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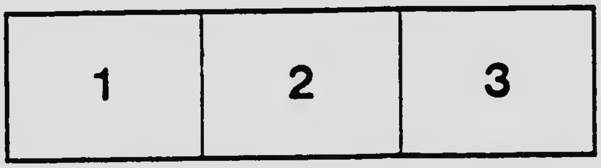

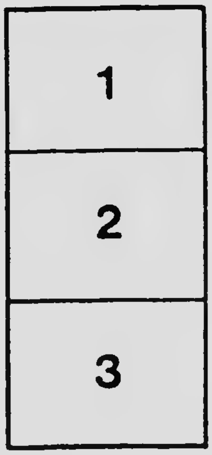

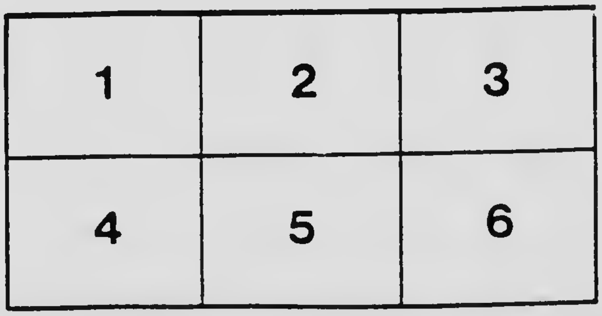

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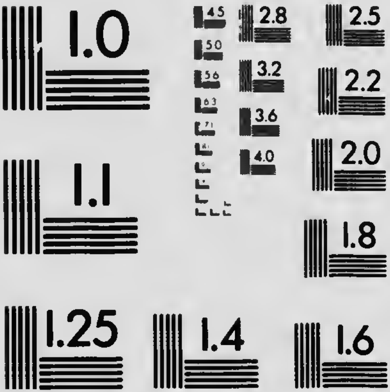
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BY

MAUD HOWARD PETERSON

AUTHOR OF "THE POTTER AND THE CLAY"

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To

"ALLADIN"

Cor unum — via una

"And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building."

I. Kings VI, 7.

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BOOK ONE

OUTSIDE THE GATES

The SANCTUARY

I.

BLAIR MARTIN stood in the big doorway looking at the gay scene before her. She was tired and glad to get away from the fashionable crowd for a little while, and grateful that the doorway shaded her from curious eyes. Since a small child, and all through the years that her father had been amassing his vast fortune, she had resented and shrunk from the often overheard remarks and the curious gaze people had bestowed upon her. Her sensitiveness to public comment was oddly at variance with the natural independence and frankness of speech she had inherited from her father, Andrew Martin. It was perhaps a legacy from the dead mother whose memory she adored, as a woman of eight and twenty adores a memory cherished by a girl somewhat over seventeen.

The incessant noise of the touring cars and roadsters annoyed her as they swept up the long driveway and deposited their gaily dressed occupants by the main tent where Mrs. Weston-Smith received her guests. An unceasing hum of voices, from the low masculine bass to the clearer feminine treble — a gamut of human sound — came to her from the throng scattered over the wide lawns and from the bazaar tables that stood nearer to the trees. From the immense temporary pavilion to the right came the clatter of dishes and again the same incessant noise. She sighed wearily.

" I suppose I must go back," she said, unconscious that she had spoken aloud.

" Is it so distasteful as that? "

She started at the voice, strange and yet, in an indefinable way, familiar.

It seemed to come from the shadow of the hall behind, but when she turned quickly and peered inside she could see no one. She laughed nervously.

" Now I am certainly going back," she said, but this time not aloud.

She passed down the steps of the wide porch slowly, and slowly crossed the lawn to the bazaar table of which she was in charge. Now and then some one stopped to speak with her and again some passed her with only a bow of recognition. She was grateful when sheer politeness did not make it necessary to stop. The late spring day was intolerably warm in spite of the sheltering trees, and the inertia that she had felt before crept over her again as she threw herself in a chair near her table and watched the throng in the distance. Most of the buying was over — indeed, her own table of fancy wares was nearly empty — and she was glad and grateful for the fact. In an indifferent sort of way she watched the sun filtering through the trees and touching the gay dresses and parasols of the women as they lazily walked to and fro or ate their ices, bought at exorbitant charity prices, in the shade of the heavy shrubbery. Over to the left behind a screen of trees were the tennis counts, lying warm and deserted in the sunshine. As she watched, the slow movements of the crowd took on new impetus, and she could see it as with a settled purpose, making its way in the direction of the courts. From behind the pavilion some men and girls emerged in immaculate flannels with tennis racquets in their hands, and she knew that the much talked of feature in the much talked of charity fête at Mrs. Weston-Smith's, the finals in the tournament, had begun. She sat still in the shadow of the trees, her elbow on the edge of the bazaar table, her chin in her hand.

"My *dear* child, aren't you going over to the courts?" said the voice of Mrs. Weston-Smith behind her.

She arose slowly, with the simple deference with which she addressed people older than herself

"I think not," she said, "I am very tired and — I shall not be missed."

"Nonsense! fiddlesticks and rubbish! You know quite well every one looks for you at affairs of this kind, and it is proverbial how people stare at you. Really I don't know why!"

Blair Martin smiled in spite of herself at the twinkle in the older woman's eyes.

"You know as well as I do," she said with a short laugh. "The women all want to see if I have on a new gown and if I am wearing my famous string of pearls. If I haven't the gown or the pearls they whisper I am mean or attempting the classical or simple style of dress — if I have, they guess at the price and comment on my extravagance. As for the men —" Miss Martin broke off impatiently.

"My, but you're bitter to-day, my dear; what about the men?" Mrs. Weston-Smith eyed her curiously from beneath a hat wonderfully wrought, heavily priced.

Miss Martin turned away with an impatient gesture.

"Oh, the men don't count," she said.

"I fancy I know of one who will," said Mrs. Weston-Smith. "He has asked to be presented. May I go and find him? He refused to enter the tennis contest although I understand he plays a fine game. The last time I came across him he was in the shadow of the hall and he seemed like a fish out of water. I fancy he's a little different from the usual run we are accustomed to."

