

Lord Bidborough and Jean walked on in silence.

At the garden where once had stood New Place—that “pretty house in brick and timber”—the shadow of the Norman church lay black on the white street and beyond it was the velvet darkness of the old trees.

“This,” Jean said softly, “must be almost exactly as it was in Shakespeare’s time. He must have seen the shadow of the tower falling like that, and the trees, and his garden. Perhaps it was on an April night like this that he wrote:

“ ‘On such a night
Stood Dido with a willow in her hand
Upon the wild sea-banks and waft her lover
To come again to Carthage.’ ”

They had both stopped, and Jean, after a glance at her companion’s face, edged away. He caught her hands and held her the way to the shadow.

“The last time we were together, Jean, it was December, dripping rain and mud, and you would have none of me. To-night—in such a night, Jean, I come again to you. I love you. Will you marry me?”

“Yes,” said Jean—“for I am yours.”

For a minute they stood caught up to the seventh heaven, knowing nothing except that they were together, hearing nothing but the beating of their own hearts.

Jean was the first to come to herself.

“Every one’s gone home. The boys’ll think we are lost. . . . Oh, Biddy, have I done right? Are you sure you want me? Can I make you happy?”

“Can you make me happy? My blessed child, what a question! Don’t you know that you seem to me almost too dear for my possessing? You are far too good for me, but I won’t give you up now. No, not though all the King’s horses and all the King’s men come in array against me. My Jean . . . my little Jean.”