when I ain't got any pains, nor any tears, an' when there ain't any more black nights to think about them in? I'll feel terrible lost just at first. It will be about as hard fur me t' get use t' doin' without them, as it will fur William Henry t' do without the sea. I guess we'll all have considerable t' do t' learn t' get along without the former things, whatever they was. Maybe some of the joy will be in learnin' all over. Janet, I'm powerful sodden with weariness. Weariness is one of the former things!" A whimsical humor stirred the words. "Sometimes the former things get t' be dreadful foolish day after day."

"Let me carry you to the bedroom, Susan." Janet had assumed this duty in order to spare David, the nights he must go up aloft. The thin, light body was no burden to the sturdy girl.

"There, Susan, and see the storm is past!" The evening glow was shining in the bedroom window. "And I will undress you, just as easy as easy can be, and put you so, upon the cool bed! The shower has cleared the air beautifully. Now are you comfortable, Susan Jane?"

"I'm more comfortable than what I've been fur a time past. Leave the shade up t' the top, Janet; I like to see the gleam of Davy's Light when it is dark. I like t' think how it helps folks find their way to the harbors where they would be. Janet, that was a terrible queer thing you said about the face in the wave."

The girl was folding the daily garments of the tired woman and placing them where David's bungling hands could find them for another day's service.

"What was that, Susan Jane?" She stood in the fair full light of the parting day.

"About it not being a dead face! That's been the horror of it, all these years; it has always been a dead an' gone face! That's why I hated the sea. But if"—and a radiance spread over the thin, wasted features—"if it should be that William Henry came back t' me, alive an' smilin' as he always did, why, like as not, I'd put my arms out—" then she paused and the voice broke; "no, I could not put my arms out—but I could smile like I've most forgotten how t' do, an' I could go with William Henry, anywhere, same as any other lovin' woman! I never thought about his face bein' alive in the wave! But, do you know, it's a real pleasant idee, that of seein' the sea again an' William Henry a-smilin' an' wavin' his arms like he use t' when he was bathin'! I declare it's a real grateful thought. Janet!"

"Yes, Susan."

"I wish you'd go up int' the Light after you've cleared the settin' room, an' tell Davy good night! I forgot t' say it when he started up. We'd had some difference 'bout money; least, Davy had, I never have any different idee about it. It's him as changes. Go get the box, Janet, an' put it under the bed. If it wasn't fur me, I guess Davy would know!"

It was after sunset, when Janet, hearing Susan Jane's even breathing, felt herself free. She stretched her arms above her head and so eased the tension. The manner of bearing life's burdens by the people of the dunes was but an acquired talent with her. The first and natural impulse of the girl's nature was to cry out against care and trouble, to make a noise, and act! It was second nature only that had taught her to assume silently and bear secretly whatever of unpleasantness life presented.

"Oh! Cap'n Daddy," she had once cried to Billy, when something had stirred her childish depths, "why don't we yell, and kick and scare it off?"

"'Tain't sensible with them as lives near the sea, Janet," Billy had calmly returned. "The sea teaches a powerful panted lesson 'long o' them lines. Troubles is like the sea. When they is the worst, they do all the shoutin' an' roarin' themselves, an' ye jest might as well pull in yer sail an' lie low. When they is past, an' the calm sets in, 'tis plain shallowness t' use yerself up then. Folks in cities don't learn this lesson; they ain't got no such teacher, an' that's why they wear out sooner, an' have that onsettled air. They think noise an' bustle o' their makin' can do away with troubles, but it can't, Janet. So like as not, the sooner ye learn, the better."

Janet thought of this hard lesson now as she stretched her strong young body, and quelled the rebellious cry upon her lips.

"I'll go up and bid Davy good night," she whispered half aloud. Then lower: "Good night, my Cap'n Daddy! You've reached the dunes safely, but you'll have to own up some day!" She waved in the direction of the Station.

"How dark the water looks!" she suddenly cried; "stars in plenty—where is Davy's Light?"

White and fear-filled, she sprang toward the stairs and ran lightly upward. Slower she went, after the third landing; anxiety, added to weariness, stayed the eager feet. If the Light were not burning, what then? Just below the lamp and gallery was a tiny room with a table, chair, small stove, and little glass lamp. Here, between the times that David inspected his Light, he sat to read or think. As Janet reached the place the darkness was so dense she could see nothing, but

with outstretched hands she was feeling her way to the door leading to the steps into the Light, when she touched David's gray head, as it lay upon his arms folded upon the table! He was breathing deeply and audibly, and the girl's touch did not arouse him. Whatever the matter was with David, Janet's first thought was of his sacred and neglected duty. She ran on, and into the lamp. She struck the match and set the blaze to the wick; then, when it was well lighted, she darted outside and withdrew the cloth. The belated beams shot into the night as if they had gained strength and power from the forced delay.

"God keep the government from knowing!" breathed the girl; "it was only a little while, and it ought not to count after all the faithful years."

Weak from fear and hurry, Janet retraced her steps to David. He was still sleeping as peacefully as a child. Under his folded arms was an open book. Janet recognized it as one that Mr. Devant had given to David recently, a little book of poems of the sea, poems with a ring and rhythm in them that bore the golden thoughts to Davy's song-touched heart. The man had fallen asleep like a happy boy, forgetting, for the first time in his life, his duty.

Janet lighted the little lamp upon the stand, and drew up a stool. The minutes ticked themselves away upon Davy's big, white-faced clock which hung against the wall. Eight, eight thirty, eight forty-five! Then David sat up and stared with wide-opened eyes right at Janet. A moment of bewilderment shook his awakening senses; then he gave his sigh and laugh.

"By gum!" he said, "jest fur an instint I thought I'd forgot my Light!"

"It's all right, Davy," Janet nodded cheerfully.

"Course!" Davy returned the nod; "course, ye don't s'pose I'd light my lamp fust, do ye?"

"Never, Davy!"

"It's bad enough t' be napping. Like as not the government would turn me out, an' with reason, if it caught on t' that. I don't know but I ought t' confess. But Lord! I was that worn, 'long with Susan Jane's bein' more ailin' than usual, an' the thickness of the air with the shower, that arter I saw everythin' was shipshape, I guess I flopped some. I'll forgive myself this once; but if it happens again, Davy Thomas, yer'll write t' the government sure as yer born an' tell 'em what a blubber-head ye air."

Janet laughed, and stretched her arms out until she clasped David's rough hands. "I'll go up an' take a look!" said the man; "stop till I come down, Janet, I've got

somethin' t' tell ye."

"I came up to tell you," the girl called after him, "that Susan Jane sent good night to you."

"She did that?" Davy paused upon the step and his face shone in the dull light. Janet nodded. Then Davy went to inspect his lamp.

*"But to us He gives the keepin'
Of the lights along the shore!"*

Janet smiled as the cheerful words floated back to her. Presently David returned.

"Everythin' is as it should be," he chuckled; "clear night, but changin' breeze, an' the Light doin' its proper duty! Janet, while I slept, I had the durndest dream, I can't get rid of it. I read once how the surest way to get rid of an idee was t' dump it on another."

"Dump away, Davy."

"It made me feel kinder like I did long ago; an' then Susan Jane sendin' that good night up, sort o' fitted in. Janet, I've been dreamin' about William Henry Jones."

Janet nodded. William Henry seemed recently to have assumed shape and form to her. He had been but a name in the past.

"I saw him a comin' up the stairs jest as plain as day, like he use t' come when he came off, an' ran up t' me, if I happened t' be haulin' ile up t' the balcony, or cleanin' the lamp, or what not. His face was shinin' same as it use t'. By gum! I never see such a face as William Henry had! It always seemed to be lit from inside. 'I've come fur Susy,' he said. He was the only one as ever called her that, an' I ain't heerd it since he went down int' the sea that mornin' he was bluefishin'. 'I've come fur Susy, an' I want t' thank ye fur carin' fur her like what ye have.' Them was his words, as true as gospel. An' they was turrible comfortin'. Fur, Janet, I ain't told it t' another soul, not even t' Billy, but I always loved Susan Jane—fur myself. When William Henry won her, I wasn't ever goin' t' let on, but when he got drowned an' Susan had t' hustle t' keep life in her body, I jest out an' begged t' take care of her—fur William Henry! I told that lie, Janet, because I darsn't tell her I wanted her fur myself. I didn't never care whether she loved me or not, after I knowed she loved William Henry, anyway; but when he went, I wanted t' take care of her an' keep her from the hardest knocks, an' I wanted it fur jest myself! After a while I talked her int' it. She warn't never strong, an' work an' grievin' made her an easy mark fur sufferin' an' so she let me take care of her! But always it has laid heavy on my mind that I hadn't acted jest fair t'

William Henry. An' sometimes, when I've been settin' out on the balcony, freshenin' up, I've planned it all out how I'd see him a comin' over the dunes some day,—comin' out o' the sea what swallowed him, with an awful look of anger on his smilin' face, 'cause I'd got his Susy on false pretences, as ye might say. It's got kind o' wearin' on me o' late, but Lord! when I saw William Henry t'-night, he was more shinin' an' smilin' than ever. An' when he thanked me like what he did, I nigh busted with pleasure. An' then as you told me 'bout Susan Jane's good night, I jest sent up a prayer out there on the balcony, a prayer of gratefulness fur all my blessin's.

"Dreams is queer stuff, Janet. 'Tain't all as should be counted; but then, ye don't count all the folks an' happenin's that pass ye in yer wakin' hours. But when a dream, or a person, or an idee comes along, as means a comfort or a strengthener, I take it that it is a sort o' duty t' clutch it, an' make it real. When ye ain't got nothin' better, dreams is powerful upliftin' at times. Gum!" David drew his shoulders up and plunged his hands in his pockets, as if about to draw comfort from their depths.

"Gum! Janet. 'Tain't often I get duty and pleasure mixed, but ye stop here, an' after I take another look at the lamp, I'm goin' t' run down an' say good night t' Susan Jane. I know how she's lyin' awake, thinkin' an' thinkin' of the past. Dreams don't seem t' come much t' Susan Jane."

David paid his visit to the Light, then descended the stairs, while Janet took up the book of poems and turned the pages idly. David's dream and all that had happened seemed to still her. How long she sat by the dim lamplight she took no thought to find out. The words of poem after poem passed under her eyes unheedingly. Once she went into the Light, saw that all was well, and came back to the book. Presently David emerged from the stairway. Janet was facing him, and the expression of his eyes brought her to her feet, and to his side.

"Davy, what is it?" she demanded.

"He has come!"

"Who?"

"William Henry! He's taken her!"

"No, no! Davy, it is not so, she is only asleep." David shook his head and his eyes had a dumb agony in them.

"'T ain't so, Janet! An' she's smilin' like she use t'. I ain't seen that smile on her face in over thirty year. That's the way she use t' look when she heard me comin'

in the gloamin', an' thought it was him! No, Janet, she wears—William Henry's smile!"

Janet darted past him, but he stayed her. "I want ye should sit by her till sun up. There's a brisk storm settin' in agin, an' 't ain't fit fur ye t' go fur any one; an' I've got t' mind the Light. Stay 'long of her, Janet. I'm glad she ain't got t' suffer any more, or nothin'!" A sob choked the deep voice and seemed to follow the fleeing girl as she ran down the winding stairs.

Davy had placed the living-room lamp upon the table by Susan Jane's bed. By its glow, Janet looked upon the woman under the gaudy patchwork quilt. Apparently she had not moved since Janet had placed her there. Without a struggle or pain she had gone forth.

"Oh! Susy," the old forgotten name slipped from the girl's quivering lips. "Oh! Susy, I just believe you saw his live, shining face on an incoming wave! And when the wave went out, it took you both to glory! But, oh! my poor, dear, lonely Davy!" Then the bright head bowed upon the coverlid. "Susy, oh, Susy! I am so glad I held you while you were frightened. If I hadn't I should never have forgiven myself. It was all I could do for Davy, and William Henry, and you!"



CHAPTER VIII

Susan Jane's funeral cast all other events into the shade. It was the all-important topic of conversation and interest. David alone really grieved for her; the others had suffered too keenly from Susan's tongue and complaints to feel any honest sorrow in her passing. Her giving them the opportunity for so comfortable and gratifying a funeral was, perhaps, the one thing she could have done to cause them to respect her memory. Janet saw poor departed Susan in a belated halo of romance, and Janet was in the mood to be deeply touched. She no longer saw Susan old, helpless, and ugly, full of small meannesses and sour criticism: she saw her only as the young girl, little older than herself, for whom long ago William Henry had always a smile, and a gentle nickname. It was beautiful, to the trouble-touched girl of the dunes, to think that the old lover came back for his sweetheart and paused, before claiming his treasure, to thank poor Davy for his years of patient love and service.

"And he understands, I know," Janet murmured, placing some autumn flowers near Susan Jane, "he is glad that dear Davy could have the joy that seemed to us all a burden. That's the way it is when the 'former things have passed away,'"—the girl's tears fell among the flowers,—"such things do not matter then; but here they do! Oh, they matter most of all!"

Mrs. Jo G., her boarders gone and her body weary from the summer's strain, gathered her neglected social charms together for Susan Jane's funeral. There would be a reunion of all Quinton that day. There would be a repast worthy the minister's donation. Eliza Jane Smith had offered her services as housekeeper *pro tem*.

"An' a mercy, too!" snapped Mrs. Jo G., lapping a plaid shirt waist over her scrawny chest. "Janet's 'bout as useful at such times as a flounder. Lord save us! how I have fell away this season! We've cleared two hundred dollars, an' about all my heft. Maud Grace!"

"Yes, Ma!" Maud Grace appeared, bleached out and thin, her eyes red from weeping and her voice shaky.

"What in land's name is the matter with you?" Mrs. Jo G. paused to gaze at the

sodden face of the girl she had sacrificed much for during the season.

"Susan Jane!" faltered Maud.

"You ain't mournin' fur her, are you?"

"No, ma'am. But I don't want t' go t' her buryin'. I ain't got no appetite fur corpses, they always make me faint."

"Well, you're goin', faint or no faint! So look after the children, an' get them ready. Land of love! I should think the sound of the stillness up at the Light, after Susan Jane's clatter, would 'bout knock David out. I will say fur him, that he's earned his reward. Do stop snivellin', Maud Grace! You look as if you, 'stead of me, had frizzled over the cook stove all summer! It's bad enough to think you didn't land a beau, without lookin' as if you felt it! That Janet's goin's on hasn't served her neither, but she ain't goin' t' gloat over you while you've got a ma what can steer you straight. You get int' your best clothes and perk up a bit; you can boss it over Janet. Her name is a soundin' cymbal or soon will be! She's got her mother in her strong. It's sort o' wrung out of me, since Janet's acted up so, though I had meant t' keep my own knowledge."

"I don't know as she's done anything much, Ma; jest trapsed on the Hills some an' turned her nose up at boarders mostly. Mr. Fitch said,"—a weak color flushed Maud's face for an instant,—"*Mr. Fitch said she felt herself high an' mighty. But that ain't no crime.*" Mr. Fitch's name was one with which to conjure in the Gordon household.

"Like as not he was runnin' after her!" Mrs. Jo G. was adjusting her memorial pin, a dreary piece of jewelry, composed of the hair from the heads of several dead and gone relatives; "but Janet wasn't after his kind. She was a modil!" The woman whispered this information, glancing hurriedly at the small children whom Maud was now getting into their clothes.

"What's that?" whispered the girl in return. The hints about Janet were gathering force in order to break after the excitement of the funeral was over. But Maud, with anxieties of her own, had heeded them but slightly until now.

"It's a thing no Quintonite ain't goin' t' stand fur!" quivered Mrs. Jo G. "'T ain't proper. I guess Cap'n Billy had better have kept her over to the Station."

"But what is it?" insisted Maud, her voice almost drowned in the shriek of one of the twins, whose long thin hair she had jerked by way of emphasis. Under cover of the scream, the mother replied:

"'T ain't fit t' talk about 'fore a self-respectin' girl. But I don't want you should have anything t' do with Janet after t'-day."

"Spell it!" pleaded Maud, shaking her younger sister into a sobful semi-silence.

"F-i-g-g-e-r!" spelled Mrs. Jo G. in an ominous murmur. Maud Grace's flat, expressionless face took on a really imbecile blankness.

"Figger!" she repeated over and over. "Figger! That's worse t' understand than modil. I don't see why you can't talk plain talk, Ma!"

"'Cause I told you. Whisper or shoutin', 't ain't the thing fur plain talk; but I wanted t' give you a weapon in case Janet takes t' crowin' over you—an' she ain't above it. She's wuss off than you be!" With this, Mrs. Jo G. marshalled her host, and set out for the Light.

It was late in the day, after poor Susan Jane had been laid away in the little graveyard back of the white church, that David slowly mounted the lighthouse stairs, pausing as usual upon every landing. There was no song upon his lips now. For the first time in thirty years, Davy felt that song was impossible. All smiling and many-colored the landscape spread before him at every opening, but the man sighed without the laugh.

"The higher up I git," he panted, "it seems I feel heavier hearted. I ain't got nothin' now, nor ever more shall have. I've had my turn, an' when I reach t' other side I can't expect poor William Henry t' share her with me. Thirty years I had her, an' course I can't complain. I ought t' be thankful William Henry didn't begrudge me them years. An' I am thankful! Yes, I am thankful, an' somehow I believe the good God ain't goin' t' let my heaven be blighted. In some way, He's goin' t' set it straight fur us three over there! Maybe Susan Jane'll kind o' hanker arter the care I gave. Maybe she's got kinder use t' it; and maybe, since there ain't any marriage, or givin' in marriage, maybe she'll have love enough fur us both!"

This conclusion brought a joy with it that radiated the honest face.

"That's the way out!" he murmured, standing upon the little balcony and facing a sunset so gorgeous that the world seemed full of glory. "It's come t' me as plain as William Henry come three nights back. It's borne in upon me, that most all of life's riddles get answered, when ye get up high enough t' leave hamperin' things below. Downstairs the loss of Susan Jane kills everything but the heartache; but up here," Davy walked around the Light, and looked tenderly at the land and sun-touched bay, "up here, where Susan Jane never came, I can see clearer, bein' accustomed t' havin' it out alone with God, so t' speak, fur the last ten years!"

And now the sun was gone! Its gladsome farewell to Davy in the Light made the smile gather on the wrinkled face.

"Your turn'll come," he said smilingly in the old words, "your turn'll come." Then he went down to the little waiting room, lighted his own lamp, and took the book of poems from the table.

He was ready for his next duty! He was soon lost to all but the swinging thought in the ringing lines. Davy was himself again! Then, suddenly, he was aware of a hand upon his shoulder. So tense were his nerves that had he looked up and seen either William Henry or Susan Jane, he would not have been surprised. But it was Janet, and her eyes were full of brooding love.

"Davy," she said, "do you remember how I used to play 'hungry man' with you, when I was a little girl?"

"I do that, Janet!" The cheerful, old face beamed. "'Have ye had any supper?' yer use t' ask, 'have ye had any supper, Mr. Hungry Man?'"

"Let's play now!" The girl laughed gently. "*Have* you had any supper, Mr. Hungry Man? Why, I can see you just as plain as plain, Davy! You used to stand inside the lamp and the lenses made you long and thin and dreadfully starved looking."

"But once I got outside the glass I plumped up quick enough!" Davy returned. He saw the look in Janet's eyes that called for bravery in him. She was pale and pitiful, and he turned comforter at once.

"It's all dependin' upon the position ye take, how ye look t' others. Once ye get outside of most things, ye straightway freshen up an' get likelier lookin'!"

"You've had no supper to-night, Mr. Hungry Man!" Janet put her face close to Davy's.

"I ain't sufferin' fur food, Janet."

"You never own to any suffering, Davy, but look here!" She ran to the landing and brought in a large tray, neatly spread with food. "It isn't leavings," she explained, placing the dishes before him; "Eliza Jane's cooking is for company, mine for Davy and me! I made the biscuits myself. Aren't they flaky?"

"They are *that*!" nodded Davy; "flaky don't do them justice; they're flakes. An' that coffee! By gum! Janet, that smells like coffee!"

"Davy, it is coffee!" The girl was glowing, and her eyes shone blue in the

lamplight. "I'm going to eat with you, Davy,"—she drew up a stool,—"eat and talk." Davy fell to with a suddenly awakened appetite, but Janet watched him above her clasped hands. Presently she said:

"Davy, who is going to—to—" She was about to say, "keep house for you," but, recalling Susan Jane's helplessness, she said instead, "who is going to keep you from being awfully lonely, now?"

"Why, Janet,"—Davy's full mouth hampered his speech,—"I reckon I'll have t' stay lonely straight on t' the end. I've had my life."

"Davy, will you share me with Cap'n Billy?" Davy gulped his mouthful and tilted his chair back.

"I'm a masterful hand at sharin' folks, Janet, but some one 'sides Billy may have something t' say as t' this bargain. There's Mark, now."