"In the hall! Who is he?"

"Men call him Hector Stone, but he might be any of half a dozen of those big odd creatures in history and mythology I used to read about in my school books as a child."

"Indeed! Hector Stone — I rather like the name. It doesn't tell one anything as to nationality or caste."

"He's as cosmopolitan as his name. He says his home is the world and his books men. There's been some talk about him lately in connection with labo questions and clean government and all the rest o those wonderful and queer questions I know nothing about. He has the manners — when he chooses — of a Chesterfield and the clothes of a rich man's so and the hands of a laboring man." Mrs. Weston

Smith smoothed out her long glove carefully, pleasantly conscious that she had aroused Blair Martin's interest in a man at last. But the latter's words and the veil of indifference that fell across her face came almost as a blow.

"I don't care for freaks. I am very tired, and when I see there is no chance of selling the rest of these things, I shall gather them up and take them to the library and with your permission go home."

"You're impossible! I'm not going to let you go and you've got to have some diversion. I'm due now at the courts. Why, the man asked to meet you. What can I tell him?"

"That I'm not receiving to-day," said Blair Martin with a slow smile.

"I won't tell him anything of the kind. I shall bring him up and you will charm him into buying to help the poor babies along. You can tell him one dollar's worth will give two children a part of a shoe apiece; five dollars will give twenty children a joyous but uncomfortable hay ride, and ten dollars, one small boy three weeks in the country where he will mope and pine for 'de gang.'"

"I can't remember all those statistics," said Miss Martin, "but here is a fat pink pincushion marked at fifteen dollars, but worth about three, that you might persuade him to buy, only you must excuse me."

"My dear, I won't excuse you; and never let Maria Linwood hear you revile the work of her hands like that. Maria slaved a week over that cushion and put in one dollar and seventy-six cents worth of choice powder to make it smell sweet."

"Which will undoubtedly enhance it in the eyes of Mr. Stone," said Blair Martin, drawing down the corners of her mouth.

"There! you're getting human again. Just sit down and rest and I'll hunt him up. I once found a gold dollar in a haystack when I was a child, though how the dollar came there I never could explain."

Without waiting for an answer Mrs. Weston-Smith and her immense hat sailed away.

Blair Martin resumed her seat with a long sigh.

"It's her affair and I suppose it's rude to be so unsociable, but if this is charity — then — "

Exactly what she wanted or intended to say is not known, for just here Blair Martin fell to musing and she was only aroused by hearing Mrs. Weston-Smith's voice at her elbow.

"Here s[illegible] — a regular Casabianca — and true to her trust. Now I hope you're going to buy something. It's for the poor babies, you know, and you mustn't mind being robbed. My dear, let me present Mr. Hector Stone — Mr. Stone — Miss Martin."

Blair Martin raised her head slowly and the movement gave no hint of the odd nervousness that crept over her when she heard his voice. It seemed to come to her strong with the strength of ages.

"I am glad to meet you — indeed I have been wanting to, and asked Mrs. Weston-Smith to find a way. I know you must be tired though, and if you don't want company you must tell me."

Mrs. Weston-Smith, with a barely concealed smile of satisfaction slipped away unnoticed. Blair Martin uttered some worn, polite platitude, and was acutely conscious that she had heard the voice before.

" You will forgive me for talking to you in the hall, won't you? I am afraid I am not much on conventionalities. I knew you were tired before you spoke there, and I believe there is no fatigue so great as that which society exacts as toll."

Miss Martin watched him as he spoke and she could not have told the color of his eyes or described any one feature of his face. She was conscious of a nameless charm and frankness she had never met before — of an understanding that was separate and distinct from time and place and sex.

" You don't care for society then ? " she asked.

" That's a very much abused term, Miss Martin," he said with a slow smile, " and there is much to be said for and against it — as there is of everything else. With your permission I will sit down. I understand I am expected to buy something. What kind of things must I get ? "

A sudden hot flush of shame swept over her as she viewed the table before her with its dainty useless trifles of lace and silk. What part could lace and silk, be they on inanimate things or — women, play in his life, she wondered, and for the first time she was ashamed of an exquisite gown.

"I — I am afraid this is all I have," she said a little shyly. "They are all quite useless, you see — for practical use — for a man."

"I don't suppose that ought to matter in an affair like this. It isn't what we buy, but how much we spend for the poor babies — isn't it?" he asked.

"I suppose so, only —" Blair Martin broke off, oddly confused.

"Only what?"

"Oh, it doesn't seem quite right, — does it? Something is wrong in the scheme of the thing, I think. We all sit around for months and wear our fingers sore and our tempers to a sharp edge, and we spend a lot in buying yards of lace and silk to make into things people never use and don't want, and it's all written up in the papers, and expensive engraved invitations are issued, and people all get together and buy the things because they must, and eat of the refreshments, and gossip, because they want to." She broke off and began to twist a fine sapphire ring around and around her finger. She did not want to meet his eyes. She knew now that they were gray and the deepest that she had ever seen.

"That's heresy — isn't it?"

She tried to speak lightly.

"I suppose it is."

A silence fell between them. They could, in a dim way not to be explained, feel the weight of it on them. The shade around the big tree under which they sat grew denser and the shadows of the other trees near by crept to meet it across the sun-touched lawn.

"Let me see," said Stone, rising slowly and beginning to examine the few articles remaining on the table. "What is this and how much?"

"That," said Blair Martin with a laugh, "is a very fine article — the only one of its kind anywhere, I know. It is a pincushion and was made by a cousin of Mrs. Weston-Smith's. It's marked for fifteen dollars, but since the day is late and customers few I will let it go for ten."

He met her eyes and his own began to twinkle.

"But think of the poor babies — I would not rob the poor babies."

"I think I can say with truth it would not rob the poor babies," she replied.

"Well — of course if that's the case, I'll take it, although what I'm to do with it I don't know."

