

The Stimulus of a Hope

By Grace S. Richmond

MISS Jean Lockwood, freshly frocked and frilled, ran noiselessly down-stairs before the other feminine boarders at the MacKenzie farm-house had awakened from their afternoon naps. There was a somewhat shame-faced air about her as she stole through the wide, lower hall and out at the door, and the glance she gave back at the house and at a certain pair of half-drawn shutters had in it the guilty look of a child who slips away upon some forbidden quest.

A few minutes later Miss Jean, having crossed garden, orchard, two fields and a small brook—not to mention three stone walls by the way—was leaning upon a last wall, looking over into the meadow beyond. Here were several great wagons and a score of farm-hands, including Mr. MacKenzie and his two sons, who were busy with the gathering in of the hay crop. Beyond lay a long strip of Maine coast, and below the cliff, which formed the further edge of the hay-field, lapped the waves of the Atlantic, quiet as a sleeping child on this sultry July day.

The observer had not occupied her position by the wall more than thirty seconds before a tall figure working upon the top of one of the loads turned about, and snatching his wide-brimmed hat from his head, waved it gaily at her, replacing it before the next forkful had been pitched up to him by the unobservant helper below. By and by the well-loaded wagon started toward the distant barn, passing Jean's corner as it went. The young man, leaning on his fork as he stood poised upon the load, laughed down on the girl by the wall.

"Ready for that ride yet?" he called.

"Yes, indeed; may I have it now?" she called back.

"Next load. You'll have to be on when we begin and go up with the load. You can't climb up now."

"I'll be ready," she promised.

The big hat waved a farewell at her, which she answered with a little nod and smile. When the wagon came back she was on the other side of the wall.

Dorothy Perkins

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something in her face, which fed the hope springing in his mind—"I say, Dorothy, is this why you've been so cool to me, and so chummy with Merryweather?"

"You have only just found the box? Then what were you speaking of when you talked to Captain Merryweather about the girl next door. I was in the pergola and couldn't help hearing—" her voice trailed away in confusion.

A light dawned on Jack's mind.

"You heard—what? Why, I said—oh, good heavens! Dorothy, you couldn't think I was speaking of you?"

"Who, then?" she breathed, her heart in her eyes.

"The Phillips's maid—the girl they call Tilda. She actually wrote to me, sent some flowers, and—asked me to look for her in the garden. Ah! there she is, looking out of the window now. Heavens! To think she should have made all this trouble. Dorothy, is this why you were so cool to me?"

"Yes, I am afraid it was. You see, I was a little bit afraid. I'd been foolish in sending you flowers—and, it seemed so dreadful that you should talk about me like that and—call me 'abominably plain.'"

"Oh, my darling; that you should think that! Dorothy, I've loved you always—always! There's no one in the world so dear to me as you are. I shall see Dorothy," was what I said to myself whenever I thought of coming home."

The next minute or two was spent in giving and receiving sweeter things than words. But presently Jack said, as he looked at the faded spray of roses, "Well, you've given me a Dorothy Perkins, and now you've got to be a Dorothy Perkins. Do you know what I mean?"

She looked at him in wonder, not understanding in the least.

"Haven't you heard that my old uncle, Jonathan Perkins, has decided to make me his heir because I've won that blithering V.C. But I've got to take his name. You'll be Mistress Dorothy Perkins in a month from now; and so that's that!"

"Mean it?" cried the young fellow, as she ran over the closely cropped field, lifting her skirts daintily.

"Of course I mean it," she returned, with a saucy nod. "Haven't you promised me a ride on a load of hay ever since I have been here? You're almost through haying, and, besides, we're going away day after to-morrow."

The last was said in a lower tone, as young MacKenzie was preparing to help her climb upon the wagon. He stopped abruptly and stood looking down at her with eyes before which her own drooped.

