

THE CONFESSION

to understand how she had learned to love him. I endeavored to speak, but the words seemed to choke me — I was about to leave behind all my inspiration and hope. At the foot of the stairs he stopped, his hand pressing my arm.

"Jean wishes to speak with you before you go," he said calmly. "She is in the parlor."

Then he turned and walked away, leaving me standing there alone facing the closed door. The blood surged to my face; I could feel the trembling of my fingers as they grasped the knob. I had not expected, not even hoped for this. She was standing waiting me, in the centre of a room full of sunshine — a slender, white-robed figure, with smiling lips and smiling eyes. I stopped irresolute, still grasping the door, wondering what it was I should say to her. Yet she gave me short time for thought.

"I asked Colonel Donald to have you come to me before your departure," she said firmly, "so there might be no misunderstanding between us."

"You refer to the words spoken yonder, Miss Denslow?" and it seemed to me an icy hand gripped my heart. "There was no misunderstanding, I assure you. I realize that what you said was merely to save life; spoken on the spur of the moment."

Her eyes fell, the blood flooding her cheeks.

"It was not that I meant, Lieutenant King, it was something very different. I have not really deceived you, but — but I have permitted you to deceive yourself. I thought I could let you go away without any ex-