"You might give it to a sister, perhaps, or a cousin or a friend," she suggested.

"I have no sister or cousin," he said simply. "Might — might I offer the beautiful thing to you as a memento of our first meeting?"

"I cannot take it," she replied almost brusquely. It was not what she had intended to say, but she was conscious of speaking only the truth to him, unvarnished by conventionalities.

For a moment he smiled; then he said gravely, "I beg your pardon. I offered it more in sport — as one would offer a toy — than as a gift of any worth. And what does the Poor Babies' Bazaar want for this? It is a clothes-bag — isn't it? The colors are pretty."

She smiled as she did up the pincushion in white tissue paper.

"No, indeed — how blind you men are. That is a shirt-waist holder. Its price is — let me see — seven — five — it can't be. Yes, it is. It's actually seven-fifty." She laughed. "Couldn't you use it for your dress shirts?" she asked with pretended anxiety.

"Not possibly. I admire your ability as a saleswoman, Miss Martin."

"Here's a work-bag all fitted up with cunning little scissors and an emery — everything complete. It's really one of the prettiest things that came in to-day. I wonder it was not sold before. I had thought of buying it myself."

"Perhaps you had better — since it is of no use to me as a present or otherwise," said Stone, a shadow creeping over his bright face. "You sew?"

"I love it," she said like a little child. "My mother taught me years before she died."

"Ah," he said.

She handed him the pincushion, and as he thanked her he saw in her eyes the shadow of a grief that had never quite lifted from her life.

"It is a great thing for a man or woman to remember — a mother that was a mother in something more than name. We do not often meet with it in the upper circles, but I had such a mother too, once."

Her eyes dropped their gaze on the table, and her fingers began to nervously gather the remaining trifles together.

"In her girlhood and early married years my mother had to sew," she said a little proudly, "and — and when the money came it made no difference to her, she sewed still — she made many of my things — she taught me. Her needle was her pleasure and — her solace."

She stopped and bit her lip. Why had she spoken to a stranger so, she wondered. Yet was he quite a stranger after all?

She put the unsold things one by one into a basket until the table was all cleared, and he did not speak as he watched her at her task.

"May I carry it for you?" he asked when she had finished.

"If you will. I shall leave it in the library. Then I must get my wraps and go home. It is getting late and I have always tried to make it a point to be on hand for my father's dinner. It is so desolate alone."

"Yes," said Stone, picking up the basket.

She led the way to the house through the glow of approaching sunset. To the right, from the tennis courts, came loud applause and voices calling out the final scores. To the left stood the pavilion — deserted now, as was the house that loomed before them.

"What a pity," said Stone irrelevantly.

"What?" she asked curiously.

"That such a naturally beautiful spot should be so spoiled."

"You mean this mix-up — don't you — the Italian pergola and the Chinese pagoda summer-house, and the mixture of fret-work and Corinthian pillars on the house itself?"

"Exactly."

"I have often noticed it, but you are the only one that has ever spoken of it."

"It seems rather rude, doesn't it, with the owner not two hundred yards away, but I am thinking of it quite impartially and aside from Mrs. Weston-Smith. It does seem that we should make money stand for beauty at least, doesn't it?"

"Yes," she said briefly, as she led the way into the library.

He put the basket down.

"May I wait until you get your wraps and hunt up your team or car?"

"Thank you. It is a little blue roadster. You will find it apart from the others. I left it so that I could get it out easily. It has narrow gold outlining and the license number is two hundred and eighteen."

He lingered at the library door watching her mount the stairs.

Ten minutes later, when she came down to the library it was empty, and on going out to the porch she saw him at the foot of the steps waiting for her with the car.

"I found it without any trouble," he said as he helped her in. "Are — are you sure you can manage alone? There is a bad stretch of road a mile away from here."

"I can take the other by Brooke's Crossing," she said with a slow smile.

"And go three miles out of your way when your father will be waiting dinner?"

"How do you know the road that leads to The Anchorage?" she asked. "Do you know my father?"

He smiled in an odd way.

"I have heard of him," he said. "Are you all right?"

"Quite all right," she laughed in answer, her foot on the clutch pedal. "Good-bye."

He lifted his hat and held it in his hand.

"Good night," he said.

She started to turn the steering-wheel.

He handed her some money.

"Why, what is this for?" she asked. "You paid for the wonderful pincushion."

"But not for the little work-bag. I have decided to take that and — help the poor babies a little more."

Through the glow of fading sunset she drove the car down the long winding carriage road looking straight ahead of her. She was conscious that he was still standing on the lower step watching her — that he stood there until the tall trees and the curve had hidden her from his sight. Suddenly he stooped and picked up something from the stone step. It was one of her long white gloves that she had worn earlier in the day. It had dropped when she was replacing it with the heavier ones she used when driving. He looked around him and saw that he was quite alone. For a moment he held the glove and slowly smoothed out the creases. A faint odor of violets exuded from it — as permeating as it was evasive, an ounce of which was worth a weeks' pay to a working girl. Then he folded it and placed it in an inner pocket of his coat before he turned away.

Along the country road, Blair Martin meanwhile drove her car, past luxurious homes of the rich hidden behind stone walls and great trees, over the "bad stretch," which she took carefully, remembering his warning, and on into the falling dusk of twilight until the lights from the lodge of the Anchorage streamed out as she neared the gates.

"He only said 'Good night,' but he never asked to call," she thought as she descended later and turned the car over to a waiting groom.

In silence she passed through the wide hall and climbed the stairway to her rooms.

II.

A MONTH later Hector Stone turned his car in at the great gates of the Anchorage. It was a powerful six-cylinder machine, inconspicuous in color and in outline; perfect in its mechanism and fitness for realizing the purpose of its makers. It vaguely suggested its owner. At first he looked around him curiously as he drove up the wide carriage road. Stretches of woodland lay on either side and in their dense growth the afternoon shadows rested deep and still. The way was long and the house hidden from his view. After a while the sense of curiosity vanished and he glanced around him as though seeking some one he did not find. A mile from the big gates the house itself stood. He came upon it suddenly and unexpectedly and for a moment he slowed down in surprised wonder and delight.