"Day after to-morrow!" he repeated, under his breath. He glanced toward his helpers; they were observing with interest. He drew himself up, and then said, in his usual hearty, laughing way, "Well, then, it's time I kept my promise," and swung her up upon the wagon with a strong lift which made nearly unnecessary her own effort.

"What shall I do?" she asked, as he leaped up beside her and the men began to pitch up the hay.

"Just stand still, and step on it when I put it in front of you," he told her; and she obeyed. The men worked fast and skilfully, and the sweet-scented load grew rapidly under Jean's feet. She found, as the soft mass grew gradually higher and higher, that she was getting out of range of the men below and coming to be alone upon the top with Kirk MacKenzie.

Amid the light chatter she was keeping

her skirt. After a minute he looked around and up at her. She smiled down at him, but he did not smile in return. His eyes were dark under their heavy lashes. He was regarding her intently. In spite of herself she returned his gaze.

Suddenly he lowered his head again, but this time his face rested upon the hem of her skirt. A strange thrill went through the girl; she could hardly have told why. Her pulses began to beat more quickly. This certainly was not precisely the sort of thing she should have expected from a farmer's son toward the daughter of a man infinitely above him in position, in wealth, in everything. Yet somehow she did not resent it.

The young man did not move during the slow ride until they came in sight of the barn. Then he drew himself up to one knee, and without looking up said, softly:

"I'm going to ask something of you. Will you do it for me—since you're going day after to-morrow?"

"I—I think so—if it's not a very big thing," promised Jean, trying to speak lightly. His manner astonished her not a little. She had had many pleasant hours in his company on the summer evenings and summer Sundays, to which her mother had not objected. Farmer MacKenzie's sons were of the sort whom the mothers who brought their daughters to the country were glad to have about in the absence of the city youths, since the daughters must be amused and young people will get together. Maine was so far away from New York that there was little to be feared from such comradeship.

She kept her word, and Jean found it a hard matter to keep hers. Under the influence of Mrs. Winchester's management all the young people were together throughout the evening, and if it had not been for the rebellion which her sister's espionage excited in Jean's breast the latter might have yielded to the force of circumstances. But as the evening waned an entreating glance from Kirk prevailed, and the girl managed at last to slip away. In five minutes more she was alone with him upon the beach in the moonlight, at some distance from the house.

Winchester, Jean's sister, "where in the world have you been? How did you muss your frock so? And—why, Jean—there's a wisp of hay in your hair. You crazy girl! Mother, I believe she's been riding on a load of hay! Will she ever be grown up?"

The last sentences were not addressed to Jean, for the simple reason that that young person had moved nonchalantly on across the lawn instead of pausing at the piazza, which was filled with well-dressed and observant women of various ages. When Mrs. Winchester was alone with her mother an hour afterward she said one or two things with emphasis.

"I'm simply thankful you have agreed to leave this place on Thursday. I've been watching pretty closely these last few days, and I'm positive the affair is getting serious. Of course, it's perfect nonsense, but Jean is at the most impressionable age. I remember how I was at nineteen, and Jean is more romantic and impossible than I ever was. That Kirk MacKenzie certainly is a dangerously handsome fellow; he even looks well in the things he wears evenings—here; he's absolutely picturesque in his working-clothes. The child does not realize how he would appear in other surroundings, nor his lack of education, nor any of it. He's in love with her—I'm certain of it. I assure you I shall keep a close watch on her these last two evenings. The girl has no idea in the world what is due us all, and she's much too pretty to be left to her own discretion."

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The young man did not speak beyond a smothered expression of gratitude for her presence until they were well around a bend on the cliff and out of sight of any possible observers. Then he began, abruptly:

"Do you want to know what has been ringing in my ears ever since I saw you last?"

She glanced up at him, startled again by a certain curious intensity of tone. The moonlight made his face look as pale as it was possible for so well-browned a skin to look.

"It's 'day after to-morrow,'" he said, slowly.

"Oh—yes—I'm sorry to go so soon," she faltered. "My sister is very anxious to get to Pocasset Beach; we have ever so many friends there."