"No, Davy, there is no one, and that's the end of it! I'm a—well, a failure in getting anything to do from strangers, and so I thought if you would let me, I'd share with you and Billy, and by working very hard I'd make my board and keep." The sweet face quivered.

"Ain't the paintin' business paid, Janet?" Davy, during sleep-filled days and lonely nights up aloft, had caught no drifting gossip to disturb him.

"No, it hasn't paid!" The girl drooped forward wearily.

"Billy said ye was helpin' a woman painter."

"The women have all gone now, Davy."

"That's the wust of foreign trade," comforted David. "Ye can't depend on it."

"No, but I mean to be a good housekeeper, Davy. I am going to make you and my Cap'n Billy Daddy just cosy. I reckon I'm better fitted for *home* trade."

"Like as not, Janet, like as not. Most women are, if they only get convinced 'fore it's too late. Well, I'll be powerful thankful t' have ye around. 'T ain't any way fur a man t' live, without the woman's touch. Sometimes I've fancied that's what makes women restless. Men don't credit them with 'nough importance."

"You've eaten a fine supper, Mr. Hungry Man!"—Davy had eaten it all,—"and now I'm going downstairs to make things homey. I wish the sun rose earlier; good night, Davy!" She bent and kissed his seamed and rugged cheek.

"Good night, Janet, an' God bless ye!"

At every window on the way down the girl stopped to look out at the stars that were thick in the early autumn gloaming. She was aware of a lack of joy in life—one has to know sorrow and trouble to recognize and classify it clearly. Knowledge was coming slowly to Janet. Hope had buoyed her up, the hope that Thornly would let her prove that she was stronger and braver than that silly creature he had once thought her, but, as time dragged on and no call came from the hut upon the Hills, hope died. Then she had seen Thornly drive past her one day with that white girl from Bluff Head. The pale, exquisite face had suddenly grown scarlet at the sight of Janet by the wayside, and Thornly had stared right ahead, taking no heed! Since that day the lack of joy had grown apace.

She had gone to the hut upon the Hills and hung the tiny whistle upon the door latch. She would never call him again! She had not looked for the key; she had not thought of entering. No longer had she a right there.

Billy had deferred his explanations to the girl after his visit to the hut; the sudden death of Susan Jane had postponed the day.

At the foot of the lighthouse stairs Janet paused and held her breath. Some one was moving about the rooms! Some one with a candle, for the flickering shadows rose and fell upon the inner chamber wall. The room in which Susan Jane had died! No fear of a robber stirred Janet, the time had not come when Quinton must fear that. It could not be Mark Tapkins. He might be foolish enough to use his "off night" haunting the Light—his actions were curious of late—but had it been Mark, he would have been sitting patiently on the outer steps. Janet waited a minute and then went noiselessly into the sitting room, and tiptoed to the bedroom door. Then she started back, nearly dropping the tray of empty dishes. The intruder was Maud Grace. She held a lighted candle, and she was hunting, evidently, for something, for she looked under the bed, in each drawer, in the closet; and at last she got down upon the floor and thrust her hand beneath the bedclothes! It was not her actions, alone, that startled Janet, but the dumb look of misery upon the pale, stupid face.

"Maud Grace!"

The crouching girl gave a muffled cry and then sat upright, clasping her hands closely.

"What are you looking for?" It seemed an odd way to put the question. It sounded as if Maud were in her own room and had only misplaced some article of clothing.

"Her money!" The words were clear and hard. "Susan Jane's box! I know what

you think, Janet, you think I'm a thief! But I've got—to—have money, an' I'll pay it back!"

"Come out in the sitting room, Maud. I'll light the lamp and then we can talk."

The calmness of tone and words gave the girl upon the floor courage to rise and go into the next room. There she sat down in Susan's old rocker and waited until Janet made a light. Then they faced each other, Janet taking her place upon the horsehair sofa.

"You're just as bad as me!" cried Maud suddenly. The steady look Janet bent upon her angered and repelled her. "You ought t' understand how 't is."

"I don't know what you mean," Janet replied, "but I'm not bad enough to steal a dead woman's money."

Maud turned a bluish white and her misery-filled eyes fell.

"I had t' have money. I darn't ask Pa or Ma; I can't tell anybody, but I've got t' have money to go away. I could have sent it back, somehow, once I got away!"

"Where are you going?" Janet's voice had the ring of scorn in it, though she tried to think kindly.

"Ah! you needn't put on them airs!" Maud was trying to keep the tears back. "You ain't any too good with your modillin', an' you—you—a figger!"

This did not have the desired or anticipated effect upon Janet. She looked puzzled.

"Somehow you sound as if you were talking in your sleep, Maud Grace," she said, "you don't seem to have any sense. But you've got to explain about the money!"

At this Maud sprang from the chair and flung herself beside Janet. She must have help; and this girl, doubted by all the moral village folks, was her one hope in a desolate hour.

"I've got t' go after him!" she sobbed.

"After him?" Janet could not free herself from the clinging arms.

"Yes, Mr. Fitch. Ah! Janet, if you was good like all the rest, you couldn't understand, but all day I've been thinkin' how you would stand up fur me if you knowed! He made love t' me, Mr. Fitch did, an' now he's gone, an' he don't write, an' I know he's never comin' back. Somethin' tells me. An' oh! Janet, I've got t' have him! I have, I have! I only meant t' take the money till I got to him. I found

his card in his bedroom after he went. He didn't tell me true where he lived, but the card's all right. An' I've got t' go!" The girl's thin voice was hoarse with emotion. She clung closer, and her breath came hard and quick.

A loathing filled Janet as she listened, a loathing made bitter by the insinuation of her similarity to this poor, cringing creature beside her.

"You don't want him if he doesn't want you, do you?" she asked slowly.

"I do that!" Maud's tone was doggedly miserable.

"Even if he is trying to get away from you?" The memory of the weak, boyish boarder at Mrs. Jo G.'s added force to this question.

"Yes!"

"Then, shame to you, Maud Grace! I wouldn't say such a thing as that if I were to die!"

"Maybe"—the wretched girl groaned—"maybe you ain't just like me. Somehow I can't think you are; but, Janet, it's worse than dyin', this is. I've got t' go!"

The poor, pleading face was raised to Janet, but its dumb agony met no understanding emotion. A stir outside caused both girls to tremble with fright.

"I've heard every word you've said!" Mark Tapkins stood in the doorway opening upon the porch. "I was a settin' out there, sort a-watchin' an' thinkin' o' other things an' not noticin' what was passin', till all of a suddint it come t' me, that I had been a listenin' an' takin' in what wasn't intended fur me. I'm glad I did!" His slow face lifted proudly. "I'm glad I was used, so t' speak, fur this end. Maud Grace, you ain't got any call t' bother Janet no more. I understand you!" His eyes rested upon the forlorn girl and she shrank as before fire. "I understand, an' this is man's work. You come along home, an' t'-morrer you give me that card of his'n, an' I'll travel up t' town, an' fetch him back!"

"Mark!" Janet was on her feet, her eyes blazing, "you mustn't help her in this foolish business. You have no right to interfere. You have no right here! She shall not make herself so ridiculous as to send for a man who is trying to get away!"

Mark looked at her gently, patiently.

"Sho! Janet," he soothed, "you leave things you don't understand t' them as does. I'm goin' t' fetch that feller back. I know his kind, the city breeds 'em! Maybe the bracin' air down here will help him. Come along, Maud Grace, it's nateral

enough for me to take you home from Janet's." Janet made no further effort to change Mark's intention; and he and Maud went away together.

When Janet heard them close the garden gate, she went into the bedroom, took the money box, that poor Maud had so diligently sought, from the top shelf of the closet, and put it in a bureau drawer; then she turned the key in the drawer for the first time in all the years.

CHAPTER IX

"Well, it's a relief to me, Dick, to know that you do know!" Mr. Devant shrugged his shoulders, and laughed lightly. "Katharine and I have had a sneaking desire to ask you if you'd found us out, but we waited for you to make the first move."

"I'm slow to move in any game," Thornly replied. "I rather think it comes from my chess training. When a child begins that pastime, as you might say, in his cradle, with such a teacher as father, it's apt to influence his character."

"Exactly. Have a cigar, Dick; it's beastly lonely to puff alone."

"Thanks, no. I've smoked too much in my hut on the Hills. Being alone always drives me to a cigar."

The two men sat in the library at Bluff Head. A fire of driftwood crackled on the hearth and a stiff wind roared around the house.

"Of course we had no right to enter your studio,"—Mr. Devant spoke slowly between the puffs of smoke,—"except the right that says all is fair in love and war. I admit that I was shaking in my boots that day for fear you might come in upon us. Katharine was braver than I. You must own, Dick, that you hadn't treated the girl quite fair."

"I do not grant that, Mr. Devant. I think Katharine had no cause for complaint. Good Lord! a doctor's wife might quite as well feel herself aggrieved because her husband's dissecting room is closed to her."

"Come, now, Dick!" Devant threw his head back and laughed; "it's carrying the thing too far when you liken the Pimpernel to a disagreeably defunct subject."

"It all goes to the making of one's art; that is what I mean. It belongs to the art and need not be dragged into public to satisfy a woman's morbid curiosity."

"Or a man's?" The laugh was gone from the face of the older man.

"Or a man's, since you insist." Thornly looked into the depths of the rich glow upon the grate and took small heed of his companion's changed expression.

"And your model gave us away?"

"I beg pardon?" Thornly drew himself together; "what did you say?"

"I said, your model, the Pimpernel, told you? It must have given the little thing a bad half hour to be found out."

"It killed her childhood," the young man returned; "it died hard, and it wasn't pleasant for me to witness, but, thank God, the woman in her saved her soul from utter annihilation. Somehow, I have always wanted you and Katharine to know this."

"Thank you. You have told Katharine?"

"No, I'm leaving to-morrow. I'm going to tell Katharine to-morrow night. I waited for her to speak first to me; I hoped she would to the last. All might have been different if she only had."

"Perhaps Katharine is generous enough to forgive you unheard?" ventured Devant.

"No woman has a right to forgive a man in such a case, if she suspects what Katharine did!" The keen eyes drew together darkly.

"How do you know what Katharine thought, Dick?" The older man was growing anxious.

"A woman thinks only one thing, when she strikes that kind of a blow, Mr. Devant. The effect of the blow upon the object was proof enough of its character. I happened to be in at the death, you know."

"Dick, you're a man of the world; this sort of sentiment is not worthy of your intelligence. Katharine is a loving girl and naturally a bit jealous of you and your dissecting room. You must realize she had cause for surprise that day? Why, the little devil looked like a siren and the bare feet in the net were breathtaking. I think, under all the circumstances, for Katharine to overlook it in silence proves

her a large-hearted woman."

"Or an indifferent, determined one!"

"Dick!"

"I feel rather more deeply, Mr. Devant, than you have, perhaps, imagined. This means much to me. I have never had but one ideal of womanhood that I have cared to bring into my inner life. My mother set my standard high."

"Your mother was an unusual woman, my boy."

"The unusual is what I have always admired."

"You are too young to be so unelastic."

"I'm too young to forego my ideal, Mr. Devant."

Presently Saxton entered the room with a tray of glasses and a bottle. After he was gone, Mr. Devant took up the subject anxiously.

"I was your father's friend, Dick, your mother's too, for that matter. I do not want you to do a mad thing in the heat of resentment. Katharine Ogden is a rare woman, a woman who will be the one thing needful to make your success in life secure. Her fortune will place you above the necessity of struggling. You can paint as genius moves and give the public only your best. She is beautiful; she loves you, is proud of you, and knows the world, the world that may be yours, in every detail. She is your ideal, my boy, your ideal, lost for a moment in the fog."

Thornly listened, and suddenly Janet's simile recurred to him: "It comes to me just as Davy's Light comes of an early morning when the fog lifts!" The memory brought a tugging of the heartstrings.

"You have scattered the fog, Mr. Devant," he answered. "I own I was in rather a mist, but you bring things out most distinctly!"

"And you will not go to Katharine at once? You see I am presuming upon old friendship and a sincere liking for you."

"I only wish there were a night train!" Thornly gave vent to a long, relieved breath.

"You hold to your purpose, Dick? I feel that but for me this might not have occurred. I should have restrained the child that day."

"I shall tell Katharine all, Mr. Devant. I am sure she will ask me to release her from a tie that can be only galling for us both."

"You will be playing the fool, Dick,"—a note of anger rang in the deep voice,—"a fool, and something worse. Gentlemen do not play fast and loose with a woman like Katharine Ogden!"

"I am sorry you judge me so harshly." Thornly flushed. "I should hardly think myself worthy the name of man, if I followed any other course. To marry Katharine with this between us would be sheer folly. To refer to it must in itself bring about the result I expect. I have no desire to enter Katharine's world and she has no intention of adopting mine. She has always believed I would use my success as a step to mount to her. That her world is less than mine has never occurred to her."

"But if the girl loves you?"

"She does not love *me*. Had she loved me, she must have spoken since—that day."

Mr. Devant arose uneasily and walked about the room, then he came back and drew his chair close to Thornly's.

"Will you take a glass of my—wine?" he asked huskily.

Thornly was about to decline, but changed his mind.

"Thanks, I will," he said instead. And the two sipped the port together.

"Dick, this has shaken me a bit. I feel that I have an ignoble share in the whole affair. I'm getting to be an old man; I can claim certain privileges on that score, and if life means anything past forty, it means sharing its experiences with a friend. I'm going to speak of something that has never passed my lips for nearly twenty years."

"You are very kind, Mr. Devant." Thornly set his glass down and thrust his hands in his pockets. "I appreciate your friendliness, but please do not give yourself pain. If life means anything under forty, it means getting your knocks at first hand." He tried to smile pleasantly, but his face fell at once into gloomy, set lines.

"I'm afraid," Mr. Devant went on, keeping his eyes upon his companion's face and guiding himself thereby, "I'm afraid some Quixotic idea of defending this little pimpernel of ours moves you to take this step. Believe me, nothing you can do in that direction—unless indeed you have gone too far already—can avail, if you seek the girl's happiness."

A deep flush rose to Thornly's cheeks, but the proud uplift of the head renewed

hope in the older man's heart.

"You say," he continued, toying with his glass, "that to drag Katharine from her world would be ruinous to her; to drag this child of the dunes from her world would be—to put it none too harshly—hell! I've looked the girl's antecedents up since that day on the Hills. I've had my bad moments, I can assure you. It's like trying to draw water out of an empty well to get anything against their own from these people down here; but I had hopes of the girl's mother. I pin my faith to ancestry, and I am willing to build on a very small foundation, providing the soil is good. But the mother in no wise accounts for the daughter. She was a simple, uneducated woman, with rather an unpleasant way of shunning her kind. James B. Smith, my gardener, permitted me to wring this from him. He doesn't fancy Captain Billy Morgan, thinks him rather a saphead. He hinted at a necessity for the marriage of this same Billy and the girl's mother. It's about the one sin the Quantonites know as a sin. They come as near going back upon each other for that transgression as they ever come to anything definite. The girl is the offspring of a stupid surf-man and a nondescript sort of woman. She is not the product of any known better stock; she is, well, a freak of nature! You cannot transplant that kind of flower, Dick. The roots are hid in shallow soil of a peculiar kind. If you planted her in, well, in even your artistic world, she would either die, shrivel up, and be finished, or she might spread her roots, and finish you! I've seen more than one such case."

Thornly shook himself, as if doubtful what he should reply to this man who, above all else, in his own fashion, was trying to prove himself a friend.

"Thank you again, Mr. Devant," he said at last haltingly; "I suppose all men as old as you are sincere when they try to help us younger chaps by knocking us senseless in an hour of danger. But it's better to let us see and know the danger; we'll recognize it the next time. All I can say is, that I have formed no plans for after to-morrow night! I've got to get out into the open if I can. I rather imagine my art must satisfy me in the future."

Devant went over to a desk between two bookcases, opened it, and took something from a private drawer.

"What do you think of this?" he asked, handing Thornly an old photograph.

"I should say,"—the younger man looked keenly at the picture,—"I should say that it was an almost ideal face of a certain type."

"Of a certain type, yes." Devant came closer and leaned over his companion's shoulder. "The coloring, of course, is lacking. I never saw such glorious hair and

eyes. The eyes gave promise of a nobility the woman-nature utterly lacked. That girl, Dick, has wrecked my life!"

Thornly handed the photograph to Devant. He felt as if he were in some way reading a private letter.

"Your life does not seem a wrecked life," he said confusedly. In a vague way he wished to repress a confidence that he felt, once told, might wield an influence over his own acts, and this his independence resented. "You have always appeared a thoroughly contented, successful man."

Devant laughed bitterly; then he idly placed the photograph in a book and closed the covers upon the exquisite face. Thornly hoped that would end the matter, but his companion was bent upon his course. He stretched his feet toward the fire and looked into the heart of the glow, with sad, brooding eyes.

"Happy!" he ejaculated, "happy! It is only youth that estimates happiness by superficialities. A smile, a laugh, a full pocketbook! You think they mean happiness?"

"They are often the outward expression."

"Or counterfeits. Have you ever read 'Peer Gynt,' Dick?"

"Yes. Ibsen has a gloomy charm for me. I read all he writes in about the same way a child reads goblin tales. I enjoy the shivers."

"You remember the woman who gave Peer permission to marry the one pure love of his life but stipulated that *she* should forever sit beside them?"

"Yes!" Thornly smiled grimly. "That was a devilishly Ibsen-like idea."

"It was a truer touch than the young can understand. Those ghostly women of an early folly often sit beside a man and the later, purer love of his life. Some men are able to ignore the gray spectres and get a deal of comfort from the saner reality of maturer years; I never could. That girl"—he touched the closed book as if it were the grave that concealed her—"has always come between me and later desires for a home and closer ties. Her wonderful eyes, that looked so much and meant so little, have held me by a power that death and years have never conquered."

"She died then?" Thornly could no longer shield himself from the undesired knowledge; he must hear the end.

"Yes. She came from near here, poor little soul! I can never get rid of the

impression that her death was hurried, not only by trouble, but sheer homesickness. You cannot fit these slow, quiet natures into the city's whirlpool. I was a young fellow, down for the summer. I was ensnared by her beauty, and hadn't sense enough to see the danger. She followed me to the city,—took a place in a shop, and was about as wretched as a sea gull in a desert. I was fool enough to think it a noble act to befriend her and so I complicated matters. My father must have found out, though I was never sure of that. Father was a man who kept a calm exterior under any emotion; but he sent me abroad, and I, not knowing that he had discovered anything, dared not confess. I meant to come back at a year's end and set all straight in some way. Good God! set things straight! How we poor devils go through the world knocking down things like so many ten pins and solacing ourselves with the fancy that when we finish the game we'll set the pins in place again! We never get that chance, Dick, take my word for it! Whatever the plan of life is, it isn't for us to set up the game! We may play fair, if it is in us, but once we get through, we need not hope for any going back process. When I returned at the end of two years, I could not find her! It wasn't love that set me upon the search for her, Dick, I always knew that; but I think it was the one decent element that has ever kept me from going to the deepest depths. I got discouraged, finally, and took our old family lawyer into my confidence."

"Did you look down here?" Thornly asked slowly. The tale had clutched him in a nightmarish way that shook his nerves.

"They don't come back here, my boy, once they tread the path of that poor child. They simplify morality in Quinton along with all else, and the one unpardonable sin suffices for them. They grade their society by their attitude toward that. But old Thorndyke took this place into consideration as a beginning, for he aided me in my search when he was convinced of my determination."

"And you never found her?" Thornly was leaning forward with hands close clasped before him, his face showing tense in the red glow of the fire.

"Thorndyke did."

"Ah!"

"Yes, the poor little thing had been rescued after a fashion. Soon after I left her, a fellow who had always had a liking for her, a chap who had worked in the shop with her, was willing to marry her and she consented. You wouldn't think she could, quite, with those eyes, but she did! The man was good to her; but the city, and other things, were too much, and she lived only a short time. There was a

child! I wanted to do something for it; I had a passion of remorse then, but Thorndyke told me that the child's best interest lay in my letting her alone. She was respected and comfortable. For me to interfere would be to throw dishonor upon the dead mother and a cloud upon the child. All had been buried and forgotten in the mother's grave. About all I could do to better the business was to keep my hands off; and that I did!"

Devant's head drooped upon his chest, and Thornly felt a kind of pity that stirred a new liking for the man.

"You think the lawyer told you the true facts?" he asked; "true in every particular?"

Devant started up and turned deep eyes upon the questioner.

"Great heavens! yes. You do not know Thorndyke. He was about as cast iron an old Puritan as ever survived the times. He was devoted to our family, and served us to his life's end as counsellor and friend; but not for the hope of heaven would he have lied! No, that's why I confided in Thorndyke, I could not have trusted any one else. I knew he would never respect me afterward; he never did. But he served me as no one else could, and I bore his contempt with positive gratitude."