"Beautiful," he said aloud. "Yet who would have expected it of Andrew Martin?"

The house — a fine modification of the mission style, with all the mission charm and none of its inconvenience — stood in its stuccoed beauty and tiled roof on an eminence of ground. Wide, perfect lawns, unadorned except by splendid trees, stretched down to meet him on three sides. In the rear he could see the garden that sloped to an orchard in a hollow. Beyond the orchard ran a cooling stream where cows were grazing, and then the land went up again, and he caught a glimpse of dotted cottages, — the homes of the farm-hands, — and then a faint outline of dim hills against a summer sky.

Without the odd haste he had felt earlier in the day and with the surprised wonder still upon him, he drove his car into the Spanish courtyard entrance. There at the front door he stopped and dismounted and turned to ring the bell. The place was deserted and if he had hoped to see any one he was disappointed. He looked at the courtyard critically and with an eye trained to the best in beauty and in art, as he waited for an answer to his ring. He was conscious that his exacting taste was satisfied — that each detail on inspection was as perfect as he had thought it at first glance. . . . An hour later, seated in the great library, he spoke of it to Andrew Martin with the candor that characterized him.

"Yes, most people feel that way about it. I do myself, only none of us have ever said it like that. It's Blair's work — my daughter, you know, Mr. Stone — the architect said he never saw such a head for building on a woman."

"Indeed," said Stone aloud. To himself he said, "I might have known."

"You have a great way of saying things, Mr. Stone — in fact I might say a most strong and — persuasive way. I suppose you have been told that before? I expect it has helped you in your — ah — your work. Now for my part I'm not very much on talk, I've been too busy all my life for that."

Stone smiled good-naturedly.

"Not but what a tongue is a gift — a great gift," went on the elder man hastily. "Why, you've almost persuaded me about the changes in the mill —" He broke off, conscious that the smile on Stone's face had faded and that he was regarding him anxiously.

"They are very necessary, sir."

"How do you know so much about my mills?"

An odd look crept for a moment into Stone's eyes.

"I am a member of a board of investigation as to the sanitary and safety conditions of the mills in New England

"It strikes [illegible] you see and know more than the usual investigator," said Andrew Martin shrewdly.

"Perhaps I do my work a little more thoroughly."

"Too damned thorough — I beg your pardon — for the owners to altogether relish. It's a good thing for us you are not one of the inspectors."

"It might come a trifle hard on the owners, but it would mean a great deal to the working force." Stone spoke quickly.

Martin moved impatiently.

"There's a good deal of tommy-rot about the working forces. I've been one of the working forces all my life, sir. I'm one of the working forces now, and I always expect to be. I've served my apprenticeship at tougher labor than you ever tried."

The odd look crept back into Stone's eyes.

"Then you doubtless know all your men — all their needs."

"Not at all. Not — at — all!" said Martin, and his manner was disconcerted. "I leave all that to the managers and the foremen now, and a pretty good lot I have, too. The output of the mills has been greater than ever before."

"Then it would seem that I could not have suggested the improvements at a better time."

"I'm not so sure of that. What's the good of all the increased profits if you've got to put thousands back into the work again? The mills are good enough to stand on their own feet now, sir. That's what I say and that's what the inspector said last week. The official state inspector ought to know. He said nothing about the safety devices you seem to think so necessary, or the repairs in the engine room. I guess his word goes."

Stone rose wearily. The fruitlessness of his errand — and all that the failure meant — oppressed him. He picked up his hat.

Andrew Martin rose too, smiling genially.

"I like you," he said, "first rate, only I like you better than I do your views, and I admire your tongue."

Stone looked at him with anxious, tired eyes.

"I would prefer you to like me less and my views more," he answered.

The Scotchman winced a little.

"You'd better leave social conditions alone and enjoy your money," he said. "That's a job for any man."

"Yes," said Stone significantly, "that's a job for any man."

"Great heavens! — you've been left a fortune as big as the one it's taken me years to amass by work — *work*, sir. Make use of it in the right way."

"I am making use of it, Mr. Martin, in *my* way. Your work is your mills. Mine is — men."

"Just the same I could give you pointers on those men. I've never reduced, or closed down on them. They've always gotten their money promptly. I've never had a strike but once."

"No doubt, Mr. Martin. Yet that prompt pay has not always been enough to meet their needs. In sickness the pay has stopped — in death the families have been forgotten — is it not so?"

Stone's eyes compelled an answer.

"Have you been talking to my men — have they been complaining to you? As far as what you say is concerned, I don't know. I leave such details to the managers. They are tried and trusted men, Mr. Stone, and I have had no cause to complain of the way my business has been conducted." There was a note of warning and of finality in the Scotchman's voice.

Stone bowed.

"I understand, Mr. Martin. Good day."

"Good-bye -- good-bye. As I said before, I like you, but not your views. If you could come again — dine with us, perhaps, and meet my daughter — but leave your views behind, we might get on better." The Scotchman's good humor had returned.

"Thank you, but my views and myself are one. I do not wantonly intrude them except where I feel I can help those less fortunate than myself."

Andrew Martin shook his head.

"You're following a beautiful bubble, young man, and by and by it will burst."

"It is not a bubble, Mr. Martin, it is rather a part of a vast avalanche that gathers strength with every effort. Some day the avalanche will crush those beneath, as some day the boiler in mill fifteen will burst — as some day men will be crushed and injured for lack of safety devices on the machinery on the third floor. The inspector will not escape."

The Scotchman's face flushed hotly.

"I'm not used to threats. Still, I like you. Will you come again?"

Stone smiled a little.

"Would it do any good?"

"You'll never make me change my mind, if that's what you mean. I fancy I know more about the mills than you do — however close and thorough your inspection. I fancy the managers who have run things for years to my satisfaction, know still more. If you'd come now and talk cars with me — I'm in the market for a new one, and I see you are a good judge of cars at least — I'd be glad to see you and have you meet my daughter."