"And to-morrow I shall have to say 'to-morrow,' and after that it'll be 'to-day'—and 'good-by.' Do you know what that means to me?"

"Does it mean much?" she asked, softly.

"Much!" he repeated, in a low, intense voice.

She walked on, trying hard to think. She said to herself that she ought not to let him go on. She knew what her family would say—that such a match as this was utterly out of the question. Supposing MacKenzie to be in earnest, and it began to look as if he were tremendously in earnest, the best thing she could do for him was to refuse to hear what was evidently on his lips. Yet a sudden, intense longing took possession of her. Even if this were all over and done with to-morrow, it seemed to her that she must let it come to-night.

"Did you know what I was doing this afternoon on the hay-load when my face was against your dress?"

"No," she whispered.

"I was kissing it—kissing it over and over. Are you angry?" Her face was turned away, but after a moment she shook her head ever so slightly. The motion was very nearly involuntary on her part; she could not resist it.

"Why aren't you angry? You ought to be. I'm a long way below you, according to the ideas of your sort. Your sister was afraid to leave you alone with me a minute to-night. She wouldn't have you care for me for worlds. But you do care—Jean?"

She turned upon him as if to push him



One of the massive British tanks after having stoved in the "Hindenburg line" in the great Cambrai battle finished up the day by bringing back one of the prizes of the victory, a 5.9 German naval gun. The tank lumbering through the muck, easily hauled the big naval gun along in its wake, while the Tommies did their best to make the going a little easier. As this British photo shows the tanks can do other things besides battering down enemy lines and cowering the Teutons into submission. The tanks it will be remembered delivered the "follow through."

up with him she was furtively watching him, admiring his strength, the play of the magnificent muscles beneath the smooth, tanned skin of his arms, the poise of his head upon his well-developed neck and shoulders, the fineness of his spirited profile. She was thinking, as she observed him, that no young man of her acquaintance possessed such physical beauty, such quickness of wit, nor such power to interest her. They were young men of the world, of education, of social position; she had been brought up among their sort. This was a farmer's son, with the presumable education of the nearest village school and of no social training whatever; yet—she drew a long breath as she remembered day after to-morrow.

"All right there," called Kirk MacKenzie to his men. "That'll do. Burke, you can drive us home. Davids will ride over on the next load; we'll not crowd Miss Lockwood. May I stay here with you?" he asked, softly, as one man went off whistling; the other, old Burke, climbed to his seat in front.

Jean nodded, and sank down in a drift of white muslin in the middle of the big swaying load. As the wagon started MacKenzie flung himself at her feet, face downward. The girl looked off across the meadow for a moment, then down half shyly at the big figure before her. MacKenzie had thrown off his wide hat, and his thick brown locks touched the edge of

So argued the mothers, and they were mostly right.

"It's a pretty big thing," said Kirk MacKenzie, watching Burke's back, "but I'm going to ask it because—I must. Will you go off for a little walk with me to-night when the rest of the folks are in the house?"

Jean was startled now, because she was not used to country ways, was accustomed to careful chaperonage and knew that her mother would allow nothing of the sort if she were aware of it; certainly not with Kirk MacKenzie. If it were Bentley Brown, of Boston, Mrs. Lockwood might be conceived of as showing a trifle more leniency. Jean thought of these things, and knew it would be the part of loyalty to maternal counsels to refuse, but Kirk looked up at her just then with a glance which seemed to command while it sued—the kind of look which has its fascination for a girl if it come from a man she likes.

"Please—" he breathed, earnestly.

"Perhaps," allowed Jean, flushing brilliantly beneath the satisfaction which flashed into his face. Then the wagon rolled into the barn-yard. Kirk cried, "Lie down flat; it's a big load," and threw himself at her feet again. A moment later he helped her down, and she had darted off out of the barn and into the garden, from which she emerged demurely enough half an hour later, her hands full of long-stemmed lilies.

"Jean Lockwood!" cried young Mrs.