"But you could never forget?" Thornly spoke almost affectionately. The older man looked up.

"No. And as I grow older I thank God I never could. We ought not forget such things as that. We ought to expiate them as long as we live. I have grown to take a kind of joy in the hurt of the memory, a kind of savage exaltation in the suffering. So, perhaps, can I wipe out the wrong in this life and get strength of a better sort for the next trial on beyond, if there is another trial! I suppose every man wants to show, and live the best that is in him; not many get the chance here, from what I see. I reckon that is why we old fellows have an interest in you younger ones. It goes against the grain, if we have a sneaking regard for you, to see you quench the divine spark with the same galling water we've gone through. Going, Dick?"

For the other had risen and was holding out his hand in a confused but eager fashion.

"Yes, Mr. Devant, and thank you! You're not an old man, I sincerely wish that you might some day, well, you understand—not forget exactly, but get another trial here!"

"Too late for that, Dick. Can't you stay over night?"

"No. I'm going to the Hills. I've some last things to do there."

"And to-morrow, Dick?"

"I'm going to Katharine!" The two men looked keenly into each other's eyes.

"I'll meet you then at the train, my boy, at 7.50. I've business in the city. I always put up at the Holcomb; look me up after you've seen Katharine."

"Good night, Mr. Devant, and again thank you!"

Devant walked with Thornly to the outer door, and then to the windswept piazza. "It's sharp to-night," he said; "I'll soon have to give up Bluff Head. Davy's Light has got it all its own way to-night, not a star or moon to rival its beauty. A time back I fancied one evening that the Light failed me. It was only for a few moments I imagined it, but it gave me quite a jog. I suppose it was the state of my nerves; one can rely upon Davy. He's a great philosopher in his way. His lamp is his duty; his lamp and that poor crippled wife of his who has just died. Davy is one of the few men I've met, Dick, who seems to have played the game fair and has never tried to comfort himself with the hope of going back. 'I'm ready for the next duty,' he said to me the other day with his old rugged face shining; 'there's always another duty ready at hand, when you drop one as finished.'"

The master of Bluff Head watched the straight young figure fade into the night. Then he turned again to Davy's Light.

"The weight of a dead duty," he muttered. "That's what anchors a man! It isn't in the order of things to trust a man with a new duty, when he failed with the last. There isn't any light to guide a man that's anchored by a dead duty."

Then Devant went back into his lonely house and sat down before the dulling fire to think it out about Thornly.

"He'll never go to any one but me, after he's seen Katharine," he thought. "He may not come to me. It all depends upon how deep the thing has gone, but, in case he needs any one, I'd better be on hand. I may serve as a buffer, and that's better than not serving at all."



CHAPTER X

Janet had conquered the art of crocheting in order that she might construct a Tam o' Shanter cap. It had been a difficult task, and the result was far from satisfying. Dropped stitches and uneven rows were in evidence all over the creation of dark red, with its bushy little knot on top. But Janet had an eye for the impressionistic touch, and as she glanced in the mirror of Susan Jane's bureau, the general effect was gratifying. Under the dull red the splendid, dusky gold of the girl's hair shone exquisitely. Janet had trained the rebellious locks at last to an upward tendency and the mass was knotted loosely beneath the artistic headgear. The eye for color had never been lacking in this girl of the dunes. Nature had taught her true, but Thornly had, later, assisted Nature; and no French modiste could more accurately have chosen the shade of reddish brown to suit the complexion than had Janet selected, from the village store, her coarse flannel for blouse and skirt. The skirt was long now, and the heavy shoes were worn religiously through heat and cold. There was to be no more absolute freedom for Janet of the Dunes.

David had come down from his Light, heavy eyed and weary. Mark Tapkins's absence caused extra duty for David, but the man would ask for no other helper; it would seem like disloyalty to Mark. Janet took a turn now and again to relieve David, and that helped considerably. The girl had borne her share the previous night, but her face showed no trace of the vigil.

"Sprucin'?" Davy paused. Tired as he was, the girl's beauty caught and held him.

"Some. I've set your breakfast out on the table, Davy, and the coffee is on the stove."

"Yer gettin' t' be a master hand at cookin', Janet. I don't b'lieve Pa Tapkins can beat yer coffee. Expectin' Mark back?" There was a double interest in this question.

"I haven't heard a word, Davy."

"Goin' visitin'?"

"No, Davy; nobody seems to want me to come visiting. The summer's doings have sort of rent Quinton asunder, and in some way I've managed to fall in the crack. I don't know what I've done," she smiled a crooked little smile, and gave the artistic Tam a new angle, "but I'm rather frozen out. Mrs. Jo G.'s Amelia

made a 'face' at me yesterday. I shouldn't have noticed it, for the creature's hideous anyway, but she called an explanation after me; 'I've made a snoot at you!' she screamed, and would have said more, but Maud Grace pulled her in. No, Davy, I'm going up to Bluff Head."

"It's empty," Davy said, moving between stove and table clumsily.

"Eliza Jane's there, and James B. I wonder if they are going to shut the house for the winter?" asked Janet.

"Like as not," Davy nodded, and spoke from the depths of his coffee cup.

Janet bethought her of the cellar window and the old unbroken calm, and she sighed yearningly.

"Good bye, Davy." She came behind his chair, and snuggled her soft cap against his cheek. "I'm going up to have a good reading spell; then after dinner let us, you and I, if Mark should happen back, go over to the Station to see Cap'n Billy. Something's the matter with my Cap'n Daddy. He's keeping off land like an ocean steamer. Davy, he's got a cargo aboard, take my word for it, that he doesn't want us to know about. Like as not he's taken to pirate ways and we've got to get aboard, Davy, sure and certain."

"By gum!" ejaculated David, "what an eye ye've got fur signals, Janet! I've been doubtin' Billy's actions fur some time an', if Mark comes back, I'll jine ye goin' over t' the dunes. What's Mark's call t' the city?" he asked suddenly.

"You'll have to ask Mark." The girl was halfway down the garden path as she answered. "Probably following the city trade."

"Not much!" muttered Davy, going into the sleeping room; "Mark's got his stomick full of city once fur all. He hates it worse'n pisen."

Down the sunlit path went the girl to the oak thicket which lay between the Light and the road that stretched from the village to Bluff Head. Not a soul was in sight, and the crisp air and glorious view gave a new kind of joy to Janet that was distinct from pleasure. She felt that even if trouble crushed her, she would always be able to know this satisfaction of the senses. She paused at the entrance of the woods and looked back. The path was strewn with a carpet of leaves; here and there a tall poplar stood majestically above its stunted comrades of pines and scrub oaks, but looked gaunt and bare, while the humbler brothers bore a beauty of blood-red leaves, or the constant green. Janet smiled, recalling an old belief of her childhood. She had asked Pa Tapkins once why the oaks were so very little. Pa Tapkins had his explanation ready. It had borne part in his boyhood and was a

fully confirmed fact in later life.

"It all come of the poplars bein' sich liars, Janet. Never trust no poplar! When things was only sand an' beginnin's in these parts, all the trees sprung up together. But the poplars, bein' snoopier than common, shot up considerable an' took a look around. Lordy! what did they see but the ocean a-roarin' an' makin' as if it was comin' straight over the dunes! An' the poplars passed the word down t' the little oaks, what was jest gettin' their bearin's. It scared 'em so it gave 'em a setback from the fust. But them tall liars wasn't content with statin' truths, day after day, when the sea lay smilin' like a babby; they handed down a bigger whopper than what they did when they fust saw the water. 'Nearer! nearer! it's comin',' that's what they said, mingled 'long with powerful yarns as to how the monster looked! Naterally the scared oaks didn't take no interest in shootin' up, when they thought they was so soon t' be eaten, so they got the habit of crouchin' low an' dependin' on the poplars fur information. They got a notion, too, of turnin' away from the sea. Sort o' sot their faces agin it, so t' speak. The pines, every onct so often, shamed 'em till they blushed deep red,—that comes 'long 'bout spring an' fall,—but no 'mount o' shamin' ever started them int' springin' up an' seein' fur themselves an' givin' the poplars the lie! Don't ye place no dependence on a poplar, Janet, they be shivery, whisperin' critters! They turn pale when there ain't nothin' the matter; they keep their shade t' themselves, jest plain miserly; an' they pry too much. 'T ain't proper; 't is 'most human-like."

Janet recalled the old fancy now, leaning against the tall poplar which, indeed, was whispering in nervous fashion to the blushing scrub oaks clustering close. Some one was coming up the road from the station. In the far distance the girl heard the panting shriek of the engine of the morning train from the city. Could that shambling, weary figure approaching be Mark? Why, he looked older than Pa Tapkins! Janet waited until he was abreast of her. His hands were plunged in his pockets, his shabby valise slung over his shoulder, and his head was bowed upon his chest.

"Mark!" she cried cheerily, "you look just worn out."

The man raised his dull face and an awakening of interest and hope lit it.

"Mornin', Janet," he replied and came to the tree. "Davy managed pretty good? I was kept longer than any reason. I hope Davy ain't petered out."

"No. I helped some. Did you get Maud Grace's young man, Mark?" The amusement in the laughing voice made Mark shiver. All the pleasure dropped from his face like a mask.

"I found where he was, all right, but I got there a day too late, he was off fur—fur—"

"For where?"

"There was no findin' out. He's jest clear gone an' vanished."

"Well, I'm glad of it! I think Maud Grace ought to be ashamed of herself to want him when he did not want her. I'm out and out thankful she cannot have her way."

The effect of this speech upon Mark was stupendous. His jaw dropped and a slow fire seemed to gleam in his pale eyes. Part of his nature rose in gladness because the girl could speak in that fashion. She had no knowledge within her to cause her to falter or stand abashed. But the tired man, in the poor fellow, cried out to this strong, brave creature to aid him understandingly where his own knowledge and slowness of nature made him a coward. And so they stood looking in each other's eyes.

"I don't see why, Mark, you should try to help Maud. She's silly and has acted like an idiot with every man boarder her mother has had. She's turned her back upon you. This, maybe, will teach her a lesson."

"Like as not it will!" Mark's words came with almost a groan. "Like as not it will!" What strength was in him conquered. This girl, so detached from him, must keep her childish faith. Whatever was to be borne and suffered, he, in his bungling fashion, must bear it and suffer alone. He knew the Quintonites, poor fellow! He knew there was work for him to do, but he would do it alone!

"Whar you goin', Janet?" Mark took up his burden of duty with a sigh. He was awake to life and its meaning at last, and the reality steadied him.

"On an errand."

"Whar?"

"That's telling!" The girl laughed mockingly. "And, Mark, as soon as you can, go up to the Light. I'll soon be back, Davy and I are going on a pirate hunt this afternoon."

"A what kind of a hunt?"

"Pirate. It's going to be great fun. Davy needs a change."

Mark watched the brilliant figure vanish around the curve of the road. That any being on earth could be so gladsome puzzled him vaguely.

"Bluff Head!" he muttered; "well, 't ain't as bad as the Hills, but it's all bad an' muddlin', an' I don't feel equal t' tacklin' it. The dear Lord knows I don't. I hate t' have a job what I know from the start I'm goin' t' botch, but the Lord's got t' take the consequences if He calls 'pon me. 'T warn't any of my doin's, the Lord knows that!"

Bluff Head was closed, whether for the season or not Janet did not care. From the region of the barns James B.'s voice came, singing a hymn, but Eliza Jane had either gone for the day or for altogether. Janet ran around to the cellar window, keeping the house between her and the barns. The window still swayed inward to her touch! The long skirts and new womanhood retarded movement somewhat, but the agile body had not forgotten its cunning. In a minute or two Janet stood in the vacant library. She drew in long breaths. Eliza Jane had aired the room well, but there was a hint of tobacco smoke still. Upon a stand was a vase of golden rod, yellow and vivid amid the rich coloring.

"Some people leave a house a great deal lonelier than others," whispered the girl; "it will never be quite the same."

Devant's presence, his vital personality seemed near and potent. She and he had been reading a book together in that early summer time before guests had appeared to disturb the quiet happiness; she would go back to the book and begin alone what they had eagerly pursued in company. Janet went to the bookcase; the book was gone and its neighbors were leaning over the vacant space endeavoring to conceal its absence. Failing to find the volume, the girl went to the table and took up, one by one, the magazines and books which covered it.

"Ah!" she said suddenly, "I have you!" Under a pile, near Devant's leather chair, was what she sought, a copy of Bacon's Essays. Devant had taken a curious interest in leading this untutored girl into all manner of paths and bypaths. It was a never-failing delight to him to watch her crude but keen gripping of the best from each. Alone now, and with a shadow across the path where once companionship and pleasure had borne part, she took the Essays to the deep window, raised the sash, and nestled down to what comfort was hers.

As was ever the case, the subject caught her fancy and in seeking the pearl she forgot the effort. Presently she was aware of a key grating in the lock of the hall door. Eliza Jane was, perhaps, returning; or more likely James B. had an errand inside. Janet raised her eyes. From her nook she could see distinctly through the hall. The outer door opened, and in came Mr. Devant. He had apparently walked from the station, and was unexpected by the caretakers. He had been, without

doubt, on the train with Mark but had taken a longer path from the station, or had dallied by the way. For a moment Janet feared he might be followed by the girl she most dreaded or Thornly,—perhaps both. But Devant was alone. He closed the door after him, hung his coat and hat upon the rack, and came directly to the library. His keen eyes saw Janet at once.

"History is never tired of repeating itself!" he cried with a laugh. Outwardly he was rarely taken off his guard. "The surest way of getting you here," he went on, "is evidently for me to go away. Don't you like me any more?"

He lounged against the heavy table and folded his arms. He was looking at the lovely face beneath the vivid cap. The first impression of the girl's beauty was always puzzlingly startling. Devant had noticed that sensation before; after a moment it grew less confusing.

"I like you." Janet dropped her eyes, recalling the day upon the Hills. Devant had met her repeatedly since that morning and had always been jovial and easy in his manner, but the recollection intruded itself at every meeting.

"Perhaps you like me at a distance, but object to my company?"

"I object to some of them!" A wan smile flitted across the uplifted face.

"Well, I am alone now;" Devant nodded cheerfully. "Alone and likely to be. I'm going to remain all winter, perhaps, Janet; you must teach me ice boat sailing and let me into all the other debaucheries of the place." He came near the window and looked out toward the barns. Then he called:

"Mr. Smith!" James B. showed his rough, red head at the barn door.

"Yes!" he called back.

"I ran down to-day, instead of to-morrow. If Mrs. James B. can come up this afternoon and get me a dinner, I'll be much obliged."

"I'm sorry,"—James B. expectorated musingly,— "but she's gone t' get beach plums."

"All right," Devant returned cheerfully, "I'll starve then. Saxton won't be down until to-morrow."

"That so?" James B. had returned to his work unconcernedly.

"Why, this is dreadful!" Janet could but smile at Devant's indifferent face. "I suppose you couldn't cook for yourself even if you were starving. I wonder if I might do something for you now?"

"Take no trouble,"—Devant waved her back,—"I took precautions before I left town, and Mrs. James B. will be over as soon as she hears I'm home. I'm getting initiated. What are you reading, Janet?"

"The Essays. I found the place where we left off. They're rather dry, but I like them."

"When you do not like a really good thing," Devant said, going to his easy-chair, "read it until you do. Bring the book here, child! I haven't read aloud since you and I were alone before."

Janet arose, and as she did so something dropped at her feet. She stooped to pick it up, looked a bit surprised and confused, and slipped it into her blouse.

"What was that?" Devant asked.

"My—" Janet paused; "it was my mother's picture! I always carry it in my waist now. I dropped it."

"May I see it?"

"Cap'n Daddy said"—how long ago it seemed—"that I had better not show it, it seems as though she belonged just to Cap'n Billy and me. But then you are different. I think Cap'n Billy would not mind if you saw her. She was so pretty!" Janet came to the table, laid the book upon it, and then drew—*two* photographs from her blouse!

"Why!" she exclaimed, turning pale and stepping back, "why! I'm—I'm—why, something has happened. Look here!"

She extended her hands, and in both was the likeness of the dead Past! Identical they were! Both well preserved and arisen to face this man and young girl at God's own time! How shrivelled the memory of the grim error was! How weird and pitiful it arose against the youth and beauty of the vital creature who with outstretched arms challenged him to explain the black mystery!

"What do you know of my mother?"

"What do you know of my mother?"

"This—is—my—mother! I must have dropped one picture from the book. What do you know of my mother?"

It was only a palpitating question, but to Devant it bore the awful condemnation of outraged girlhood.

"My God!" he gasped, taking the photographs from her. "My God!" There could be no mistake. Both had been taken from the same negative!

Old Thorndyke had lied then! This girl, with her memory-haunting, elusive beauty, was—he sank back and stared at her. No: it could not be! Whatever the meaning was, he dared not think that she was his daughter! If Thorndyke had lied once, he probably had many times. There may not have been a child; but that would have been a senseless invention—and Thorndyke was not the man to waste his energies. Perhaps the first child had died. Perhaps there had never been a marriage such as Thorndyke had said. That might easily have happened, and then the mother could have drifted back to the dunes with her pitiful secret hidden forever. Her marriage with Cap'n Billy, in that case, might have resulted quite naturally. So dense was the darkness that Devant dared not move. He was afraid he might bring down upon this innocent girl a shame that in nowise concerned her.

"How came you to have a picture of my mother?" Janet's eyes were gray-black. An answer she would have, and her heart demanded truth. She saw Devant's panic and it filled her with sensations born upon the instant.

"I knew her when she was a girl. A girl like that!" He nodded toward the photographs as they lay side by side upon the table where Janet had placed them.

"Where?" The relentless voice was hard and cold.

"Here, and later in the city!"

"Did"—Janet paused and bent forward, her tense face burning and eager—"did you love her?" Why this question was wrung from her, the girl could not have told. It was in her heart and would have its way.

"No." Devant's voice was husky, but he would save the future from the clutch of the past, if it were in his power to do so.

"But she loved you!" For the life of him, the man could not face his accuser. His eyes dropped.

"I know! I know! You need not tell me. That is the reason she let you keep her picture!" She swayed. For the first time in her vigorous, young life Janet felt faint. Devant sprang toward her.

"Don't, please!" she cried, recovering herself almost at once and turning toward the door; "I'm going to my Cap'n Billy!"

"Janet!" He tried to stay her. He had much to say, if only he knew how to say it. She might be going to—what? An awful danger seemed to yawn at her innocent feet, but his early sin forbade his interference.

"I'm going to my Cap'n Billy!" There was no backward glance. Devant heard the outer door close; then he sank in his chair and bowed his head upon the two photographs.

"Where your mother went before you!" he groaned. "Poor little flotsam and jetsam!"



CHAPTER XI

"There goes Janet like a shot from a gun!"

"Whar?" Davy and Mark were hauling oil up to the lamp. They stood upon the little balcony, and had a good view of the girl as she ran like a wild thing over the stretch of ground between the lighthouse and the wharf.

"Ho! Janet!" shouted Davy, leaning over the railing. "What's got ye? Ain't ye goin' t' wait fur dinner—an' me?"

Janet paused, and the face she turned up to the balcony moved the hearts of both men to alarm.

"I cannot wait!" she called back. "I'm going to Cap'n Daddy!" Then a thought caused her to add, "Don't either of you come after me! I want nobody but my Cap'n Billy."

"Now, what's knocked her endwise?" groaned Davy, staring blankly at Mark.

"Like as not she's been gettin' a cargo that she don't fancy, up to Bluff Head." Mark's face was drawn with pity. "I come down on the train with Mr. Devant. Maybe he's set her straight 'bout that Land-lubber-of-the-Hills!"

Poor Davy, detached by his duties and environments from the common gossip of his kind, bent a puzzled look upon his companion.

"Land-lubber-of-the-Hills? What in the name o' Sin be ye talkin' of?"

"Don't you know what they say 'bout her?" asked Mark, his dull eyes fixed on the sail of the *Comrade*, as it put off from the dock.

"No. I ain't never had time, above my duties, to do more'n sleep an' eat," David replied. "But I've got time now t' stand up fur that girl yonder, if any consarned gossip takes t' handlin' her name lightly. That girl's put in my care by Billy, an' Billy an' me have stood by each other through many a gale. An' now, Mark Tapkins, I'd like t' hear what ye've got t' say out plain an' unvarnished. I don't want no givin'. I only got one way o' hearin' an' talkin'." Mark drew back from the calm, lowering face of the keeper.

"Nation!" he gasped, "you don't think I'm agin her, do you, Davy?"

"I ain't carin' whether ye be or no. Like as not, if she's shook ye, yer full of resentment. Them is young folks' ways. But fur or agin her, if ye can harbor scandal about Billy's Janet, ye've got t' share it with me what knows how t' strangle it fust an' last. Spit it out now!"

