

gave herself up to the enjoyment of the bright refrain. Her white teeth showed as she smiled over the gay words; her pretty head kept time to the air.

Ping! ping! It was close at hand; the song ceased suddenly, there was a pitiful gasp, a moan, and the singer fell all in a heap beside the rough step on which she had been sitting. A dread silence fell on the clearing; only the plaintive note of a bird broke the stillness. A tiny red stream crept its ominous way beside the form of the silenced singer. The twilight deepened.

"Lois! my Lois!" A deep musical voice broke the silence at last; a bounding step came crashing through the under-brush. "Lois, where art thou? Lois." No answering voice greeted the call. Never before had she failed to reply gladly to him. "Lois!"—there was astonishment and chagrin in the voice this time. "Lois! where is my chérie, my fadette?"

A moment later he bounded into the clearing, stopping short with an exclamation of horror. "Mon Dieu! what is this?"

On his knees beside the prostrate form of her whom he had called Lois, Paul Daudet realized that a terrible calamity had befallen the companion of his loneliness. He raised her in his arms, kissing her passionately the while. "Open thine eyes Lois, my Lois," he cried. "Speak to me, my chérie!" By terms of endearment, by passionate caresses, he endeavored to bring her back to consciousness. He carried her into the cabin, and laying her tenderly on the rough bed, knelt beside her, watching her eagerly. Would those dark lashes never lift again, those lips never smile, never speak his name? "It is the punishment," he cried, his eyes raised to Heaven. "The punishment come at last. Oh! Lois my darling, we were too happy; the great God has found us out at last." At the early dawn, just when night drawing her mantle about her withdraws, when

myriads of birds waking, softly welcome the break of day, and when it is said that the angel of Death, loves best to claim his own, Lois opened her eyes, and looked up into her companion's face, the love-light in her eyes defying the shadows of death that even the watcher in spite of his despairing hope could not fail to see.

"Paul!" said a weak voice (could it be the same that sang so blithely but a few hours ago!) "Paul, the punishment has come." The listener groaned. "You, Paul, sinned against the Church—against God. I sinned against my husband—I was all to blame; may the good God forgive me."

"My chérie! My darling! I cannot live without thee. Can He be so cruel? Surely He is merciful."

"Yes—but—not—to—such—as—we."

Lois' voice was getting weaker and weaker, "the prayers, Paul—the Church—is—there—no absolution for—me?"

Then and there, Paul Daudet, renegade priest, sinner against God and man, said the prayers for the dying, the solemn absolution over the dying woman, his Lois, his passionately loved companion, who had left her husband, home, honor, and country for his sake, as he had deserted Church and friends for hers.

The sun rose, casting glints of light across the cabin floor. Paul Daudet sat like a statue beside his beloved dead, unmindful of the time—lost in retrospection. He saw Lois as she was so long ago, a loved and honored, but unloving wife. He heard again her innocent child confessions that he, as her clerical confessor, was privileged to hear. He saw her striving to obey duty, and stamp passion under her feet; alas! with bad success. He saw her fall into temptation and leave all for him, but ah! how she loved him—how he loved her. It had been a forest Eden, this blessed spot, where they had gone to hide together from the wrath of Church and individual. But