"I have met Miss Martin."

"You have met Blair? She never told me."

"She probably does not remember me. It was at that wonderful charity bazaar given at Mrs. Weston-Smith's."

"Oh, I remember. A very fine affair I believe it was. Didn't have time to go myself. I rarely do. To tell you the truth. I don't care much for those things — neither does Blair, but I make her go. Mrs. Weston-Smith has been very kind to my daughter. I admire Mrs. Weston-Smith very much — a fine woman."

"Your daughter has been kind to Mrs. Weston-Smith," said Stone significantly.

The Scotchman laughed, pleased, and quick to catch the inference.

"There isn't any one better than Blair," he said. "She's the image of her mother and like her in many ways. I've given her all I could, but it's been her mother that left her the blood, Mr. Stone — and the breeding I've been too busy to learn."

The Scotchman turned abruptly and looked out of the window toward the Spanish courtyard where Stone's car still stood. He seemed to see neither the courtyard nor the car.

Stone broke the silence.

"Good-bye," he said, but his voice was kinder than it was before. "Perhaps some day I will come to the Anchorage again."

The Scotchman watched him as he got into the car and went off down the winding driveway.

Then he went back to the library and his easy chair and his electric fan and sat down to think. By and by he rang a bell, and when the silent butler appeared in the doorway he ordered a Scotch and soda.

"I didn't even offer him a drink," he thought, as he sipped it slowly and with relish. "He was altogether a rather upsetting young man. Yet he doesn't look so young either, and his face shows trouble. Now what on earth could trouble a healthy man under forty, and a millionaire at that? Probably never did a stroke of work in his life either, with his big car and his immaculate dress. Wonder what happened to his hands! They're rough-looking for a man of leisure. Wonder how he knows so much about my mills! Guess Jenkins knows more, though. Perhaps Jenkins has had my interests a bit too much at heart — perhaps. That's nonsense, though. The mills were never more prosperous or the men more contented. Jenkins told the inspector so last week. . . . I wonder how the wives and bairns *do* get along, though, when the men are sick or — dead. . . . And I wonder why that young man didn't shake my hand."

III.

IN July Hannah, Miss Martin's faithful maid, packed innumerable trunks and followed her mistress to Bar Harbor, where she had gone to visit an old school friend. Blair had been loath to go, for some reason other than leaving him, Andrew Martin shrewdly guessed, but just what that reason was he had been unable to find out. He knew a good deal more about mills than about women — indeed he had never understood women very well, not even the dark-eyed, soft-voiced woman from the far South he had married years ago when they were both penniless, — but a certain instinct he had inherited from his own country and its people, told him that his daughter had grown unnaturally quiet; had often seemed distracted and preoccupied when he had tried to interest her in his new plans and projects, and took little interest in what went on around her. So when the invitation came one morning and she had shown it with an indifferent smile to her father, the Scotchman had jumped at it as the solution to the trouble, had peremptorily insisted on her going, and had, in spite of remonstrances, written her a check of four figures, over and above her allowance, to be spent on new clothes.

"I'm a blind old fool — it's only change she needs," he told himself late one afternoon on returning to the great house after seeing her off. "Eight weeks with those of her own age will set her on her feet again. It's hard to remember she needs some one besides myself to talk to every day, but my, how still the house seems! Suspect I'll have to get used to it — Blair'll be marrying some day and leaving me in earnest." And Martin smiled grimly to himself as he sat down in lonely state to a long course dinner in the big wainscoted dining-room hung with fine tapestries and flanked by two butlers to heed his every want. He remembered suddenly and quite irrelevantly a humble one he had known eight and twenty years before, and how a frail sweet-eyed woman with a voice like liquid music had served him with broiled mackerel and corn pone. He remembered it quite well. It was the night before Blair had been born.

He rose suddenly from the half touched entrée with a strange taste and a stranger name, left his Madeira untouched and walked out into the summer night.

Once he stopped in his pacing to and fro and thought of ordering out the car and driving over to Mrs. Weston-Smith's, who had decided not to open her Lenox house that season. Then he shook his head.

"I don't know what I want," he said with an indecision foreign to him. "Wonder what's become of that fellow Stone. I'll ring him up and ask him to come to a bachelor dinner to-morrow night. I'll never agree with him, but that rather adds interest to the game."

Stone had accepted with alacrity after first making sure, for some odd reason, that the Scotchman's daughter was away, and that dinner was the forerunner of many others that he ate at Andrew Martin's home during the weeks before Blair Martin returned. Sometimes Martin had asked Stone to spend an afternoon with him and take a run down to the North Shore in the car, but Stone always pleaded an excuse of something else to do with a geniality that made offense impossible. He always kept his dinner appointments of half past seven punctually at the Anchorage, which pleased Martin's business sense, and he was always faultlessly dressed and generally drove himself in his dark colored car. There he would sip the Scotchman's wine and let the Scotchman talk until he grew weary of his own voice, or deftly draw him into an argument in which the Scotchman, worsted, would take refuge behind a quantity of worn platitudes, hoping they would make up for Stone's quality of reasoning. For the most part they were good-natured bouts of the tongue, for Stone never allowed himself to forget that the Scotchman was his host, or that there was much to gain in Martin's final acceptance of his views. He talked, he argued, he ridiculed, he cajoled with an outward calm and patience that perfectly concealed the inner anxiety and weariness of failure that he often felt; and

Martin grew to look for his comings with an eagerness of which he himself was only barely conscious, and through the day to go over with himself Stone's line of reasoning in order to find the weak points in his own defense.