Mark drew himself together with a mighty effort. Recent events were wearing upon his vitality.

"They say, Janet is mixed up 'long with a feller what painted her, over on the Hills!" he spoke as guiltily as though he alone were responsible for the report.

"Who says so?" Davy's bushy eyebrows almost hid his kindly eyes.

"Well, Mrs. Jo G. fur one!"

"Ye can't knock a woman down. Ain't there some one else that I kin begin on?"

"Well, it's kind o' common talk. Floatin' round like eelgrass up the creek. I s'pose it's sunk int' some kind of bottom of fact, as t' who started the rumor, but it's jest slippin' around now, on top."

"'T is, hey? Well, 't ain't the fust time I've clutched eelgrass an' tore it from its muddy bottom. That gal," Davy pointed a trembling finger dune-ward, where the *Comrade* was bobbing over the roughening water,— "that gal ain't goin' t' be

soiled by any slime if I know it. She b'longs t' Billy an' me, an' by thunder! we can sail her bark fur her when her little hand grows tired on the tiller!"

Mark was wiping his eyes. Davy had made him feel himself a blackguard, but he could not see just where he had erred. Davy, however, took small heed of Mark.

"I'm goin' down t' get dinner!" he said suddenly, "an' I ain't goin' t' foller, 'cause she's goin' t' Billy an' there ain't no call I should inflict myself on 'em. But I'm goin' visitin' in the village this afternoon,"—he nodded ominously,— "I'm goin' t' pay up some o' my funeral calls. I hope I ain't goin' t' cause any more funerals, but it all depends on how bad the disease is!"

Mark's inclination was to hold Davy back from his march of devastation, but he felt his impotence.

"Onct you put Davy on the scent," he whimpered, as he listened to the keeper's departing footsteps, "you might as well give up. Davy's a turrible one fur runnin' down the game. Nation! I hope he won't fall foul o' Maud Grace an' fling her at her mother!" The cold perspiration rose to Mark's forehead. "Nation! I wish I hadn't mentioned Mrs. Jo G. I wish t' gracious I'd laid the hull blamed business t' Pa, fur Pa kin stand it bein' so soft-like."

Janet reached the dunes in good time, but the distance had never seemed so long before. The throbbing, hurt heart outstripped the faithful little *Comrade* doing its best before the favoring wind. Every tack seemed a mile, and a fever rose in the blood of the silent girl at the tiller.

She had time to think. She had time to grow old during that passage. One figure stood out alone from the confused tangle—her mother! Around that form much centred! She must know all—all, about her mother.

She must not break upon Billy with her startling news. Billy was so easily driven into an impenetrable silence! She must draw him out by old familiar methods and not frighten him into caution. By the time the *Comrade* was fastened to the Station wharf, the girl had got herself well in hand. The men of the crew who were not sleeping were engaged indoors, a lonely stillness brooded over all. Janet went up to the government house and looked in at the open door facing the ocean.

"Where's Cap'n Billy?" she asked. The two men, preparing food at the table, raised their eyes with no surprise, and Captain Jared Brown replied:

"Isterin'." Then with a huge clasp knife he opened a can of tomatoes, raised it to his lips and drained the contents. Tomatoes were Jared's only dissipation.

"Has he been gone all day?" Janet waited until the empty can was set down.

"The better part of it." The man wiped his lips with the back of his hand.

"Does he have a patrol to-night?"

"No! no!" Jared began to show an interest.

"I'm going to surprise him. Don't let on, Jared, if you see him. Who is in the lookout?"

"John Thomas."

Janet went to the stairway.

"John Thomas!" she called up, "don't let on to Cap'n Billy that I'm here."

"I don't report no derelicts!" shouted John from aloft. John Thomas was an unsmiling humorist and the idol of the undemonstrative crew. He had seen the girl's approach and was ready with his answer.

Then Janet went across the sand hill to Billy's little house. Inside all was as neat and trim as a ship's cabin. Billy ate with the men at the Station, but the tiny kitchen was ready for Janet whenever she came as, also, was the orderly bedchamber beyond the living room. Billy kept to his lean-to, when away from the government house. The rooms were too stifling for the girl. She could not bear the loneliness that only empty houses have; she went out and sat upon the sand dune on the ocean side. It was never lonely in the big open world! Presently small things caught and held her excited mind. Far out a sail was passing beyond the bar, and away—where? Then a gull swooped low in wide free circles, and passed—whither? Closer at hand, the stiff grass, stirred by the wind, made perfect circles upon the white sand. Deeper and deeper the grass cut until there were little ditches, and then the sand fell in, and the patient grass, guided by the unseen power, began again. Janet's unrest found peace in these small happenings. This was home. Safety and Billy would soon come and gather her into the strong stillness of love!

"I told him I was afraid of the city folks; and he laughed!" she whispered, "but they've caught, or they have nearly caught, Billy's poor fish!" She flung her head up with an air of defiance. Whatever came, she must meet it as Billy had taught her to meet the storms of childish passion.

Suddenly she became aware of a sound behind her. She turned, and there was Billy! The surpriser was taken by surprise.

"My Cap'n!" Janet rushed to him and flung her arms about him.

"Hold there!" he cried, "I'm all over isters, Janet; isters an' eelgrass an' water!"

"Never mind, Cap'n Daddy, you are you! I am never going to leave you. I've come home!" In her raptures she had shaken Billy's hat off, and now stooped to pick it up. "I'm going to be an oysterer myself, or some other man-thing that will help. But, Cap'n Daddy, I'm going to tie up close to you!"

Billy was in nowise deceived by this loving outburst. He had kept guiltily away from the girl with the knowledge he knew he must impart to her some day. Mark Tapkins had informed him of the artist's departure; and that, together with Susan Jane's death and funeral, had given Billy, never before cowardly, a time of grace. But he knew that his girl had come to him in some trouble. Every expression of the dear face was known to him, and he was ready to throw out the line of help as soon as the signal was sure.

"Janet," he said, "I'll fetch a mess of somethin' from the Station an' we'll take it together. You lay out the table same as ye use t'. Ye might happen t' like t' fry up some isters. I've had oncommon luck; an' ye allus sot considerable store by the first isters."

"The very thought of them makes me hungry! Hurry, Cap'n Daddy; I want you right close!"

Billy was not gone long, and when he returned the two made ready the evening meal. They tried to be gay, but between the attempts at merriment each was watching the other.

The sun went down behind the Hills and Davy's Light sprang to its duty on the Point. Billy got up stiffly, lighted the little glass lamp and set it upon the table amid the dishes of food from which neither he nor Janet had ravenously eaten.

"We must rid up," said Billy, eyeing the disorder; "once yer done with food, 'tain't a pleasant sight hangin' around." When this was finished Janet drew her chair close.

"Cap'n Daddy!" No longer could the girl hold herself in check. "Cap'n Daddy, I've got something to tell you!"

Billy's heart smote him as he looked at the pretty head, bowed now upon the folded arms. He put out his rough hand and smoothed the ruddy hair.

"Steady," he murmured, "'tain't no use t' lose heart, Janet. I done wrong not t' give ye a clearer chart t' sail by, but ye'll get int' smooth waters agin, please

God!" How little he realized her true trouble!

Janet tried to still her sobs, but they eased the strain and she sobbed on, while Billy made the most of the time to take up his neglected task.

"It was just the kind of shoal yer little bark was like t' steer fur," he went on, never raising his hand from her dear head, "an' I oughter have told ye. I allus have thought that most of us would keep off rocks an' shoals if we knowed they was there. Janet, I've got t' tell ye somethin' 'bout yer mother! It oughter come to ye from a woman, God knows, but there ain't no likely woman t' hand, an' I must do my best. She, yer mother, was powerful 'fraid ye might wreck yerself on the same kind o' reef what she struck. She wanted ye should be a boy 'long o' that fear, but she 'lowed if ye were a girl, I was t' tell ye in time if I saw danger, an', Janet, I ain't done my duty!" Billy's voice was hoarse from intense feeling.

"Cap'n Daddy!" Janet's voice shook with sobs. "Don't you blame yourself. You're the one perfect thing I have in my life. I know it now; I always knew it, and I never wanted to leave you."

"Shuttin' yer eyes from danger ain't strength-givin', Janet; keep a watch out, an' be ready. That's what life means." His voice drew the girl from the shelter of her arms, she looked steadily at him through wet lashes. "Janet, yer mother sunk 'long o' lovin' a man—a man—well, like him—on the Hills!"

"What!" The girl bent forward and the fire of her passion dried the tears from the troubled eyes. She would hold her news back. Billy had the right of way.

"Yes, yes." Billy let go his grip of the present. He forgot the girl opposite, and her personal claim upon him. He was back in his own youth, and in arms to defend the one woman of his love, while of necessity he must use her against herself.

"'T ain't no harm in lovin', if love on both sides means right. Mary—that was her name—Mary was cursed, yes, cursed, with a handsome face an' a lovin' little heart what she didn't know how t' steer true. That's what she always stuck t' later, that eddication would have taught her t' know better. She was the heartsomest gal that ever was raised in these parts. Her an' Susan Jane was 'bout as friendly as any, an' I will say fur Susan Jane, that with all her cantankerousness, she stood by Mary. David an' me never sot our fancy on any one but Susan Jane an' Mary; an' Davy an' me warn't doomed t' happiness! Least, not in our own way, though 't was give t' us both t' help when everythin' else failed. Mary, she went t' the city an' took a place in a store. She had ambitions t' soar an' be somethin' different. Once or twice she came home all dressed up t' kill, an' lookin' like jest nothin'

but a picter. An' once I went t' the city jest t' see her. I took special care o' my get-up, knowing how much Mary sot by such things. I thought I was all right till I reached the town; then it broke on me like a clap o' thunder that I was about as out o' place there as a whale in a fresh-water lake. Mary was real upset 'bout my comin' onexpected an' lookin' so different to city folks, an' she out an' out told me 't warn't no use, she was bein' courted by a city man as was rich, an' goin' t' make a real lady of her."

Poor Billy's weather-beaten face twitched under the lash of the old memory which had never lost its power over him. Janet did not take her eyes from him, nor did she break the spell by a word of hurry or question. Presently Billy went on.

"An' then—she came back here! Davy, he brought her across the bay after dark one evenin'. No one on the mainland knew. When I went on the midnight patrol she met me—an' told me!"

"Told you what?" No longer could Janet hold the question back. She knew Billy's method of going around a dangerous spot, and her womanhood and daughterhood demanded *all*.

"'Bout him in the city!" The past misery shook Billy's voice. "He—he didn't marry her! He went away an' left her! The poor little wrecked soul came back here, havin' no other harbor in all God's world, an' she knew she could trust me an' the love I allus had fur her. Her faith steered her true! She didn't want t' let me take the course I laid out; she said it wasn't fair t' me. Lord! not fair t' me! She never would tell me his name. She wanted t' forgit everythin'. It made her shiver t' talk, even, of the city. She didn't want no help 'long o' him who had deserted her, an' I never pestered her none. Then I—married her. Davy, he backed me up, an' he an' Susan Jane went t' Bay End an' saw us married. Susan Jane kept her visitin' over at the Light till I took her, calm an' easy-like, t' the parson, an' most folks never guessed the real truth. An' then we come over here fur a little while, such a little while! I never seen a more grateful critter than she was. She never seemed t' take int' 'count the joy 't was fur me to serve her an' chirp her up. I fixed the little place fur her, an' I took my traps t' the lean-to so as t' give her plenty o' room, an' by an' by, like it sometimes happens after a stormy, lowerin' day, the sun bu'st through, an' toward the close the glory seemed right startlin'. I can see her face a shinin' now every time I shet my eyes. An' she grew that wise an' far-seein' that it made me oneasy. 'T warn't nateral, an' she such a soft little thin'!" Billy passed his rough hand over his dry, hot lips. "Then you come, an' she slipped her moorin's."

The two were staring dumbly, sufferingly, at each other. Billy saw the agony he had awakened and his heart sank within him. After a moment of silent doubt, Janet arose and stood in front of Billy, laying her cold hands upon his shoulders. There was no need for her news now!

"My Cap'n," she whispered, with a fervor Billy had never heard in her voice before; "my Cap'n, I am a woman, a woman like my mother. Tell me, as true as heaven, am I your Janet and hers?" Billy's deep eyes pleaded for mercy, but the woman before him would not relent. There was a heartrending pause, then:

"No, ye ain't! God help us, ye ain't! But He's let me love ye like ye was—an' that's been my reward."

Janet shut her eyes for a moment and clung to Billy. In that space of time it was given to her to see a way to redeem the past. When she opened her eyes, the misery was gone. She was smiling, and there was no mist between her and Billy. She went beside him and drew his shaggy head upon her strong breast as a mother might have done; then she bent and kissed him.

"Dear, dear Cap'n Daddy! I see it all. My mother was wondrous wise when she took you for her pilot. Oh! my Daddy—for you are my father. In all the world there never was such a father! We'll cling close, Daddy, won't we, dear? Nobody shall ever come between us, promise that, oh, promise it!"

"As God hears, never!" Poor Billy broke under the load of love and gratitude, and bowed his head upon the table. But the girl, her face glowing with a strange radiance, did not loosen her hold; she bent with him.

Had Billy been more worldly-wise, he might have suspected that this vehemence had root in something beside filial love, but Billy was never one to question a gift from God. Whenever his simple soul, chastened by suffering and earnest endeavor, took courage, he always thanked heaven and returned to his common tasks. When he looked up now, the old calm had settled upon his face.

"An' so, Janet," he said, "ye can tell me free an' easy 'bout that painter-chap over t' the Hills!" The girl started. "I know all 'bout him," soothed Billy, "an' I don't hold it agin ye that ye let me think it was a woman painter. Them is young folks' ways, an' ye didn't lie, Janet, ye jest didn't tell straight out. But Mark an' me, we had our eyes 'pon ye, an' was lookin' out fur yer interest." Billy paused for breath. "In yer future dealin' with the painter-man, Janet, jest do 'cordin' to yer new light. I ain't goin' t' worry or fret. Ye allus was one t' act clear headed if ye had hold o' facts."

Janet dropped upon Billy's knee and hid her face against his. From such a shelter she could speak more freely; but oh! how different the confession was from what it once might have been!

"It was the first time I ever deceived you, Cap'n Daddy. I hated myself for it. But, Daddy, he never cared for me—in that way, dear! He cares only for his beautiful pictures. He used me to help him with them, it was I who did not know the difference, just at first. Even after I knew, I wanted to have a share, but, Daddy, dear, women cannot help in that way, more's the pity—or mercy! I see it all very, very clearly now; but, dear,"—here a kind of fierceness shook the low voice,—"he is not like—the one who broke my mother's heart! You and I must remember that. When I wanted to help him, no matter what any one thought, he would not let me! He saved me from myself. I understand it now, and I shall bless him while I live. I—I flung myself at him, Daddy, but he went away because he was too noble to hurt me!"

"He did that?" Billy held the girl close and smiled radiantly.

"Yes, yes; he did that!"

Billy recalled his and Mark's visit to the hut, and a feeling of shame stilled all further confession. He, as well as Janet, was beginning to understand.

"It seems like the clouds has lifted, Janet, an' I'm thinkin' there'll never be no more 'twixt us."

"Never! dear, dear Daddy!" the girl hugged him to her.

"I ain't been so happy an' care free fur years, Janet. It seems like we've cleared the decks, not fur action so much as smooth sailin'!"

"That's it, Daddy, smooth sailing. Just you and I to the very end!"

"Come, Janet, we must get t' bed. We'll sleep on all this new happiness. Yer room's ready; 't was her room fust. She said over an' agin that it was a safe harbor. An' so 'tis, Janet, so 'tis, an' allus shall be fur whatever was hers! Good night, child, an' God bless ye! If yer only fair-minded ye can see that ye don't get any more storms on yer voyage than is good fur ye."

That night Janet lay wide-eyed and sleepless upon her mother's bed. Her fancy wandered far and her young blood coursed hotly through her veins; but always she came trustfully back to the thought of Billy's patient love and courage; and it gave her heart to face the future, whatever it might be.

CHAPTER XII

The master of Bluff Head had the disconcerting impression borne in upon him that the getting ready for winter at Quinton had a moral and spiritual significance, as well as a physical one. He felt a cold exclusion round about him, as if the good people did not quite know what to do with him. He belonged to the summer. For him and others of his world they had braced for action and thawed out to the extent of making him feel he was not intruding, while occupying his own house. But they resented his prolonged stay and necessary infringement upon their well-earned liberty. Not that Devant imposed his presence upon them—he rigidly observed a decent dignity—and he was more than willing to pay a high price for any service he required; but James B., while accepting large wages, fretted under the necessity of holding to a sure thing, while a vague possibility lay outside.

James B. had learned, in his secret way, that Captain Billy had been told, when he went for the physical examination at Bay End in September, that his heart wasn't up to the requirement. A lesser man would have been dropped from government duty with such a handicap as that, but the physician, knowing Billy and his steady life and good record, passed him for another year.

James B., like a vulture, had been hoping for a place on the crew for many a day. The hope gave an excuse for idleness. Eliza Jane knew Billy's symptoms and was willing to countenance James B.'s indifference to other business propositions of a steady nature, while that possibility of the crew was apparent. However, there was no reason why James B. should not turn a penny in a temporary way at Bluff Head, while waiting; and that Eliza Jane insisted upon.

"But," sighed James B. as Mr. Devant stayed on, "if he would only go, then like as not Eliza Jane would let up on me 'bout laborin' while I'm waitin'."

This state of affairs became known to Janet through the tactless remarks of Mark Tapkins. She went at once to Billy to find out exactly what the doctor had said. Billy, from the highest moral position, prevaricated nobly, and left the girl with the impression that the condition of the suspected heart was really very

desirable.

"It's this way," he explained, "all hearts is tricky, an' once ye know the tricks, why, there ain't no danger. It's like knowin' the weak p'int of a vessel, ye ain't goin' t' strain the weak p'int, once ye know 'em, an' like as not the vessel'll last twice as long as a seemin' sound boat. Don't ye fret, Janet, James B. can loaf a considerable spell, if it's my goin' he's dependin' 'pon. An' no one more'n James B. will be thankfuller fur my hangin' on."

Davy's funeral calls had had a beneficial effect upon the community. More than one woman said afterward that it looked as if Susan Jane's mantle had fallen upon Davy's shoulders.

"He said t' me!"—and Mrs. Jo G.'s catlike eyes glittered,— "he said as how t' his mind a gossip was like a jellyfish, sort o' slimy an' transparent, an' when you went t' clutch it, it stung! I asked him right out flat footed what he meant, an' he told me t' think it over!"

More than Mrs. Jo G. thought Davy's words over, and, as a result, turned their attention to getting ready for the winter.

The oyster boats dotted the bay. The wood was piled near the kitchen doors, and the Methodist minister, with a sigh of relief, came down from the mental pinnacle upon which he had endeavored during the summer to attract strangers, and preached sermons from his heart to the hearts of the Quintonites. A donation party was in the air, too, and the needy pastor grew eloquent along generous, ethical lines.

Eliza Jane, in a detached and injured manner, continued to cook up at Bluff Head. The master, feeling that at least he paid for the necessity, ate in peace; but Saxton, who fell between the aristocracy of Devant's ideas and the Quintonite ideal, suffered cruelly from his plebeian position. Only a vague hope of city life and pleasures held him to his position. And Devant was undecided as to what he should do. Thornly had not "looked him up" after seeing Katharine. Indeed, that rigid young man had sailed, within the week, for Point Comfort, and Devant, fearing to meet Katharine alone, had hurried back to Bluff Head, there to be confronted by his Past in a most crushing manner. So unlooked for and appalling was the resurrected ghost, that it had stunned him and left him unable to act. He feared to make a false move and waited for Janet to point out the way. But the girl remained upon the dunes with Billy, and the bay seemed an impassable barrier between them and Bluff Head.

To go to Billy and demand the sequel to the pitiful story of Mary Andrews's life

was out of the question. Mr. Thorndyke was long since dead, and had left no papers nor books to help any of his clients in their affairs. While he lived, he had served them faithfully, according to his light; but he felt that in dying he cancelled all obligations. Suppose Mary Andrews had gone to Captain Billy with her secret buried from sight, who was he that he should deal the faithful man at the Station a blow that might end his life—surely, his trust and peace? But Janet! There was the awful doubt. Thorndyke had said there was a child, had he spoken true? If there were a child, was it that beautiful girl of the Station? Devant's blood ran hotly, as he thought upon his belief in heredity. Might it not be himself, instead of the poor mother, who was accountable for the Pimpernel?

"Good God!" he muttered; "what would I not do for her? Train that keen mind, so apt and greedy! Fit her for a high place and, in small measure, redeem the brutal past! Give her perhaps—to Thornly!"

This thought stayed him. It might be by that power he would prevail—if only he were sure!

He was standing before the mirror, tying his cravat, as these thoughts ran through his tortured mind. Suddenly his hands dropped at his sides and he strained his eyes at the reflection that met him. First it was the color of the eyes that held and amazed him; then an expression at once familiar and baffling. Was his own face, for the first time in his life, becoming known to him? Or was the face of that girl of the dunes crowding all other faces from his vision? Once, when first Janet's beauty had stirred him, he had noticed her perfect ears set close to her head. The ears were shell shaped and pink. The left ear, near the lobe, had a curious inward curve, unlike the right—a fascinating defect that added to, rather than detracted from, the beauty. It was like a challenge to attract attention. Devant now observed his own left ear. There, in coarser fashion, was the same mark! Through familiarity it had, before, passed unnoticed, now it forced itself upon his consciousness like a witness for the truth! Slight as these things were, they turned the strong man weak. He dropped into a chair and rang for Saxton.

"Bring me some coffee," he said; "make it yourself, and make it strong."

"Yes, sir. And if it ain't presuming, I would like to say that there is more than the coffee what is weak, sir. The cookin' here ain't what you're used to, sir. The club table, or that at the hotel, is more nourishing." Saxton had put in his suggestion, and went his way comforted.

The coffee braced the shaken nerves, and again Devant went to his mirror as to a

friend. The color of the eyes had changed. Janet's eyes were never so pale and dull. The complexion was grayish white—the haunting likeness was gone—but the curious curve of the left ear stood in bold evidence and called for recognition in the final reckoning.

"A thousand might have the same!" thought the troubled man; but he had never noticed it but twice in all his long life!

After breakfast that day he went for a walk in the scrub oaks. He dared not go to the lighthouse, but he saw no reason why he should not walk upon the path leading to it. The damp sodden leaves sent up a pungent odor as his feet crushed them. A smell of wood smoke was mingled with the salt air from off sea; it was a perfect late autumn day, with a warning of winter in its touch.

Devant walked slowly with bowed head; he was pondering as to what he should do in the future. His life had never seemed more useless than it now appeared with the glaring doubt in his mind. Suddenly he was aware of some one approaching, and he raised his eyes hopefully. It was Janet, and the breeze, lifting her hair from her face, left the little ear exposed. It was that upon which the man's gaze rested!

"Good morning," said the girl, "I was coming to Bluff Head." Janet was the one more at ease. Her struggle had been along clearer lines.

"Going up to read?" asked Devant uneasily; "the library is yours, my child." The last words had a possible significance that was well-nigh heartbreaking to the man.

"No: I—I want to say something—to you! I did not seem to be able to come before." A rare dignity touched the girl. Her womanhood appeared to have taken on a queenly attribute; but the language of this new womanhood was still to learn. She had spent the night at the Light, and the latter part of it she had shared Davy's watch. Together they had "freshened up" from the little balcony, and the calmness of the stars and David's philosophy had set their seal upon her. She was brave and tolerant. She had chosen her path, and with the courage of the dunes she was ready to tread it wherever it might lead.

"Shall we walk on?" asked Devant. It was easier than to stand still. So they slowly turned and went toward Bluff Head.

"I know,"—the even voice fell to a whisper,—"I have just found out that—that Cap'n Billy is not my real father!"

Devant staggered under the blow. The terse directness, a part of the girl's nature

and training, was embarrassing to the man of the world.

"You are sure of that?" he asked, when he could control his voice.

"Yes."

"Do—do you know who your real father is?"

Janet looked fearlessly up into the haggard, eager face.

"Yes: I know."

"Who told you?"

"Cap'n Billy told me that he is not my father; he does not know who my father is. My mother was very faithful to you, and to him! He told me how she came to him—afterward! She did not want Cap'n Billy to save her his way,—she thought it was not fair to him, but Cap'n Billy had but one kind of love! He married her, and he took care of her! You don't know how cruel these people can be to—to girls like my mother, but Cap'n Billy knew, and he saved her!" The dark eyes were blazing.

"Be less hard, my child," groaned Devant, turning his face away; "God knows, I have suffered!" Janet paid small heed to the words, or to the man beside her.

"At the last," she went on bravely, "they were happy in a beautiful way for a little while. Then she died! But I was left, and Cap'n Billy loved me, and cared for me. He was father, mother, playmate, everything to me!" The eyes softened, and the girl turned and faced her companion. "And," she breathed hoarsely, "you and I must keep him from ever knowing the rest!"

"The rest?" Devant asked slowly.

"Yes. About you. I am not doing this only because I love him better than anything else on earth. I am doing it for my mother! It is all that she and I can do for him. Will you promise?"

Devant leaned against a tree. Motion was no longer possible. Janet stood in the path and waited. The brute instinct arose in the man's heart. This was his child! In doing for her lay the only expiation possible for him in the world. What were the claims of that man over on the dunes compared to his, should he powerfully press them? What if Captain Billy had given his life to the doing of a duty belonging to another? The Tempter now took on a virtuous, unselfish guise. Think what the girl's life might be! Could any true love, even such stupid love as Billy might bear her, stand in the way? No; Billy would be the first to relinquish

his hold upon her!

With the calm, steady, waiting eyes upon him, Devant dared not urge his first claim of parentage. He would appeal to her reason.

"This is hardly a question for you to put to me," he said. "I must see Captain Billy and talk to him man to man."

"What for?" There was a dangerous light in the girl's eyes. "Because you have suffered for the wrong you did, you think you can ease your conscience by confessing to Cap'n Billy, and making him suffer again?" Devant stared at her.

"You think it is for myself?" he asked.

"Who then?"

"Why, for you! Can you not see what it would mean to you?" Janet drew back.

"You—you want to do things for me? You who left my mother to die?" A fine scorn shook the low voice.

"My God! do not be so hard. Only because you are young and blind can you speak so heartlessly. Do you not see, it is because I cannot do for her, that I want now to do for you? I want it with all my soul for her sake, as well as yours! I wish to undo, as well as I can, the bitter wrong." Devant moaned.

"Cap'n Billy did that for you, long ago. Your silence must be his reward!" Janet's face shone.

"Can you conceive," asked Devant hoarsely, "what you are giving up?"

"Yes." Now the shining eyes were misty. "Over on the dunes, after Billy told me and I had chosen my course, I did think of the other way, just as I used to imagine things when I was a lonely little girl, impossible things, you know! I thought of books, and knowledge, and of the great beautiful world, and all the soft, pretty things that I know I should love. I did not think or imagine in my fancy that you would want to give them to me; but now that I know that, it doesn't make any difference. Every time I think of my Cap'n Billy, nothing else matters!" Two large tears rolled down the uplifted face.

Devant felt himself baffled, and anger arose within him.

"Suppose," he said hoarsely, "suppose I could offer you—Thornly's love?"

The stab was cruel, and the wound smarted. Under the soft, brown skin the color died away, and the eyes widened and deepened.

"That is no gift of yours!" she whispered proudly; "and I know now what happens to girls like my mother and me when we—forget!"

Devant recoiled. Then a shame humbled and stung him.

"Do not judge him by me!" he said.

"I do not." The words were hardly above a whisper. "But you know, and he knows, there is a bar between us, and we must sail wide, if we would not be wrecked. He would not hurt me, nor let me hurt myself. That is why he went away!"

"But," and Devant was himself again, broken, beaten, but himself, "if Captain Billy should ever leave you—should die, you understand? Will you not promise to send for me? When you are older, you will judge less harshly. Will you promise to let me come next to Captain Billy?" He stretched out his hands, pleadingly. Janet hesitated for a moment, then she placed her slim, brown hands in his.

"I do not know. How can I tell? I thank you, but I cannot see any further than Cap'n Billy! Good bye."

"Good bye, my child!" Their hands dropped, and they went their ways.

Janet was not permitted to reach the Light without further trouble. The day was doomed to be freighted with heavy cares. In the depths of the scrub oaks she came upon Mark Tapkins, sitting upon a log and looking as nearly tragic as he, poor, slow fellow, could look. When he heard Janet, he raised his heavy eyes to her face.

"I've been waitin' fur you," he said. "I saw you talkin' t' Mr. Devant as I came cross lots. I've got t' tell you!"

"Tell me what, Mark?" The girl thought another outburst of love was coming and it seemed such a shabby, poor little thing, in the gloom of recent happenings. And yet this roused her pity. It was so much to Mark, and it was his most sacred offering. She should not despise it.

"'Bout Maud Grace!" Janet started. So it was not herself after all!

"What is the matter with her now?" she asked.

"She's gone!"

"Gone where?"

"The nation only knows!"

"Well, Mark, I never have understood your interest in Maud Grace. You couldn't act more devoted, if you were her lover, except in that case you would not have gone on that foolish hunt for her boarder."

Janet was impatient. She wanted to get away over to the dunes, to peace and Billy.

"When Maud gets ready, she'll come home. Doesn't her mother know?"

"Janet, you've got t' stay an' listen!"

"Mark, I'm tired. I cannot help any; I want to go home."

"You've got t' listen!" Mark repeated doggedly; and as the girl took a step forward, he caught her skirt in his trembling fingers. "First I took an interest 'cause—'cause I thought I loved you, an' I didn't want you smirched!" The words were flung out desperately, and they had the desired effect. Janet started and then stood rigidly intent.

"Smirched?" she repeated slowly, "what do you mean?" And yet as she asked the question, light was borne in upon her,—light that had had its origin in the awakened womanhood.

"I kind o' guess you know what I mean, Janet; an' I wish t' the Lord I had let you help from the start. There ain't another soul as I kin go t' here until it's too late t' do fur Maud Grace—not a soul but you! An' God knows, I don't understand how it is I kin hope from you; but I kin! I jest kin! You won't be hard, fur all you don't love Maud Grace much. I know true as heaven, you'll be gentle t' her now, when you wasn't before!" The poor fellow's face was distorted and quivering, but he had no need to hold Janet. She had come close and was resting her hand upon his bowed shoulder.

"Mark!" she whispered, "you mean—you mean?"

The man nodded dumbly.

"And, of course, they would all turn upon her! They do not seem to know any reason for showing mercy. Oh! I do understand." The dark eyes blazed; then softened under a mist as memory recalled the pitiful story of that other Quinton girl; and Mrs. Jo G.'s kindness that black night when she, Janet, was born. But now there was no Cap'n Billy to pilot this sad little wreck.

"I don't know what t' do!" moaned Mark, covering his face with his thin, rough hands. "I can't bear t' think of her driftin' off, Lord knows where; an' I don't b'lieve she's got a cent, an' even if she walked t' the city, she can't never git him."

"No!" Janet was thinking quick and hard. "When did she go?"

"She went 'fore breakfast, an' she told her little sister t' tell her mother she'd gone t' you!"

"To me?"

"Yes. An' course that was just t' spar fur time."

"Of course! Well, Mark, we must find her, and then—she may stay with me!" Janet drew herself up very straight and there was defiance in her action and expression. "Are any of the boats gone?"

"Lord knows!" shivered Mark, "but she wouldn't try a boat. She can't sail fit fur anythin'. She's got the fear so many down here has—fur the water. Don't you remember?" But the suggestion brought a new agony to the poor fellow. "Whatever made you think of a boat?" he said.

Suddenly a further knowledge, born of the new womanhood, almost blinded Janet. This simple fellow, suffering at her feet, had never loved her! She had but led him far afield in some strange fashion. He had always loved the missing, giddy girl; and this awful trouble had driven the dense fog away forever! In the clear view, Janet's heart arose in sympathy.

"You love her, Mark?" she whispered, "oh! I understand." The man looked at her stupidly, clasping and unclasping his bony fingers.

"Do I?" he said brokenly; "I thought 't was you! As God hears me, I thought 't was you! But now this has happened 'long of the—the poor little thing, it's kinder knocked me down. I allus felt sorry fur her! You had so much an' she had, what you might say, nothin'. I allus was a master hand fur wantin' t' help, an' when I saw you driftin' off t' the Hills, I wanted t' help you, an' I thought I loved you! An' now I want t' help her. I'm poor shucks, Janet, an' not over keen; but I'm fairly full of trouble now!" He bowed his head, and the big tears splashed upon his rough hands.

In all the past Janet had never so respected him as she did at that moment. Almost reverently, she touched the bent shoulder.

"It may not be too late, dear Mark," she comforted; "we'll find her, and all may be well. The best man I ever knew did what you may have to do, Mark. Forgive and forget, and let a great love have its way!"

The poor fellow could not see into the future. The remorseful past and the pain-filled present engulfed him.

"She use' t' want me," he groaned out, "'fore the boarders come! She use' t' come up t' Pa's an' act up real pert an' comical; maybe if she hadn't, I'd 'a' noticed her more! Ah! if I'd only been content t' see it then, I might have saved her. I was only up t' Maud Grace's limit, but I was allus a-thinkin' I was more, an' then when she took t' the boarders I got mad an', an'—"

Janet knelt upon the leaves and bent her head upon Mark's knees. Never in her life before had she so touched him, but she knew now that he and she were out in the open where no future misunderstanding would darken their way. He needed her and she needed him; and poor, lost Maud needed them both.

"Don't take on, Janet!" Mark touched the bright head, with clumsy, reverent hand, "'t warn't any fault of yours. I did all I could t' bring myself up to a p'int that I hoped I could reach you frum—but 't warn't in me. I was 'bout Maud Grace's limit, as I say, but I didn't want t' own to it, an' now," he gulped bravely, "'t ain't much of an offerin'! I'm a poor shote, but if I could, I'd use my wuthless life fur her. It's 'bout all I kin do."

"And it is the greatest thing on earth, Mark!" Janet smoothed the rough hand. "Maud will never come to you; you must bring her back and I will help you both. Go, Mark, go look at the boats! She had no money; she could not hope to walk far; in desperation she may have tried to get away by water."

Mark shook his head, but started obediently. Once he was out of sight, Janet turned into a side path, and ran like a mad thing to the lighthouse wharf. The *Comrade* was gone! And nowhere on the bay was the white sail visible! Janet raised her eyes and looked at the autumn sky. The calmness was ruffled near the horizon by ragged little clouds.

"The wind is changing," she murmured, "the oyster boats are coming in. There is going to be a wicked storm before nightfall." The bland sky seemed to give the lie to such reasoning, but the trained senses of the girl could not be deceived. She trembled as if the coming cold already touched her; her eyes widened, but her lips closed in a firmer line.

Away around the cove, she saw Mark putting out on the bay in one of James Smith's boats. He was reefed close and was making for the inlet, up Bay End way. He had discovered from afar the absence of the *Comrade*.

"If the men see the *Comrade*," Janet thought, "they will think I am aboard, and no one will worry—but oh! poor, frightened Maud!"

By two of the afternoon the autumn sky was storm-racked. The wind came up

out of the sea with a fury and an icy chill. The oyster boats scurried homeward, and, afar, Mark's lonely sail was a mere streak of white in the dull gray.

"Nobody must see me!" Janet mused, clutching her hands close. "If they have seen the *Comrade*, they will think I am safe with Cap'n Daddy by now. If Maud's on the bay Mark will find her and bring her home!" With that thought the girl ran to the house.

Davy met her at the lighthouse door.

"Ye look like ye'd been blown from kingdom come!" he said; "by gum! this is a breeze. Had yer dinner?"

"Dinner? Oh! yes. I had dinner—all I wanted. I didn't mean to be so late, Davy, I meant to get your dinner!"

"Yer kinder pale round the gills, Janet." Davy looked keenly at the drawn face. "Maybe ye eat somethin' that didn't set right on yer stummick. Better take a spoonful of Cure All, Susan Jane allus thought considerable of that. I could 'a' sworn I saw the *Comrade* puttin' off this mornin'. I thought ye'd taken a flyin' trip to Billy. Seen anythin' of Mark?"

"Oh! yes. I nearly forgot, Davy, but Mark may not be here to-night. He's—he's got business over at Bay End."

"How did he go?" questioned Davy, "by train?"

"No! He went in one of James B.'s boats."

"He's a tarnal idiot t' do that in the face of this gale. He ain't no shucks of a sailor. John Jones come off frum the Station t'-day, an' he ain't over careful, bein' what ye might say half fish an' half dare-devil, but John, he started right back when he left an order fur me. Mark ought t' have knowed better. Janet, what is the matter with ye? Here hold on, gal, till I get that Cure All!"

Janet held on, and smiled feebly as Davy poured the burning liquid down her throat.

"Thanks!" she whispered presently. "I was mistaken, I did not eat any dinner. Davy, I am hungry. I always need my food, Davy; you know how I am." She was laughing nervously.

"Come on, then!" commanded Davy, eyeing her critically; "I ain't never seen ye so done up by goin' without one meal before. I believe yer threatened with 'spepsy, it comes now an' then, with that imptiness in the pit of yer stummick."

That night Janet tried to sleep in her little room, but the fury of the storm, and her heavy, anxious secret forbade an instant's rest. At last, about midnight, she dressed and went up to Davy. He was standing near the entrance of the lamp, and his tired face was drawn and pitiful.

"By gum!" he ejaculated when he saw the girl. "This wind comes straight from Greenland's icy mountains, an' ain't losin' any of its temper as it comes. The waves could be seen over the dunes, long 'fore sundown; an' jest hear that."

"What is it, Davy?" Janet pressed beside him. "It sounds like some one knocking on the glass."

"An' so 'tis, so 'tis! Least it's birds. Poor, dumb things, blown on land an' makin' fur the Light. Bein' seafarers, like as not, they know the Light is t' guide 'em, an' they come t' what they think is safety. Poor, poor things! They beat the glass as if askin' fur mercy, an' shelter, an' here I be a-listenin' t' them knockin' themselves t' death an' unable t' help. If the good God takes heed of the sparrows what falls, He ain't goin' t' overlook the gulls; but 't ain't much comfort to think on that, when He lets 'em die, die right agin the Light. Gum! we ain't had anythin' like this since Tom Davis was caught in his skimmy over by the dunes twenty-five years back; least we haven't had anythin' like it as bad so early in the Fall."

"Come down, Davy," pleaded Janet, "don't stand and hear the poor birds beat themselves to death. To-morrow they will lie thick in the garden. Oh! it is a fearful gale! And Tom Davis was so near the dunes that night, wasn't he, Davy? When his boat went over, he could have waded ashore, only he did not know where he was—and the fog hid the Light; but every one knows about Tom Davis, and if a boat did go over, a—a person would try to wade ashore. Don't you think so, Davy, remembering, as he would, Tom Davis?"

"Ye got Mark on yer mind, eh?" Davy came down to the little sitting room and turned up the lamp wick. "Well, ye bet Mark put in somewhere 'fore this gale struck him. Tom Davis was different, he didn't take no precautions, ever. He was in his ilers an' boots when he went over, an' he wasn't reefed none. He wanted t' get here quick with a fair wind—if such a foul gale could be called fair. He wanted t' take part in a show down t' the church. But his time had come; an' the curtain went down on him out there alone in his water-sogged boots an' heavy iler coat! Tom Davis was born fur misfortin as the sparks fly up'ard. Him, with them boots an' ilers on, in a gale sich as that war!"

"Davy, what was that?" Janet clung to the keeper, her eyes dark and fear-filled.

"It sounded 'most like a human call, now didn't it?" said Davy, raising his head;

"it's a gull, that's what it is, Janet. A more knowin' gull than the rest!"

"Are you sure, Davy? It could not be—anybody calling, could it?"

"Gosh! no, no. What do ye suppose any one would be callin' fur?"

"Why, if he were in danger."

"'T ain't anybody on the bay, Janet. City folks is gone, an' the Quintonites ain't chancin' a pleasure trip in this gale. Get downstairs, Janet; it's just possible some one's knockin' an' callin' below."

Janet waited for no second bidding. Down the iron stairs she ran, and never paused until she reached the lower door. This she opened cautiously, and braced herself against it to keep out further entrance of the terrific wind.

"Any one there?" she shouted. The noise of the storm alone replied.

"Any one outside?" Again she called. A soft something fell at her feet with a dull thud. It was a gull, broken winged, its life beaten out against the glass of the Light! Once again she shouted, "Any one there?"

On the wind came that strange, weird call that had frightened her in the tower. It rose and fell piteously, and passed on with the blast.

"I never heard that before to-night!" Janet murmured, as she forced the door shut; "it is new and awful!"

She went into the living room and lighted the fire. She would not try to sleep again. She made some coffee and carried it up to Davy; she dared not stay alone. For the first time in her life she was afraid and thoroughly unnerved.

That morning, before Davy had come from the lamp, there was a knocking on the outer door, and a pushing as well. Janet, coming down the stairs with the empty tray, saw the door open, and in the light of the gray, still morn, for the storm was past, she recognized Mark in a yellow oiler with a sou'wester nearly hiding his wet and ashen face.

"You found her?" The words broke from Janet like a sob.

"Not yet." Mark's voice was slow and weak. "We want Davy t' come an' help, soon as he can. An' can you let me have a cup o' coffee, Janet? I'm most done up. The—the *Comrade* is bottom up round by the P'int an' I—I guess she was bein' beaten toward home; but—but—"

Janet dropped the tray and ran to Mark; she drew him into the room and pushed him toward a chair.