Stone interested him. There was much about him that puzzled the Scotchman, and an enigma held a certain charm for Martin, be it a mill proposition or a man. His own experience with life taught him to know the lines of anxiety and care when he met with them in other men, and while he rarely sought to analyze the cause, or thought of offering help, he found his curiosity aroused. He knew a good argument when he heard it even while he strenuously defended the other side, and from the lowlands of his somewhat irascible temper he viewed the heights of Stone's control with interest and with envy. One by one, through those dinners and in the long talks in the grounds afterwards over their Havanas, he started to put the pieces of the enigma together until he became engrossed in the task. His conclusions — more or less correct — left him dissatisfied with himself, for while many of the pieces matched, the keynote of the picture seemed always lacking. He thought much about the keynote away from Stone and while with him, and from the dim recesses of his active brain, he connected it in some way with the odd appearance of Stone's hands. He found himself regarding them first curiously, then intently, and always he felt that in them lay much of the solution to this man's life and past.

Once, in a carefully framed speech of apparent unconcern, he laughingly alluded to them, and wondered how Stone would take the personality.

Stone laid down his cigar and stretched both his hands before him, fingers spread. Then he slowly turned them and regarded them, palms uppermost, so long that Andrew Martin broke the oppressive silence with a short, nervous laugh. At the sound Stone dropped his hands and quietly resumed his cigar. Then he looked into Andrew Martin's eyes and smiled inscrutably. The Scotchman waited for him to speak, but he did not, and by and by the smile got on Martin's iron nerve. He never ventured a personality again.

In thinking of Stone he never cared to remember the incident, nor did he mention it in his infrequent letters to his daughter. The letters, when they did reach her, were mostly filled with accounts of Stone, and sometimes the accounts were irritable and sometimes sarcastic. There was in them open and frank curiosity, but always respect, and an interest, the extent of which Martin himself did not realize.

He would have been oddly diverted could he have guessed just how eagerly Blair watched for letters that she usually found so brief and dry and full of business plans. He rarely mentioned or quoted Stone's views; he studiously avoided any mention of mill fifteen or the safety devices Stone talked of for the third-floor machinery; and thereby he unconsciously gave his daughter that which she then most longed for — a picture of the man himself. She too took to building puzzles, and the odd bits dropped by her father's letters fitted in a wonderful way into an outline drawn by herself from her brief knowledge of him. Instinct added to the bits that were making up the picture — and a strange reticence concerning him whenever she heard his name mentioned, and her own slow heart-beats when she thought of him, helped to make the crooked bits fit better.

At the end of August her father wrote her again. It was a bulky letter, written in an unformed hand, but one of strength, and she took it out upon the rocks at sunset to read alone.

"Stone is all right," it ran towards the close, "but I'm counting the days until I get you back again. Heaven knows what I'll ever do without you, Lassie, when the right man comes along. Stone has helped the loneliness wonderfully, but he'll never convert me to his views, which are socialistic and barbaric. I shall be curious to see what you think of him. I have a pretty good opinion of your judgment of men and women, although why you don't take more to Mrs. Weston-Smith puzzles me. When you come home and get to know Mr. Stone better, as I hope you will — "

Blair Martin stopped in her reading, folded up the unfinished letter and put it back in its envelope, and stared out across the bay to the woods and mountains beyond. Then it was that a peace not wholly of the sunset hour crept over her, and she closed her eyes and for a moment laid the traveled paper to her cheek.

"When I go home and get to know him better —" she murmured, not questioning the awakening from her dream.

IV.

THE day had been one of intolerable heat. It had left its blighting mark everywhere. In the dust of the city thoroughfares men and women walked inertly beneath the burden of its sting, and the city children paddled their scorched feet in the water from a leaking main, their pale, pinched faces smiling with relief. Out through the well-kept country roads that were the Commonwealth's pride, oil had laid the dust but could not touch to brightness again the drooping half-parched boughs that bent and tried to give shade to the wilting wayside flowers which Stone noticed as he passed in his big car.

"All a type of the same great humanity," he mused, driving slowly from sheer fatigue, "the working men and women on the city streets — like these suffering trees — taking the burden of the heat and giving us with our millions the shade; the flowers — withering and yet smiling gratefully — God knows for what — like the children playing by the water-main."

The weariness, the disappointment, the discouragement of years was in his eyes. The remembrance of the day lay upon him like a pall. He looked down at his perfectly fitting clothes, his immaculate linen, fresh and new, at the great car he drove, and then at his stained and blackened hands, and he smiled grimly.

He had been on the point of telephoning Andrew Martin that he could not come that night, and then he remembered Martin's loneliness — and what a last effort for his cause would mean, although the hopelessness of the latter lay heavily on him now — and he had returned to his apartments, as perfect in their way as were his clothes or car, where the man who had served him for years, close-mouthed and watchful-eyed, had laid out all his things in readiness. There were other reasons that had decided him to come to-night. The Scotchman's daughter was expected back the next day. He would not be coming to the Anchorage now with the same freedom as of old. After all — he had failed in his quest for the men. Did anything else matter, he wondered, remembering Blair Martin's eyes.

He turned in at the big gate and drove slowly up the driveway with the stretches of woodland on either side until he came within sight of the house. He recalled the first time he had come here, and he sometimes wondered why the scene was ever newly pleasing to his eyes. To-day he looked for no one, knowing that Andrew Martin was always to be found at such an hour in the great library, and that the mistress was away. He drove slowly up the driveway the better to drink in the peaceful beauty of the scene. To the right, up in the soft sky over the garden, hung the faint outline of a young moon.

Near by a great mimosa tree stood out in bloom, and the pale faces of moon-flowers, shining out against the deeper tone of the green leaves, covered a quaint pergola-shaped arbor leading to the garden.

He entered the courtyard and the big car made no noise. He was dimly conscious of her presence before he saw her. She was seated in a low wicker chair, an unopened book lying idly in her lap. Her elbow was resting on the arm of the chair and her chin was in her hand. So deep was her revery that she did not even hear him descend, and it was not until he was close to her that she looked up.

She rose suddenly, the book falling to the ground. Her summer gown, exquisitely wrought, of sheerest fabric, fell about her in soft folds. No added color betrayed emotion or surprise, but he saw as in a trance the white throat throbbing above the square-necked dress, and a fleeting wonder sweep through her eyes. She came towards him, one hand outstretched, and the voice in which she spoke was the voice in which her mother, years ago, had welcomed Andrew Martin.