"Sit down!" she said brokenly. "Sit down, you look as if you would drop. See, I have the coffee all ready; it will take but a minute." She hurried the preparation, and after she saw Mark gulp the strong, hot drink, she asked quietly, but with awe in her voice, "Can you tell me now, Mark?"

"There ain't much t' tell. When a boat's bottom up in such a gale as was a-blowin' last night, an' only a poor, little frightened gal was at the tiller, why—why there ain't, what you might say, anythin' t' tell."

Mark stared dully before him. He was tired and soul-weary. "She's got away fast enough this time, Janet," he went on drearily; "'t ain't likely any one will be troubled settlin' things fur her now."

"Don't! don't! Mark." Janet was crouching by his chair, her tear-filled eyes looking wildly at his dull, vacant face. "We, you and I, were trying, you know!"

"Yes; but it was uphill work, an' would have been wuss, like as not. 'T ain't easy settin' straight a botch like that. I guess this is the best way. Don't take on, Janet! Seems like she allus got the rough part, but you couldn't help that none. I guess you'd been the quickest one t' help her if she'd cried out t' you; but even you couldn't have helped much."

Janet heard again in fancy the weird call of the night.

"No; I could—not—help!" She shuddered. "Where are you going, Mark?"

"Back t' the bay. They're draggin' round by the P'int. Her father's there, an' some others. I found the *Comrade* 'fore daybreak an' got them up. If Davy can lend a hand, later, tell him t' come along; he was the one what found Tom Davis, they say. Davy seems to have a sense 'bout where t' look."

With his heavy oilskin coat hanging loose, and his head bowed, Mark went back to do all that could be done for poor Maud Grace.



CHAPTER XIII

Bluff Head was closed. The master had left word with Eliza Jane Smith that after his departure the house key should be delivered to Janet with a note of explanation.

The note reminded her that next to Captain Billy, he was the one upon whom she must call in case of need, and he left the library in her keeping with a list of books for study and recreation.

Snow was on everything, even on the new little grave in the desolate churchyard where poor Maud Grace and her pitiful secret slept. They had found the child late in the morning of that awful day succeeding the storm. In the small clinched left hand was a bit of water-soaked paper. No one but Mark had taken heed of it, but he guessed that it was the card which was to guide the girl to the man who had deserted her. Perhaps in that last hour of struggle and fear, she had taken it from its hiding place for comfort or, perhaps, to destroy it when hope was past. But it gave no clue. It was merely a wet pulp in a thin little rigid hand!

Mrs. Jo G. took her grief stolidly. It was not in her to cry out or moan, but she felt her loss and sought to explain the strange ending to the young life.

"'T was this way," she said to Eliza Jane Smith, "the boarders, an' all the life of the summer, had onsettled Maud Grace considerable. She wanted company all the time. She sort o' turned t' Janet, an', like as not, that mornin' she went t' the Light t' see her. Not findin' her, an' seein' the *Comrade* at the dock an' John Jones's boat puttin' back t' the Station, like Davy said he had done, Maud Grace just fixed it in her mind that Janet was with John Jones, an' so she took the *Comrade* an' went after them. Then when the wind came up, she lost her head, an' so—" Mrs. Jo G. at this juncture hid her face in her checked apron and silently rocked back and forth. She could not think of the night and storm, the lonely, frightened girl dashed hither and yon in the little boat, without breaking down. Life near the dunes was stern and the people had learned to accept calmly the storm and danger, but, just at first, it was always hard.

Mark Tapkins divided his time between his home and the Light, but no longer did he raise his eyes to Janet. Mark had got his bearings at last, and was steering

his lonely way through sullen and bitter waters. Trouble had set a strange dignity upon him.

Davy, seeing others downcast, rose to tuneful heights. Not only the landings, but the house, the long flight of steps, and the windswept balcony and shining Light knew his cheerful songs.

"Singin' 's a might clarifyin' exercise," he said to Janet; "it opens the body an' soul, so t' speak, an' lets more'n the tune an' words out. The angels sing in glory, an' I mind how 't is said the mornin' stars sang together. So long as I've got a voice, I'm goin' t' sing, an' drown the sound of worse things." So Davy sang and guided many a sad thought into safer channels.

Over at the Station the crew patiently went through their routine. The short dark days passed with the monotony that was second nature to the brave fellows. Perhaps their greatest courage was displayed in their homely, detached lives. They cooked; they slept; they drilled and patrolled the beach. They talked little to each other; but they were ready for near and far-off duty, should a signal be displayed. Small wages repaid them for their faithful endurance; they were not permitted to add to their income by other labor, and they knew that when age or weakness overtook them the government they served as faithfully as any soldier could, would discard them for younger or stronger men. Nevertheless they bore their part uncomplainingly through deadly loneliness or tragic danger.

"It looks like it was goin' t' be a hard winter, settin' in so early an' so persistent," said Billy one day. Billy took more heed of the weather than did the others. The patrols tired him more now than they ever had before.

"Like as not!" agreed Jared Brown; "I saw a skim of porridge ice, this side the bar, as I turned in this mornin'."

Billy nodded.

"Janet comin' on this winter?"

"No, she's mostly goin' t' stay off. Davy needs her more'n I do, an' 't ain't no fit place over here for jest one woman."

"'T ain't that!" The smoke rose high between the men.

"Heard how Mark Tapkins seems t' feel Jo G.'s gal's death?"

"Yes! yes!"

"I thought once 't was your Janet."

"Well, 't warn't." Billy felt justified in this denial, though at one time he had thought so himself.

"There don't seem t' be any one likely fur Janet hereabouts. A little larnin' spiles a gal, Billy."

"Is them yer sentimints?"

"They be."

"Well, folks differ. Janet pleases me."

"Yes, but ye can't 'spect to handle Janet's craft forever. She's got t' rely 'pon her own sailin' some day."

"Like as not, but when that time comes, Janet'll take the tiller without any fuss. That's the way she's built."

"Like as not."

Over on the mainland, James B. was comfortably happy. With the closing of Bluff Head, his unmistakable duty ended. He could take no other job while waiting for Billy's delayed surrender, and he could loaf at the village store or sleep behind his own kitchen stove in virtuous comfort. He was at peace with the world and had no desire to see Billy resign from the crew in his favor.

Social functions grew apace as winter clutched the coast in real earnest. The donation party was a brilliant success—from the congregation's point of view. They had a good time and made deep inroads into the provisions they had brought, leaving the cleaning up for the minister's wife. Christmas festivities lightened the time, too, and for a space made the hard-working men and women as gay as little children. Several travelling entertainments later had shown a fraternal spirit and "stopped over" at Quinton. They were always generously patronized and left a ripple of excitement behind them. One inspired some of the young people of the place to start a dramatic society. It began with an energy that threatened to swamp all other social and religious functions. After many rehearsals a play was announced, and the entire population turned out in force. The play was given in Deacon Thomas's parlor, because that had a rear room opening into it that could be used as a stage, but one scenic touch in the stage property doomed the aspiring artists to defeat and the society to annihilation.

A donkey was required in the play. No one had genius nor ambition enough to create an entire one, but a very realistic head was constructed, and this, fastened to a broomstick and thrust forward at the psychological moment, produced a

startling and thrilling effect. The audience was stirred to its depth. Most of the young people were either on the stage or behind the curtain; but the few who were in the audience broke into cheers, which were quickly quelled by Deacon Thomas, whose son John had led the applause. He bent forward and gripped Deacon Farley by the shoulder.

"Silas!" he said, "I don't see anythin' sinful in the speakin' part, but that animal is too much like a theayter!"

That was the battle cry of defeat. The "theayter," to Quinton, was as pernicious as a bullfight would have been to a Puritan.

Janet, who was accountable for the donkey head, felt a real disappointment in the downfall of the dramatic society. It had appealed to her artistic, imaginative nature. In it she saw a glimmer of enjoyment which all the other village pastimes lacked. She loved dancing, but, without knowing why, she disliked to dance with the young men of the place. With the yearning of youth for popularity and companionship she felt the growing conviction that she was outside the inner circle. Davy had closed the lips of idle gossipers, but even he was unable to open the hearts of suspicious neighbors. The girl longed to draw to herself human love and loyalty, but her every attempt failed.

"Davy," she said with a deep sigh, "I reckon I'm just a bungler. Everything I do seems wrong. I'm afraid,"—and here she grew dreamy,— "I'm afraid I'm like the poor poplars. I see over the dunes. I see too much, and I frighten others."

"'T ain't overwise, Janet," mused Davy through the tobacco smoke, "to get t' thinkin' what ye are an' what ye ain't. Let other folks do that. Jest be somethin'."

"Yes, yes, Davy, but what? Everything I try to be, I fail in." Janet thought of the chance that lay in the distant city and wondered if she would have failed there.

"Well, I allus take it," Davy replied, "that the good God gives us jest as much t' do as we're able t' do, an' He wants it well done. He ain't goin' t' chuck jobs around t' folks that ain't equal t' doin' well what they has in hand. Fur instance," Davy pointed his remark with the stem of his pipe, "ye ain't such an all-fired good housekeeper as ye might be!"

"I know it, Davy."

"An' yer clo'es, while they become ye like as not, have a loose look in the sewin' that might be bettered. The fact is, Janet, ye ain't pertikiler 'bout the fussin' things! An' it may be, yer way lies in perfectin' yerself in the fussin's of life."

"Oh! you dear Davy!" Janet was laughing above her inclination to cry. "I do believe you are right. I'm going to pay particular attention to the little fussy things. Dear knows! if I do them all well, I'll have little time for discontent." She stood up—she and Davy were in the living room, while Mark was doing duty aloft—and flung her strong, young arms above her head.

"Davy, I wish just once in my life I could—let myself go! I don't care much how, but just go! I'd like to take a ship out to sea, not the bay but the open, middle ocean, and go just where I pleased."

"Ye'd get wrecked fust thing!" broke in Davy.

"But I'd be doing something big until I got wrecked. Or I'd like to be alone on a great desert where I could shout and dance and sing, and no one would be there to call me mad."

"But ye'd be mad, jest the same." Davy was watching the flashing face uneasily. The gossip that had drifted to him had but strengthened his love and care for Billy's girl. He was a hardy support now, protecting this free nature from outer harm and inward hurt.

"No, no, Janet! Don't hanker arter the ocean nor the desert till ye know how t' handle yerself. Oceans an' deserts ain't no jokes fur greenhorns. I heard Mark say the bay was froze over. That don't happen often, so early as this."

"I'm going to get my ice boat out to-morrow, Davy. Life on an ice boat is life! A sailboat is not bad with a good wind, but you always have to take the *water* into your reckoning then. But the ice—ah! There is nothing there but you and the wind to consider!"

"An' holes!" Davy added.

"You're just an old pessimist, Davy." Janet laughed.

"Like as not!" Davy agreed. He hadn't an idea what a pessimist was, but he never wasted time inquiring as to the labels others attached to him.

That night, winter, in its grimmest sense, settled upon Quinton. The bay became a glistening roadway between the mainland and the dunes. Children on skates or in ice boats filled the short, cold days with laughter and fun. Sleighing parties flashed hither and yonder with never a fear of a crack or hole; and beyond the dunes the life crew kept a keener watch upon the outer bar. Chunky ice formed near shore, and the tides bore it inward and left it high upon the beach. Day by day it grew in height like a shining, curving line of alabaster, showing where the

high-water mark had been. And upon a certain threatening day, John Thomas came off and stopped at the Light to have a word with Davy.

"He didn't want me t' say anythin' t' ye, but it don't settle on my mind as jest right not t'. Billy's had a spell!"

Davy pulled up his trousers; with him a sure sign of deep emotion.

"What kind?" he asked.

"Sort o' peterin' out. He was peelin' taters in the Station, when all of a suddint he sot down kinder forcible on a chair, dropped the knife an' tater, an' looked at me as if I'd done somethin' t' him. I ran crost t' him an' stood by, so t' speak. Then he kinder laughed an' said, distant an' thick, 'That was comical! I felt like my works had run down!' Billy ain't what he once was."

Davy set his lips in a grim line.

"He ought t' have a lighter job!" he muttered. "How is he now?"

"Oh! he's come round. But spells is spells an' yer got t' look out. Don't tell Janet; Billy was sot agin that, somethin' fierce."

"I don't know as Billy should want t' shield her more'n common sense p'int. I feel she ought t' know. 'T ain't pleasant t' get a knock in the back of yer head; an' that's what Janet's goin' t' get some day about Billy."

"He says she knows enough; an' he ain't goin' t' have her pestered."

"Well, t'-morrer I'm goin' on," nodded Davy, "an' Billy ain't goin' t' honey fogle me none. Arter I cast my eye on him, I'm goin' t' give myself orders. Sighted anythin' lately?"

"A schooner got mighty near the bar 'long 'bout sundown last night. Kinder skittish actin' hussy she was, but she turned out an' cleared off without much trouble. We was all ready fur her."

"Big sea, too!"

"Powerful! An' I tole Cap'n that I've got kind o' superstitious 'bout them boats as make a near call an' then sidle off. Twict durin' my time a real thing has happened soon after. Seems like they come t' see if yer watchin'; kinder gettin' yer attention, so t' speak, an' warnin' ye that ye ain't there fur fun. I'm goin' on 'bout three this afternoon. Sky looks nasty."

"It does that!" agreed Davy, "an' it's my turn up aloft t'-night. I somehow feel more certain when I'm there myself in foul weather. Mark ain't never done

anythin' t' cause me t' distrust him, but Lord! he's got that unfortnit air of makin' ye distrust yerself about him."

"Mark lacks salt!" John laughed good-naturedly. "If he an' Pa had a dash o' seasonin' in 'em, they'd be all right; they're flat, that's all."

"Like as not!" Davy said; "but flats ain't the best kind o' things t' run on, in a storm."

So Davy held his peace regarding Billy's spell, until he could have a look at Billy himself; and all that cold, dreary day Janet worked at the small fussy things of her daily life, keeping her hands busy but having time and to spare for her active brain to wander far. She lived over again the summer, the wonderful summer. She felt the yearning for books and the quiet of the Bluff Head library. She recalled Devant with a sense of hurt and pity; but Thornly came to her memory with a radiance that grew with absence and, perhaps, forgetfulness on his part.

With the proud young womanhood that remained with the girl like a royal birthright, the knowledge of all that Thornly's renunciation of her help in his art meant brought the warm blood to her cheek and a prayer of gratitude to her lips. She could afford to live and work apart; she could be glad in worshipping her ideal of all that was brave and manly, even though she knelt forever before an empty shrine.

Billy and Davy loomed upon her near horizon in added splendor. Ah! she had known such good men! She was very blest. And so she sang as she worked.

About noon of the winter's day, James B. slouched down to the Light and entered the living room where Janet sat darning Davy's coarse gray socks.

"Has John Thomas gone on yet?" he asked.

"No," said Janet, "his boat is at the dock."

"I'm thinkin' of goin' on with him. Looks like a rough enough storm was comin' up, an' if anythin' should happen an' extry hand or two, over at the Station, wouldn't come amiss. Eliza Jane's been havin' feelin's in her bones that I better be over there."

Janet's eyes flashed, but the drooping lids hid them. She could not tell why, but every time James B. went over to the Station she resented it. It seemed as if he were keeping an eye on Cap'n Billy, and it aroused her dislike and suspicion.

"Eliza Jane's bones must be troublesome for the rest of the family," she said.

"They be!" nodded James. "I told Eliza Jane t'-day, that t' be rooted out in the teeth of the kind of storm this one is like t' be, jest fur feelin's in her bones, warn't exactly fair t' me."

"Why do you go?" The girl raised her great eyes and looked full at him.

His furtive glance fell.

"'Cause Eliza Jane said t'!" he answered doggedly. "She was down t' Miss Thomas's an' when she knew John Thomas was off, she sot her mind on my goin' on with him. I kind o' hoped he was gone."

"Well, he isn't. There he goes now down to the dock. It's queer he doesn't stop and speak a minute."

James B. slouched toward the door. "Any message fur Cap'n Billy?" he said.

"Just my love, and tell him I'm coming on to-morrow or next day. Shut the door, James, the wind comes in as if it were solid."

She watched the two men make ready the little ice boat, she saw them get aboard, and almost on the instant the steadily increasing wind caught the toy-like thing and bore it with amazing speed past the Point and over toward the dunes!

Then an anxiety grew in her heart. Of late she had been subject mentally to sensations that in a measure were similar to those that affected Eliza Jane's bones. She was depressed or elated without seeming cause. It annoyed and shamed her, but she could not control it. John Thomas's return to the Station without a word to her, his visit to his mother and Eliza Jane's prompt despatch of James B. to the dunes, grew to ominous proportions, as the lonely girl dwelt upon them.

"I wonder if my Cap'n Daddy is all right?" she thought wistfully. She was merely carrying out Billy's desire in remaining so much upon the mainland; her own inclination was for the desolate little cottage near the Station, and the loving companionship of Billy.

"I don't care what he says," she whispered to herself, "I'm going to go on and stay with him part of the time! I need him even if he doesn't need me." She wiped her tears upon the rough gray sock that covered her hand. "I'm just like Mark. Because I cannot do what I'm fit to do, I'm failing in everything. There is no use! I must go to Cap'n Billy, and learn to be happy with him and—nothing else!"

The determination to go to the dunes brought a sense of comfort with it, but a

nervousness grew apace. It was as if, now that she had decided to go, she was in a hurry to start. She was conscious of a trembling eagerness in every act. She put her mending away; she prepared the noonday meal with vigor and intensity, selecting what she knew Davy most liked.

"This is a feast!" gloated Davy, looking around his humble board and sniffing appreciatively the steaming favorites. "Looks like ye'd caught on, Janet."

"So I have, Davy, I've gripped for sure and certain."

"Didn't tell ye, did I, that Mark is goin'?"

"Going where?" Janet laid down her knife and fork, and looked interested.

"Him an' Pa is goin' t' build, 'twixt here an' the Hills, an' open a inn. They plan t' move the old house down, an' jine it on."

"An inn?" Janet laughed.

"Them was his words. A inn! Sometimes it seems like Mark was walkin' o' a dark night on cold, wet sand. He slaps down his foot, sort o' careless, an' strikes phosphorus. He ain't got, what ye might call, seein' qualities, but he strikes out light! That's the way it was with him tellin' Pa 'bout sellin' crullers. The old man made a small fortin. An' now this inn will pan out, you jest mark my words. It stands t' reason folks would rather go to a inn than to a boardin' house!" Davy grinned at Janet over a cup of tea green enough and strong enough to curl any ordinary tongue.

"Pa's goin' t' cook, an' Mark's goin' t' run the business," added Davy.

"Well, they'll have good cooking." Janet smiled as she thought of the scheme. "Maybe they'll let me wait upon table."

"Like as not they will if ye want t'. Well, 't ain't any more than fair, ye consarned little trap, but that ye should do yer turn at waitin' on Mark. Sho! just hear that gale, will ye! It's steered round an' is comin' straight off sea. By gum! If any craft drifts on t' the bar t'-night there's goin' t' be spry dancin' at the Station." Davy went to the window, and peered out. The early afternoon was bitterly cold, and darkened by wind-driven clouds, full of storm and fury.

"They've got an extra hand, such as it is." Janet came and stood close by Davy.

"Who?" he asked.

"James B. He went on with John Thomas."

"Did, did he? Well, by gum! Janet, I wish to thunder I could get Billy to give up

the Life Crew an' take Mark's place here!"

"Why, Davy?" There was intensity and pathos in the question, and trouble in the gentle eyes.

"'Cause!" vouchsafed Davy, "jest 'cause. That's why. Fetch me a bite in the lamp, Janet, 'long 'bout sundown. I ain't comin' down, once I go up this afternoon. I ain't lookin' fur trouble. 'T ain't my way, but somehow, when such a night as this is like t' be settles down, it don't seem anythin' more'n friendly fur me t' bear the Light company."

So Janet cleared the dinner away; she found little tasks to fill the darkening hours, and with eagerness prepared the tray for Davy and took it aloft at sundown. By that time the wind was almost a hurricane; and before it were driven sharp sheets of snow that cut and sounded as they sped madly landward. The tower swayed perceptibly. Davy's face was grimly careworn, and his manner forbade sociability.

Janet waited a few moments; then, realizing Davy's mood, left the tray and went below. But now a trembling and inward terror possessed her. She tried to shake off the feeling with contempt for her folly. She sang, remembering Davy's philosophy, "When ye sing ye open the safety valve fur more to get out than words an' music." But this song gave relief only to sound and mental action.

Early night came with eagerness, as if, for the doing of what was to be done, the black pall was alone appropriate.

"Why, any one would think,"—Janet stood by the window and her teeth chattered as she spoke,— "any one would think I was that white girl at Bluff Head instead of Cap'n Billy's girl. I afraid of a storm! I, housed and safe at the Light! I, who, in many such a gale, trotted after Cap'n Billy just for pure fun. It's time I went on and got the dune tonic for my foolish nerves. *Me* with nerves!"

Then she ran to the door and opened it slowly, pushing against it to stay the wind.

"I thought!" she moaned, "I thought I heard a call!" The memory of the night that poor Maud Grace went down beyond the Point added keenness to her fancy. "It sounded like that call. Ah! as long as I live I shall remember it. I do believe it was Maud. I always shall, no matter what they say."

The howling of the wind drowned the girl's words, but her strained face pressed against the opening and her senses were alert. "I hear it!" she panted, "I hear that call! Suppose, oh! suppose that it is my Cap'n Billy calling? If he were on the

patrol and in danger, he would call to me. He would know I could not hear, but he would call, just for comfort!"

Again the burdened wind shrieked outside. The face at the door grew ghastly and the eyes terror-filled.

"There are more ways of hearing than one!" she muttered. "Cap'n Daddy, I am coming!"

Who was there to stay her with word of caution? Who was there to control her as she made ready to answer the heart-call of her beloved Billy?

Now that doubt had fled, a calmness possessed her. She was indifferent. First she wrote a note to Davy and placed it, open and conspicuous, beside his plate; she had laid the breakfast table half an hour before.

"I've gone to Billy. Took my ice boat." That was all, but Davy would understand. Then she wrapped herself warmly, covering all with an oiler and pulling a sou'wester well down over her ears. Finally she extinguished the lamp, let herself out of the door, and ran, in the face of the gale, to the dock. There she paused.

"I'd have to tack miles off my course," she muttered, "I had forgotten the direction of the wind." There was nothing to do but take to the ice, and walk and run as she could! It was an awful undertaking, but the girl did not pause. The call for help came only when she hesitated; while she acted her nerves were calm. So, with head bent forward and low, Janet set out for the dunes.

Once she looked back at Davy's Light. Through the scurrying snow and sleet it shone steadily and hopefully, unaffected by the wind and fury that waged war outside.

"It is like a thought of God!" she whispered, and her courage rose.

Only a dune-bred girl could have withstood the force of the storm, but by pausing for breath now and again, by sliding and gaining strength walking backward, she made fair progress, and, guided by the Light, headed for the halfway house. In that she would wait and hide. If it were Billy's patrol, she would be there to see him! If not? Well, time enough for future plans! She knew Billy would disapprove her action, but she must know!

Once the dunes were gained, their landward side was sheltered. Janet sat down in the long grass to rest before ascending. The snow cut her face and the thunder of the waves deafened her. After a few minutes she started on. Davy's Light was straight behind her, so the halfway house lay directly before. On, on in the dark

and noise! She felt her way with hands outstretched in front of her. At the dune top, the real magnitude of the storm was apparent. On the mainland it was comparatively mild. Here wind, tide, and heavy sea were let loose and were battling in ferocious freedom.

"Ah!" Janet caught her breath and staggered back, clutching the tall, dry, ice-covered grass to steady herself; but a few more steps brought her rudely against the shelter house. She pushed the door open. Neither man had as yet arrived, so there was no fire lighted in the little stove. Janet began to gather the wood and coal together in her stiff fingers; but something stayed her. She felt ill and weak. So instead, she crawled under the bench that ran across the side of the tiny hut and hid in the darkness. She began to fear Billy's displeasure. For a moment the faintness and nausea made cold and weariness sink into oblivion, and before they reasserted themselves the door was opened and some one came in.

The dense darkness hid him, and Janet waited. The man struck a match and hurriedly started the fire. By the sudden blaze she saw that it was Ai Trueman, one of the crew from the farther station. Once the fire was kindled and burning, the man sat down in the corner of the bench directly over Janet's hiding place and shook his sou'wester free of the ice and snow that had collected upon it. It was not long before the door opened again. The fire was ruddily lighting the shed by this time, and Janet, from her cramped position, saw Billy. Something in his appearance made her catch her breath in alarm. It was not his ice-covered garments that glistened in the red light nor his grim, rigid face, but the strange stare of his wide-opened eyes that caused her alarm.

"Bad night," said Ai, "but we've made good time." Billy had dropped upon the opposite bench, and the ice crackled upon his garments.

"Petered out some?" Ai now looked at Billy. "Ye look kind o' done fur."

"Take my check out o' my pocket, left-hand one,"—Billy's voice sounded far off and thin,—"an' put yours in. My hands is bit. The lids of my eyes got froze down on my cheeks an' I couldn't see, so I thawed 'em out by holdin' my hands up, an'—an' my hands caught it!"

Janet dared not move.

Ai exchanged checks, and then he bent over Billy.

"Ye all right?" he asked doubtfully.

"Sure." Billy tried to laugh, but his voice shook. "A frostbite don't count none. I'm thawed out enough now fur my own comfort. I dar n't take my eye off the

bar. I tell *you*, Ai, if there's trouble t'-night, it's goin' t' be real trouble."

"'T is that!" said Ai, and the two men stood up.

"Good night, Ai."

"Good night, Billy, an' let's hope fur a safe walk back."

They were gone! Then Janet came from her hiding. Her sickness had passed; she was warmer and more comfortable, but she meant to keep close to Billy on that return patrol! If all went well, he would forgive her by and by. She was on the point of pushing the door open, when suddenly the full blast of the gale struck her in the face. Some one was coming back. It was Billy and he stood before her. Her face was away from the light, and her sou'wester, drawn close, misled Billy; but Janet saw his eyes wide and staring.

"Ai," he panted, and his voice was thick, "I—I can't do it! The—the works are runnin' down agin. It's better t' tell ye than t' drop out there on the sand, an' no one ever know. Hurry back, man, an' watch both ways as long as ye can."

Billy swayed forward and Janet caught him. She laid him upon the floor and bent above him.

"My Cap'n!" she moaned, "oh! Cap'n Billy!" But Billy heeded her not. "He's dead!" The horror-filled words startled even the speaker. "Dead! my Billy!" But no, he breathed! "I must do his work, and get help!" the girl started up wildly. "He isn't dead! He shall not die!" She took his check from his pocket, and his Coston light. Then she gently moved him nearer the stove, put coal on the blaze, and loosened the heavy coat. "Now!" she muttered, and rushed out into the night and storm. The strength of ten seemed to possess her; and the calmness of desperation lent her power.

The noise of the wind deadened the sound of the surf. Sometimes she found herself knee deep in icy water,—for the tide was terribly high. Then she crawled up to the dunes and felt with mittened hands for the stiff grass. Presently she came to a rock, a rare thing on that coast, and she clung to it desperately. It was as true a landmark to the girl of the Station as a mountain peak would have been to an inland traveller.

"Only a mile more!" she panted, and then a memory of one of Davy's old hymns came to her:

"The shadow of a mighty rock within a weary land."

She recalled how she, as a little child, had often crouched beside this very rock

when the summer's sun beat hot upon the sand. Summer! Was there ever such a thing as summer on this ice-bound shore? She dreaded to set forth again. A stupor was creeping over her, a stupor she had been trained to fear. She struggled to her feet, but the mad thought of summer would cling to her benumbed fancy. It fascinated and lured her dangerously. She saw the Hills rise, many colored, in the blackness. She saw Thornly's little hut with its door set open to the cool, refreshing breeze. It was a breeze then, this fierce, cruel wind. It was a gentle breeze when summer and love held part! She heard again the call of the golden whistle; and this fancy made her draw her breath in sharp gasps. She shut her stiff lids and saw Thornly coming over the sunlighted Hills with his joy-filled face, shining in the summer day!

Oh! if she could but hear that golden call just once again how happy she would be! Maybe, when death came, God would let Thornly call her in that way, just as God had let Susan Jane's lover come to her upon the shining, incoming wave!

But then Thornly was not her lover; she was his and that was different!

"Death!" Again the girl struggled forward. She must not die! Why, Billy was there alone, in the halfway house—and Billy's duty was still unperformed.

On, on once again! The wind was blowing in gusts now. It was reckoning with the near-coming day and was lessening in fury. But the sudden blasts were almost worse than the steady gale. Janet, weakened and numb, was hardly upon her way, before she was knocked from her feet by the cruel force and lay, face downward, upon the icy sand! Hurt and discouraged, she yet managed to rise. The pain roused her dulled senses and in the lull that followed a strange ghostly sound was borne seaward. She stopped and stood upright. Again it came, plaintively and persistently, rising and falling. As if the faint note had power over night and tempest, the blackness seemed to break; the snow ceased, and overhead, through a riven cloud, a pale, frightened moon peered curiously. Then the wind shrieked defiantly. But again it came, that tender, penetrating call, nearer, nearer, over the dunes, and down toward the thundering sea!

Still, as if frozen where she stood, Janet waited for—she knew not what! Some one, in the dim, grayish light, was coming toward her, some one tall and strong, but well-nigh spent! The man had seen her, too.

"How far am I from the Station?" he shouted.

It was Thornly's voice! It was the little whistle's call that had stilled the storm, and brought hope!

Janet could not answer. All power seemed gone from her. When he came close he would know her and then—why, why had he come?

The girl had forgotten her disfiguring garments. Thornly was within a foot of her before he understood. Then he reeled back. The moon, for another still moment, shone full upon the ice-covered figure and the upturned face framed by the old sou'wester.

"My God!" he cried and stretched out his arms, hardly knowing whether he were warding off an apparition or reaching out to the woman he was seeking so earnestly.

"You!" he whispered, "you! Alone out here in all the storm and darkness!" She tried to answer, but words failed her. She smiled pitifully and put her hands in his.

"I have wandered for hours!" Thornly was holding the girl closer. "Do you hear and understand, Janet? I went to the Light. I saw your note lying open on the table; I was afraid for you! I lost my way on the ice. I had only Davy's Light to guide me; I landed, heaven only knows where! But I wanted you! I've got you at last!" A fierceness shook the eager voice, that was raised above the noises of the night.

"Yes!" Janet spoke low and dreamily; again the cold stilled her pain. The moon was hidden and grim darkness held them. "You—you want—me—to—help you finish—your picture!"

It really was a small matter; but even in the strangeness and numbness the girl wished he had not come. He was greater and dearer when he had stayed away and sacrificed his picture for her honor, and his own.

"My picture? Good Lord! What do I care for my picture? Child, I want you. Oh! I want you to help me to finish my life!" Thornly shook the girl gently. She was in his arms. She was leaning against him heavily, her icy garment striking harshly against his. How he blessed his great strength that terrible night! He reasoned that Janet had crossed the bay as he had, bent upon some errand at the Station. He had overtaken her in time, thank God! for her strength was fast failing.

"I must carry you!" he cried, but his words were drowned in the wind's howling. "Here, I have my flask. Drink, Janet! Drink, dear, it will give you new life. We must make the Station together."

Janet swallowed painfully, but the liquor brought relief. Clinging to Thornly, she

went silently on. Between the last two dune tops, Davy's Light again shone.

"Only a half mile more!" panted the girl. Thornly knew the value of making the most of what they had, and without speaking he pressed forward, holding her close. Suddenly Janet stopped and pointed stiffly seaward.

"The bar!" she groaned. "See! a rocket!"

Thornly strained his eyes.

"Another!" the girlish voice was tense and hoarse. "They are on the outer bar. God help them! Here, get the Coston out. Strike a light! My hands are stiff. Oh! it rises! They answer! They know we have seen them. Poor souls! Come, we must run!"

"They're on the outer bar! Two rockets! I've answered!" Page 267

"They're on the outer bar! Two rockets! I've answered!" Page 267

And she, who but a moment before was half dead from cold and exposure, now ran as if sand and heavy, icy clothing had no power to stay her.

Thornly, filled with terror at this new development and fearing that the girl beside him would not be able to reach the Station, seized her more firmly and rushed forward.

"Oh! the Station! Do not lift me; I can make it now!" Thornly did not relinquish his hold, and together they flung themselves against the heavy doors of the little house.

The light and warmth were in their faces. A ring of startled men stood before them.

"They're on the outer bar! Two rockets! I've answered!" The words came in hard, quick breaths, and Janet swayed forward. It was Thornly who bore her to a chair most distant from the red-hot stove. The men had vanished like spectres. There was a hurried noise in the further room, as the big cart, bearing the apparatus, was pushed into the night and storm.

"Opposite Davy's Light between the last two dunes!" called Janet.

"All right!" Some one replied from beyond, then a stillness followed. Thornly stood guard over the girl as she sat helplessly in the wooden chair. The ice was melting and dripping from her clothing; the sou'wester had fallen away from the sweet, worn face, and the pretty cheeks showed two ominous white spots that bespoke frozen flesh.

"I dare not take you nearer the fire!" Thornly's voice was unsteady. His own returning circulation and consequent pain made him cruelly conscious of what he knew she was suffering.

She looked up bravely and smiled. "It's pretty bad," she said with a quiver. "It hurts, doesn't it?" Then noticing for the first time that Thornly was less protected than she, for he wore only his heavy overcoat, which was crusted thick with ice, she forgot her own agony in genuine alarm.

"Take off those frozen things!" she commanded; "you must be drenched through and through without an oiler. Make yourself comfortable. I must go!"

"Go! In heaven's name, go where?" Thornly paused as he was taking off his cap, over which he had tied a silk muffler, and stared at the girl.

"Why, to Cap'n Billy. You do not understand. He is back in the halfway house. He may be dead!" A shiver ran over Janet, and she struggled to her feet. "It is awful for me to sit here! You know nothing. I must go!"

Thornly firmly held her back.

"His check," she faltered, "take it out of my pocket, please. No, the left-hand pocket. That's it. Hang it there on the rack by the door. I may not return, you know."

"There's no time for explanations, Janet." Thornly had followed the girl's directions mechanically, and now urged her back in the chair. "Of course I will not let you go, but I am going to Cap'n Billy. Whatever can be done, I will do. I will bring him on here, or I will stay with him there until help reaches us; but you must obey what I say and wait for us. You must trust me."

She looked up at him tear blinded and pitiful.

"Let me go with you," she pleaded. "I am used to it, and after all—what matters now?"

Thornly seized an oilskin coat from a peg on the wall, and thrust his arms into it.

"What matters?" he stopped to ask, looking at Janet with a puzzled stare. "Why, don't you know, little girl, that this is the beginning of everything for us? Can't you understand?" Over his anxiety and excitement a sense of joy flooded. "Here!" he cried, trying to cheer her, "it's going to be all right with Cap'n Billy and every one else. Give me that rear decked boat you have on your head, Janet, and you'll promise to stay here until I return?"

He bent over her and drew the icy mittens from the stiff, little hands; then he raised the cold fingers to his lips, and looked into the depths of the upturned eyes. He had gone through his doubts and struggles since he had left her on the Hills; she, poor girl, had long ago relinquished her hope and love, but as she gazed now into the eyes bent above her she understood!

It was the climax of their young lives. Whatever lay beyond they could not know. Whatever forces had driven them into this sanctuary they neither of them sought to question. It might be their only moment.

"I will wait," Janet whispered, clinging to him, "I will wait for you—and Cap'n Daddy!"

After Thornly was gone the unreality passed. The howling of the gale, and the memories that flooded the present loneliness, drove the sudden dream before them. While she stood housed and protected all that was dear to her, all that meant life to her, was out there in the storm!

Cap'n Billy dying, perhaps dead, three miles beyond!

The crew manfully doing their duty by the men on the outer bar!

Thornly, struggling to perform a task that might be beyond his strength; while she, amid the danger and storm, stood idle!

"Why!" she cried, "this is as bad as that drowsiness out on the shore. I must do something! I had no right to promise!" She ran to the window and tore aside the little curtain. Her heavy coat fell from her, and with it seemed to drop the weight and burden that had oppressed her. The sluggishness of mind and body was gone. She was herself again! "No promise must hold me from my Cap'n Daddy!" she whispered in a soft defiance.

Just then the darting lanterns of the crew, far down the beach, attracted her. And through the grim, grayish light of the dying night shone Davy's Light, faithful and strong.

She stood surrounded by courageous duty. Her life lesson had been one long training for duty. Was she to fail now?

But what was her duty? Slowly a radiance spread from brow to chin. The livid spots on either cheek smarted into consciousness at the rush of blood that bore surrender with it. Above even Billy's claim to her faithfulness was her promise to Thornly! There was one greater, now, in her life than Cap'n Billy.

"And he has undertaken my task!" She pressed her burning cheek to the frosted

glass. "I will trust him, and he shall trust me!"

So while Davy tended his Light, while the crew gave heart of hope to the wretched men upon the outer bar, while Thornly in the dark and storm struggled onward to the doing of a duty he had taken upon himself, Janet made ready for what might lie before.

She ran to the loft above and carried down cots and blankets. She heated kettles of water and fed the huge stove until it blazed and roared; then she brought from the Captain's room the medicine chest and the liquor that were kept for emergencies.

Still no one came! Janet gave herself no time for idle thought, nor did she permit her fevered fancy to run free. There was still something to do! She must provide for them who were risking their lives for others. She made strong coffee, and cut slices of bread from the massive loaves. Then suddenly, like a flash of humor in the tortured loneliness, she remembered Jared Brown's liking for tomatoes and set forth a large can. The homely tasks were steadying the strained nerves, but every time the wind rattled the doors the girl started.

The hours dragged on. The gale began to sob spasmodically as the day conquered it. The grayish light outside brightened—what was that?

The shed door was opening! The panting wind tore the kitchen door wide, and Janet saw three men advancing! She tried to run to them, but the body refused to respond to the eager will. She could not anticipate a knowledge that might mean so much!

Thornly and Ai Trueman came into the glow of the hot kitchen, and between them they dragged Cap'n Billy! Janet saw that he was alive, and when he realized that it was she who stood before him, the old, comforting smile struggled to the poor, worn face.

"Don't take on!" he panted as they placed him upon the nearest cot and began to strip his icy clothing from him; "this ain't what ye might call anythin' at all!"

Janet knelt beside him. "My Cap'n!" was all she could say; "my own, dear Cap'n Daddy!"

"Ye little—specimint!" Billy closed his eyes luxuriously. "They've told me what ye've done!"

"I found him in the halfway house," Ai explained while Thornly mixed a hot drink for Billy. "You see, I was nearly back t' the Station when I saw that signal

from the bar. My crew had seen it, too, an' they come racin' down as I was makin' fur them. On the way back I noticed the door o' the shelter open an' a tearin' fire lightin' up the place. I stopped t' see that all was safe, an' there on the floor, actin' like all possessed, was Billy! He was fur goin' with the men, but he couldn't stand on his legs. It was somethin' fierce the way he took on. I sort o' hauled him up an' swore I'd get him down t' the shore somehow, when this gentleman," Ai waved one of Billy's boots, which he had just managed to get off, toward Thornly, "come in an' he kind o' took command, as you might say, an' ordered us on t' this here port."

Janet was pressing her face against the weary one upon the pillow, and murmuring over and over in a gentle lullaby, "My Cap'n, my Cap'n!" Thornly came over to the cot and raised Billy to feed him the drink. Billy looked up and smiled feebly.

"If I ain't needed here," Ai said, "I'll take a haul o' coffee an' then fetch some down t' the men." Janet started.

"Oh! I forgot," she cried; "what about the wreck?"

"The tide's turnin'," Ai replied from the depths of a bowl of coffee. "Like as not the ship will lift by mornin'! More frightened than hurt anyway, I guess. They've signalled us t' stand by till daybreak, but I'm thinkin' they'll hist before then!"

When Ai had gone Thornly put the cup down, and placed Billy back on the pillows. The heavy eyes opened and fell upon the two faces near. Then a puzzled expression settled in the kindly gaze.

"Ye've got yer chart t' sail by, my gal," he whispered, going back in memory to that night when he had told Janet of her mother. "I ain't goin' t' worry any more!"

The words trailed off into unconsciousness, and Cap'n Billy swung at anchor between this port and that beyond.



CHAPTER XIV

A southwest wind howled around the little hut upon the Hills. The season was in one of its humorous moods, for the day was almost summer-like in spite of the wind's noisy insistence. Between the tops of the highest dunes the white crested heads of the waves could be seen at times; and the deep, solemn tones announced that there was "a heavy sea on."

The nearer water of the bay, in imitation of its mighty neighbor, echoed in mildest tones its restlessness, and tossed its feathery foam high upon the pebbly beach.

Thornly had found the first May pinks by the roadside that morning, and Mark Tapkins had mentioned, in passing, that Cap'n Billy was soon coming off. By these signs, and the singing in his heart, he knew the spring had come.

He was sitting before the easel upon which rested "The Pimpernel," finished at last!

The work had been his salvation through the long weeks of waiting since that night upon the beach. Alternately exulting and despairing, he had painted in a frenzy born of starved desire and memory-haunted love.