"You!" she said quite simply.

"I did not expect to see you to-night, Miss Martin. You were not due until to-morrow — at least that is what I understood your father to tell me the last time I came."

She gave a low, amused laugh.

"That need not worry or alarm you. I shall not interfere with your long business talk. But unless you want to go into the library alone and amuse yourself, you'll have to put up with my company for a little while. Dinner is not for another hour and father is late."

"Your first night home!"

"Oh, I've seen him. He met me at the train. He forgot to tell me that you were coming to-night — but he did say that he might be detained." She stopped a moment and frowned a little. "He works very hard, I think."

"There are many men who do, Miss Martin."

"I suppose so. Do you want to go into the library alone or stay out here with me?"

"What could I answer to that?" a little more gravely than her bantering speech had called for, "I suppose I must say here, if I want to speak the truth."

"Then come and sit down and watch the daylight fade. Or would you rather go into the garden for a little while?"

"Let us sit here."

She leaned back in her low chair, while he picked up the forgotten book for her, before taking a chair himself.

"Some friends of mine were coming on the Portland boat last night, so I decided to come earlier. My father seemed glad to see me. I fear it has been rather lonely for him in my absence. Your visits have been a great pleasure to him, Mr. Stone."

"Say rather a diversion," said Stone, with a slow smile.

"It's strange how you two get on together at all," said Blair Martin thoughtfully. "It's a case of extremes, I suppose. He wrote me once that your views of life were socialistic and barbaric."

"Did he indeed?"

She suddenly resumed the old thoughtful position he had seen on entering the courtyard, and she looked at him with wide, earnest eyes.

"Do you know, Mr. Stone, it all rather interests me — your views, I mean. I've never known any one before that was both socialistic and — barbaric."

"Do you want to know anything so strange and crude?" he asked in a low voice.

She did not answer at once, and took to twisting the sapphire ring she wore — a habit of hers when preoccupied.

"I am not quite sure. I have only heard of such things vaguely. They have never meant anything to me but mobs, violence and disorder, but I suppose there is another side."

He leaned forward eagerly.

"There is another side, Miss Martin."

"So I suppose — yet from the point of view we hold — we who have the money —" she broke off.

"That is not the point of view of all who have money, Miss Martin," he replied, significantly.

She flushed a little.

"I know," she said, "that you have great wealth, too, and yet your views are different. I think it is that fact that interests me in your work. You live as we do — and you seem to think like them."

He leaned forward in his chair and stretched out his hands as he had done one night in the big library with Andrew Martin, but to-night the look in his eyes was different.

"I do not always live 'like folks,'" he said, his grave smile returning. "I could not altogether feel for them as I do unless —" He broke off and he stretched out one hand across the space that separated them for her to see. For a moment she regarded it in silence — its roughened texture, its blunted finger ends, its stained and darkened hue, a slow wonder growing in her eyes.

"You — work — with — them?" she breathed.

"For months at a time, Miss Martin."

"But why?"

"Can we learn the lay of a country — the flora and the fauna — something more than maps and guide-books can give us — how the natives dress and live and why — the language that they speak, unless we go there and see it for ourselves and learn the language, too?"

She shook her head slowly.

"I never thought," she said.

"So few do, Miss Martin — I mean those like us with millions. I did not think myself until one day a friend of mine — a young physician — took me with him on his rounds. His practice was not a fashionable one. His pay consisted mostly of blessings — sometimes curses. I saw a dying cripple give his last crust to a starving child —"

She sat quite still, looking at him. Her face was very white.

"Are such things really true?"

"Do you want to see for yourself?" he asked.

"I am not sure. The thought frightens me a little. It seems as though I could never be happy again if — if I saw a thing like that."

"You will learn to be happy."

"Will I? — I suppose you know."

"Some day, if you want to, I will give you a letter to a friend of mine — a woman. She lives among them. She has given up her life to them. She will teach you, if you really care to learn — slowly, and not more than you can bear at a time." He was watching her closely.

A faint color crept into her cheeks. She did not question nor understand the dim resentment she suddenly felt towards this other woman.

"Perhaps. Could she teach me more than — you?" she asked a little shyly.

He rose quickly. Could he teach her? If he only might!

"I am not sure. Perhaps in some ways she knows more about them than I do. Her woman's intuition often discerns things where I fail. And I — I am busy most of the day," he looked down with a slight smile at his discolored hands.

She saw the smile — the look. Again she wished he had not mentioned this co-worker. What could the lives of those she knew — her own life — hold of interest to him when there lived women like the one of whom he spoke?

"I forgot. Your hours are long?"

"Not so long for one looking for experience — who can give it up at any time — although, strong as I am, I get very tired sometimes — but very long for the others who know they cannot rest for a day, an hour, for fear of want to others. Then I have thought as I watched them that their fatigue must sometimes become an agony that only death can end."

"Where do you work?" she questioned.

"In some mills, Miss Martin," he answered.

Something in his voice forbade further questioning. She was silent.

"I do not go by my own name, of course. I am registered on the books as one Joe Blackburn. The men call me Joe Blackie. Not altogether so incongruous." He laughed a little.

The laugh jarred on her.

"How can you jest! Yet surely they must see and feel and know — the difference, the difference between you and themselves."

"Perhaps, but some of them have seen before the strange phenomenon of a gentleman forced to work — his money gone; or of a man having to begin at the bottom and working upward by sheer force of will."

"That's what my father did," she said, lifting her head a little, "I am very proud of my father."

"One of the best fellows I ever knew," he went on, apparently not hearing her remark, "was a man born to the best of everything. The crash came and found him, as it finds so many rich men's sons, unprepared for any real work in life, and because he was too much of a man to live by debt he drove a milk wagon for four years — until he could start a dairy of his own."

"You live in a very different world from mine, Mr. Stone," she said, rising from her chair. "I shall always remember that. I must tell the housekeeper to be very careful how she addresses the tradespeople after this." A faint smile crept around her mouth. "I cannot think what is detaining my father. Shall we walk out in the grounds for a little while? And tell me — the name of this friend who is to show me things I have never dreamed existed except in the brains of madmen and socialists and the writers of sensational books?"