Only once had he seen Janet alone since that eventful night, for Billy's dangerous illness claimed her every thought and hour. But that once, while Davy sat beside his friend, she had walked with Thornly upon the sands and had told him her life story. Very simply she had spoken, watching, meanwhile, the effect upon her listener. He had been startled and shaken by the recital, and for a time Janet had misunderstood him.

"You must go away and think it over," she had said; "I am not the same girl, you see!"

"Great heavens, Janet!" Thornly had exclaimed when once he recovered from his surprise. "Do you think anything can make a difference now? Why, you are dearer a thousand times in ways you cannot realize, for I know Mr. Devant better than you do, and I am glad for him."

Janet shook her head. "Cap'n Billy must never know," she whispered. "There

may never be a chance, but in any case he shall never have that hurt."

"It would be an added joy, little girl," Thornly insisted, but Janet would not consider it.

"So please go now," she had pleaded finally. "Go and think and think. Perhaps by and by—who can tell? Just now it must be only my Cap'n Daddy."

Thus with the courage and patience of her nature the girl had set aside her own love and yearning; and Thornly took to the Hills and the unfinished picture of "The Pimpernel."

The glorious face upon the canvas changed and assumed character according as the master's mood swayed him.

One day it would shine forth with the sweet questioning of joyous girlhood. Then Thornly, remembering how the question had been answered on a certain summer day when ignorance died and knowledge was born, wiped away the expression while his heart grew heavy within him.

Then he would paint her as he recalled her on that black night upon the beach when, her uplifted face touched by the fleeting rays of the white moon, she had asked him if he needed her to help him finish his picture.

No! no! He could not paint her so. That was no face for a flower wreath—and the flowers he must have!

Again he painted her as he had last seen her. The love light shining in her eyes while courageously she put her joy from her until her duty to Billy was ended, and her lover had had time to think.

Thornly had thought! Never in his life had he thought so deeply and intensely, and from out the thought and love the soul of Janet had evolved and become fixed upon the canvas. "It is a masterpiece!" cried the artist in the man, as he gazed upon the glorious face.

"It is my woman!" responded the man in the artist. "My Spirit of the dunes with the strength of the Hills and the mystery of the sea."

A sudden knock shattered the ecstasy. "Come!" called Thornly and turned to meet his guest. Mark Tapkins awkwardly entered. Mark had been a great resource to Thornly lately. Unconsciously he had been a link between Janet and the Hills. In his slow, dull fashion he repeated all he saw and heard at the Station, and Thornly, trusting to Tapkins's uncomprehending manner, sent messages to the dunes that he knew Janet's keener wit would interpret and understand. But

Thornly had still something to learn about Tapkins.

"Any news this morning?" he said cheerily, pushing a stool toward Mark.

"She's come off," said Tapkins with his eyes fixed upon "The Pimpernel."

"Is already off?" Thornly's color rose. "You know you said they were coming soon."

"They've come! Her an' Billy is down t' Davy's."

"And Billy, how is he?" asked Thornly.

"Middlin'. But he ain't complainin' none. Say, Mr. Thornly, I don't know as you understand why I've been runnin' here so much lately? You see I wanted, so t' speak, t' git the lay o' the land 'twixt you an'—her!"

Tapkins kept his eyes upon the vivid face, only by its inspiration could he hold to his purpose.

"Have you got it, Tapkins?" Thornly bent closer and gazed at his visitor keenly.

"I seem t' sense it," was the low reply. "Travel an' city ways, Mr. Thornly, make men understand each other." The old foolish conceit added dignity to the evident purpose with which Mark was struggling. "Now, over t' the Station the crew think you're a 'vestigator!"

So they had been talking him over, those quiet, apparently unobservant men!

"What do they think I'm investigating, Tapkins?" Thornly's gaze contracted, and he clasped his hands rigidly around his knees. He felt as if he were before a bar of justice and he must weigh the evidence against himself.

"The sand bar," Mark replied. "Every once so often some fellers come down here with a fool notion o' cuttin' down the sand bar, an' dredge deep enough to make a inlet int' the bay."

"Perhaps they may, some day, Tapkins." Thornly felt that along this line he might sooner reach his friend's purpose in calling for the second time that day. "It's not a bad idea, you know. It would sweeten the waters of the bay, carry off the stagnant growth and let in a lot of new life. But you do not think I'm an investigator, eh, Mark?"

Tapkins turned suddenly and faced his host.

"Not that kind, Mr. Thornly," he said, in a tone that brought, again, the color to Thornly's face. "An' what's more," Tapkins continued, "I don't think same as you

do 'bout the inlet, nuther, Mr. Thornly. Nater is pretty much alike in sand bars, an' folks, an' what not! God Almighty knows what He's about when He piles up them dunes what divides ocean an' bay; an' folks an' folks!"

"Go on, Tapkins!" This was worthy of Cap'n Davy. The sojourn at the Light had had its influence upon the assistant keeper. Mark gulped and turned his gaze upon the picture.

"'T ain't no good tryin' t' mix things, Mr. Thornly. That's what the crew tells them fellers 'bout the bar. They don't listen none. They work like beavers, an' we hold off an' have our laugh. Then they go away real pleased after they've cut through, but nation! 't ain't any time 't all 'fore the sand's piled up agin. It's awful foolish workin' agin Nater."

"Just what kind of an investigator do you take me for, Tapkins?" Thornly felt he must know the worst, and at once. The look Mark cast upon him was full of trouble. He did not want to wrong this man he had grown to like, but a sense of duty lashed him on.

"The Lord knows, Mr. Thornly," he faltered, "I don't want t' make any mistakes. It's turrible confusin' when you try t' label folks. The same acts mean different 'cordin' t' the handlin', an' a good man an' a bad man bear a powerful likeness t' each other on the outside, sometimes. Once I didn't speak out t' a friend when I ought t', an'—an', well, there was, what you might say, a wreck! I ain't goin' t' hold back another time. Mr. Thornly, you're stayin' on down here, 'cause you have some sort o' idee o' openin' up a inlet 'twixt sich folks as you an' Mr. Devant an'—her!" Mark waved his cap toward the easel. "'T ain't no use, Mr. Thornly, s'pose you did cut through an' clean an' honest, too, don't you see a little craft like that one couldn't sail out int' deep waters? an' the Lord knows, big craft like you an' him would get stranded in no time down here. Folks is separated fur a good reason. 'T ain't a question o' one bein' better nor the other," Tapkins raised his head proudly, "it's jest a case o' difference. Cuttin' down barriers ain't goin' t' do nothin' but cause waste o' time in buildin' 'em up agin."

Never before in his life had Mark spoken so eloquently nor so lengthily.

A dimness rose in Thornly's eyes, and a respect for the awkward fellow grew in his heart. He arose and stood before Tapkins, his hand resting protectingly upon "The Pimpernel."

"You're one of the best fellows I've ever met, old man!" he said, "and you've lived pretty deep; but there is another point of view about those sand bars of yours. There is going to be an inlet all right, some day, over on the dunes! When

that time comes, beside sweetening the waters of the bay and doing all the rest, something else is going to happen and don't you forget it! Craft from outside will come in and not get stranded, either; and what's more, some craft of yours that is stronger and better fitted than you know of is going to sail out into the open, test its strength and not get wrecked! Sand bars are for nothing in the world, Tapkins, but for conquering. Take my word for that. It all depends upon who tackles the job of the inlet, see?"

Mark got upon his feet and took the hand that was suddenly stretched out to meet his. Thornly held the poor fellow's tear-filled eyes by the radiance of his own.

"We understand each other, old man," he continued. "I am going, please God, to cut through a barrier that has no right to exist. I'm going to let as brave and trusty a little craft as ever sailed go out into the broad waters where she belongs. Do you catch on, Tapkins?"

"I do that!" murmured Mark, and he dropped Thornly's hand. "I'll watch out, Mr. Thornly. It's my way t' watch, an' I'm learnin' one thing over an' over. In this life there's plenty t' learn if you've got—power!"

Mark had done his duty and departed. Thornly watched him from the open door until he shambled from sight. Then a new doubt arose. While he had waited alone upon the Hills, working and loving without distrust of the future, they, these patient conservatives of Quinton, had discussed him from every point of view and were ready when he pressed his claim to judge him.

How different from his old world was this one of the dunes! What different standards existed from those which swayed Katharine Ogden and her kind! Unless he met their demands, he could mean nothing to them. How far had time and discussion influenced Janet? Might she not fear to try the larger life with him; she who had, without a quiver, discarded Devant with his claims and yearnings?

For a moment the day seemed chilly and the sky darker. But Thornly was not one to hold back when even the slightest hope beckoned. He would not wait for her to call him, he would go to her!

He closed the door and strode down the sandy road. He passed the new inn at the foot of the Hills, and returned the salute that Pa Tapkins waved to him with a kettle from the kitchen window. As he neared the bay the salt smell of the water seemed to give him strength. There was James B.'s little boat at his wharf and Eliza Jane in the doorway of the low, vine-covered house.

"You jest better be goin' on!" she called to James B., who was loitering on the village side of the garden.

"I ain't more'n jest come off!" James B. answered. "I ain't any more'n had time t' swaller my dinner."

"Well, what more do you want?" snapped his wife. "You go on now, an' do what I tell you. An' there ain't no use t' turn the P'int t' the village, nuther. I kin see your sail till you reach the Station, an' if you don't go straight on, I kin reach the village store 'fore you kin. So 't ain't no use, James B."

James B. evidently agreed with her, for he turned and went disconsolately toward the wharf.

Thornly smiled and his old cheerfulness returned. He was seeing these people, slowly, through Janet's eyes. They were so brave, patient, and humorous. They were so human and faulty and lovable. Among them she, poor little wayfarer, had got her life lesson—how would she apply it now?

Before him rose Davy's Light, its glistening head ready for duty when the night should come. Some one was waving from the balcony up aloft! Some one had been watching the road from the Hills! Thornly's heart beat quicker. Was it Davy?

Just then the playful wind caught the loosened, ruddy hair of the watcher above, and Thornly hastened his steps.

The rooms of the lighthouse were empty, and silence brooded over all. Thornly mounted the winding stairs and, as if Davy's personality pervaded the way, his heart lightened perceptibly at each landing. In the little room below the lamp, Janet met him.

"We're freshening up," she said with the old half-shy laugh, "Davy, Cap'n Daddy, and I. Come!"

Thornly stretched out his hands toward her.

"Janet!" he whispered. "One moment, little girl!" She turned a full look upon him. A look of love, of question, of joy!

"Not yet. Come!" she repeated, and paused at the foot of the steps for him to join her.

On the sheltered side of the tower, in an easy-chair, sat Cap'n Billy. Davy was hovering over him, good-naturedly scolding him for the exertion he had made in

getting to the balcony.

"The next time, Billy, that ye take it in t' yer head t' come up here, by gum! I'm goin' t' hist ye up from the outside, same as if ye war ile! How are ye, Mr. Thornly?" he cried, turning quickly. "Take a seat on the railin'. 'T ain't what ye might call soft an' yieldin', but there's plenty of it, there bein' no beginnin' or endin'." He laughed and sighed in quite the old way. Billy's sickness had brought back the sigh.

Thornly bent over Billy in greeting, and then seated himself where he could look into all three faces. Janet sank upon a stool at Cap'n Billy's feet.

"You know why I have waited, Cap'n Billy, for this day?" he said.

He could not resort to lesser means, when simple directness would be better understood. Davy plunged his hands into his pockets and clutched the courage that was supposed to lie there along with the pipe and tobacco.

Cap'n Billy with quaint dignity put his thin, brown hand upon Janet's bowed head, and answered in kind.

"I do that, Mr. Thornly. Out there on the beach arter I come in t' consciousness, I done a heap o' thinkin', an' t'-day I told Davy I knowed ye would come, an' I wanted t' freshen up on the balcony 'fore we talked over the present and—the past!"

"Can't we let the past go, Cap'n?" Thornly asked gently. "You know it can never matter to me. The future is all that I want." Billy shook his head.

"Them's good heartsome words!" Davy broke in, tugging energetically at his pockets. "An' spoke like a man, by gum! Let well enough alone, Billy. You an' Janet is goin' t' stay right on at the Light, an' we'll start in fresh from now!" When had Davy been a coward before? But Billy's "works" might take to running down again, and that fear quelled Davy's daring. But again Billy shook his head.

"Course the government ain't goin' t' take on an old feller like me," he said, "specially when he has t' be towed in himself when he's most needed t' lend a hand; an' I ain't above takin' a place in the Light, Davy, when I pull myself up sufficient, but I want once an' fur all t' clar the air 'bout Janet." His troubled eyes looked pleadingly across the sunny bay toward the Station that had been his resting place and home for so long.

"The old see mighty clar, Mr. Thornly," he said, turning his gaze to the present.

"An' as ye git near port it's amazin' how the big things, the real things, hold yer thoughts an' longin's. I ain't done my whole duty by my little gal, an' the fact shadders my days."

"Don't say that, Cap'n Daddy!" Janet pressed closer to him. "You have done your own duty and the duty of the whole world by me!"

"That's like ye, Janet, t' say them words; but ye don't know all! That's whar I've wronged ye."

Davy saw that he must take a hand in what was going on. It would ease Billy and spare Janet.

"We've got, so t' speak," he commenced with grim determination, "t' open up the grave of the Past." He was always poetical when emotion swayed him. "Ye see, Mr. Thornly, t' put it plain an' square, me an' Billy knows that ye have some idee o' Janet, an' Billy ain't goin' t' let ye take her under no false pretences. As t' givin' our consent t' ye payin' yer respects, so t' speak, t' Janet, me an' Billy don't know, 'cordin t' law, as we have any right fur givin' or holdin' our consent. An' now ye have it straight an' fair!"

"Thank you, Cap'n Davy," Thornly replied, "but, I repeat, the past can never mean anything to me."

"But ye see, Mr. Thornly," Billy clung to his purpose, "this girl, properly speakin', don't b'long t' me. She drifted in t' port early, an' from, as ye may say, a wreck; I kept her, an' loved her, God knows, as if she war my own. But she ain't!"

This confession brought the beads of perspiration to Billy's brow, but Thornly's unmoved expression calmed him.

"My Cap'n Daddy!" Janet turned her face to the agitated one above her. "I've told Mr. Thornly this already, and he does not care!"

Billy drew a long, relieved sigh.

"I only want Janet," Thornly hastened to say. "Whether she belongs rightfully to you or not, Cap'n Billy, you have trained her into exactly the kind of woman I would have her!"

"That's the kind o' talk!" ejaculated Davy, and he drew out his pipe, lighted it and inwardly gave thanks that they had all passed the bar so successfully.

"But that ain't enough!" Billy insisted, shattering Davy's calm. "I knowed who

Janet's mother was, but I never knowed her father. I never tried t' find out. I allus war afraid I would somehow, an' that's what's clutchin' me now. I ain't acted wise or square. It comes t' me lately when I look at Janet, an' see how much she favors some one what I don't know, that I ain't only cheated her, but I've cheated some man out o' his own, no matter how ye look at it. She might 'a' been the means, so t' speak, o' bringin' him t' grace; an' times is when I've wondered if Janet won't blame me some day."

"Never! never! my own Cap'n Daddy!" Janet reassured him, but her eyes were troubled. An old doubt rose to take sides with Billy against her own determination.

"That's what ye say, not knowin', my girl." Poor Billy's wrinkled face twitched. "If yer true father be among the livin', an' sufferin' has eaten int' his soul, then don't ye see, I've stood 'twixt him an' his chance of somewhat undoin' a bitter wrong? It ain't no light matter t' take the settlin' o' things out o' God Almighty's hand. I wish I'd hunted him up! 'T was my plain duty t' have done that, I see it now. I wish I'd given my gal the choice 'tween him an' me! It's a growin' trouble as time passes." The slow tears were rolling down Billy's suffering face. Janet had no comfort for him now. In her ignorance she had pushed aside her chance to give him what his honest soul had longed for. Recalling Mr. Devant's words, she bowed her head upon Billy's knee in contrition, and pressed her lips against his work-worn hand.

Thornly stepped beside the crouching girl and laid a firm hand upon Billy's shoulder. He must give no shock, but his time had come to take another duty of Janet's upon himself.

"Cap'n Billy," he said slowly, and Davy eyed him closely, "I know Janet's—other father!"

The sun crept around the tall tower. The wind fell into a lull after its day of play. A silence held the little group for a moment, and then Thornly went on:

"He has suffered a lifetime of remorse. He is a lonely, sad man."

"Ye hear that, Janet?" whispered Billy hoarsely, but his yearning eyes were fixed upon the little house across the bay.

"Yes, my Cap'n, I hear," came in muffled tones.

How much the dear voice sounded like that one which years ago had so named him!

"An', God willin', ye kin have a choice, my girl, even now! I ain't goin' t' stand 'twixt ye an' a open course. Ye've got his blood as well as hers! Ye must choose yerself, Janet, an' do it just an' honest like I've tried t' show ye how!"

"Cap'n Billy,"—Thornly pressed the thin shoulder firmer, the real test was coming now,—"our little girl has had her chance. She knows her father; he came and offered her a life of luxury and pleasure—and she chose you!"

"Gawd!" burst from Davy, and his pipe lay shattered upon the floor.

Billy breathed quicker, but the habit of a lifetime helped him bear this crowning bliss. To such as he it sometimes happens that an inner sense prepares the soul for its mounts of vision. In the silence that followed, Billy struggled in memory from that long-ago time when his love was young, to this hour when he was to know!

"An' he—is?" He spoke waveringly like a child feeling out into the darkness for an object he knows is there. Thornly waited for what his love trusted.

"Mr. Devant, my Cap'n Daddy!" The answer was in Janet's voice.

"I—I sort o' sensed it!" whispered Billy. "An' ye chose me when ye had sich a chance?" Wonder thrilled through the question. Was he to know more joy?

"Yes, my own Daddy. I chose you because I loved you! I never even wanted you to know. But Mr. Thornly knew you better than I. You are nobler than I thought."

"An' ye loved me like that?" A shining joy broke over Billy's face, a joy that drove pain and remorse before it. "Do ye hear that, Davy? An' ye once said God couldn't pay me fur what I done! Why, man, God paid me all along the way, an' now He's added more'n I ever earned!" The weak voice rose rapturously. "Mr. Thornly, I want that ye should send fur Mr. Devant. I ain't goin' t' prove unworthy o' the Lord's trust in me!"

"Daddy! Daddy!" broke from Janet. Billy stayed her with a look.

"No, my gal. This ain't no matter fur ye! This be man's work!"

"Right you are, Cap'n!" Thornly grasped the old hand. Davy drew near and looked upon his friend as if he were seeing him for the first time in years.

"By gum!" he said. "An' that's what has been draggin' on ye all these years! Why, Billy, you an' me is goin' t' take a new lease o' life!"

"We are that!" nodded Billy. Then he turned to Thornly.

"I ain't never goin' t' doubt a man like you, Mr. Thornly," he said, "but ye see I

could only train Janet one way, havin', as ye know, no other 'sperience. I ain't use t' sich waters as ye sail, an' Janet ain't much wiser. I'm thinkin'," he paused and tried to see his way, "I'm thinkin', Mr. Devant might help ye on this tack. Sort o' steer this little craft, so t' speak, till it's able to keep upright."

Quietly the girl by Billy's knee arose. She stood just where the westering sun touched her with a golden glow. Thornly drew his lips in sharply as he looked at her, and even Billy and Davy were awed by what they in no wise comprehended.

"Daddy dear," said the sweet voice, "I am going to be very fond of Mr. De—of my father, by and by. We are going to be great friends, I know, and that will make you glad. But I must always be your girl! I am not afraid to sail out upon the broad middle ocean. I used to tell Davy that I longed to go; but I want no other help than your chart, my Cap'n, and my Davy's Light!" Her lifted eyes were tear-filled as they rested in turn upon the two rugged faces. Then she looked at Thornly and her tears were dried as desire grew to trust and perfect understanding; he opened his arms to her and she came to him gladly.

"And my love, my Pimpernel!" he whispered as his lips pressed the soft, ruddy hair.

The birds twittered among the nooks and corners of Davy's Light. The bay sparkled, and across the dunes the ocean's voice spoke in the deep cadences of a mighty organ's tone.

"*An' there was glory over all the land,*" Davy chanted as he turned to his evening duty. "*A flood o' glory.*"



JOHN FOX, JR'S. STORIES OF THE KENTUCKY MOUNTAINS

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Illustrated by F. C. Yohn.

The "lonesome pine" from which the story takes its name was a tall tree that stood in solitary splendor on a mountain top. The fame of the pine lured a young engineer through Kentucky to catch the trail, and when he finally climbed to its shelter he found not only the pine but the *foot-prints of a girl*. And the girl proved to be lovely, piquant, and the trail of these girlish foot-prints led the young engineer a madder chase than "the trail of the lonesome pine."

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Illustrated by F. C. Yohn.

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