He followed her out of the courtyard into the wide grounds beyond, and they crossed the lawn together.

"Her name is as simple as her life — almost as plain as her face — Miss Smith — Georgiana Smith." He smiled as at a remembrance that made him glad. She had glanced once into his face. Then with lips that went suddenly white she looked away.

"She is unmarried?"

Her voice was a monotone.

"Yes, and always will be," he said gently. "Some one told me once about her life — one who had known her always. She and happiness passed each other on the road, but she never called 'quits,' and when you see her you will understand how, further on, she found peace waiting for her at the turn."

Blair Martin clasped and unclasped her fingers tightly in the falling dusk.

"O-h!" she breathed with the hushed pity one will show for something hurt. And then the pity slowly died from her eyes and something else crept there instead — a look of which she was not aware.

"Let me go to her."

"I will," he answered.

Hurried footsteps came to them from the driveway. Instinctively both turned.

Brewster, the butler, was coming hastily towards them. When he was close to them he stopped and stood waiting.

"Well, Brewster?"

"If you please, Miss Martin," said Brewster, very much flushed from his hasty search for them, "there's a telephone message from your father. He says he's been detained so late, he's dining in town with Mr. Jenkins. He says please not to wait dinner for him, and for Mr. Stone to be sure and stay. He's something very important to talk over with him when he gets back. That's all, Miss Martin."

"Very well, Brewster. You may go."

After he was out of hearing she turned to Stone.

"You heard?"

"Perfectly."

"Do you —want to stay?"

He looked at her quite steadily.

"Do you want me to stay?" he asked.

"Is it what I want?" she asked evasively. "My father will be disappointed to come and find you gone. It is — it must be past the dinner hour now. You must be hungry."

"That is kind of you to think of me — perhaps I am. I have worked pretty hard to-day."

But later, at the table, he only played with his dinner, and he wondered why she scarcely touched her own. Odd thoughts, strangely unattached to the courses laid out before them one by one, beset him. Who could care for a transparent soup when from the shadows of the lighted candles in their great silver sconces, her eyes shone out, veiled and shining, at the table's head? While the butlers with deft hands and silent feet brought and carried the courses that they scarcely tasted, he talked the small talk of the hour; and Georgiana Smith, living in the settlement house, and the cripple and the starving child receded into the shadows of memory, as the objects without the arc of the candle's light were lost in the far dim corners of the room. And yet beneath the small talk, like the faint wind that cannot stir the great depths, his inner thoughts flowed on. She became part and parcel of that room to him, and he never entered it again without seeing her there as he saw her now — leaning back in the great carved chair of blackened oak, her arm lying on the chair's arm, white and still — those veiled wistful shadows in her eyes — her exquisite gown shining in the light and lying in soft folds at her feet. Like a lost mariner who for a moment, at sight of some enchanted isle, forgets the perils and fatigue, the thirst and hunger of the days gone — of those ahead — so he sat and looked and thought of her, for a brief time unmindful that he was drifting towards harm.

For her neither time nor place existed. As in a dream she listened to his voice, replied to his questions, laughed at some light remark, mechanically by a word or nod communicated with the servants in the room.

After the fruit had been passed — which they both refused — she pushed back her chair and rose.

"In summer we always have the coffee on the terrace," she said simply, "or do you prefer it here?"

"I have always had it on the terrace," he said, rising too. "It is too perfect a night to stay indoors. May I get a wrap for you?"

"I do not think I need one."

"You had better."

Her heart beat wildly at the simple words. Was it only a formality or did he care if she were cold?

She led the way to the terrace, stopping to gather from the hall settle a soft silk shawl which she threw around her shoulders. Together they stepped out upon the terrace, where, in a low wicker chair, she sat down.

"How still the night is," he said; "how far off the stars!"

She leaned back, looking up to the night skies.

It was quite dark now except for the starlight and the young moon that hung above the garden like a celestial lamp.

She did not answer him. To herself she said, "How sweet the night is and how bright the stars."

In an abstracted way she shook her head when Brewster passed the coffee on a silver tray, watching Stone as he took his cup in silence. He was still standing, and he looked upon the fragile bit of Minton for a moment with unseeing eyes. Was anything quite real? Was the garish day, with all its labor and distress and heat, a dream — was this the reality — this?

She did not speak as he slowly drank the coffee and put the cup down on a wicker table near by.

"May I smoke?"

"Of course."

He drew a cigar-case out of his pocket. In the light streaming out to them from the great hall, she could see that it was of lizard skin with a fine binding of gold, his initials in one corner. His individuality was stamped upon it as clearly as the letters. There was nothing out of place in it to her — no remembrance just then of the discolored hands that touched it, or of Joe Blackie. Other men had smoked in her presence before from cigar-cases that had probably cost double what his did. Yet she had not even noticed them. It is probable that if Joe Blackburn in his coarse jeans had stood before her then, she would have taken his rough clothes and tattered hat and cigarette much as she was taking the cigar-case bound in gold — as a matter of course. Wealth and position were as things apart. His face — his voice were the only really prominent things to her.

The faint flare of the match gave an added color to his face as he lighted his cigar slowly. He drew on it a moment, then regarded its lighted end with feigned interest and put it back in his mouth. He smoked but seldom. To-night he was conscious that he needed the stimulant and the comfort of a cigar.

He paced up and down in front of her in silence, and in silence she watched him. The things of speech seemed far away — as far away as the stars in the night sky.

By and by he stopped before her.

"Your father will be here soon. Will you entertain me just a little longer — will you come into the garden with me? I can see it from here — I can smell the roses. The moon-flowers are in bloom, and the mimosa tree — how pink it is!"

"The mimosa tree came from my mother's home in the far south. It seems a part of her."

"Beautiful! How have you ever raised it here?"

"Under glass at first. Thomas's care did much — the love my father and I gave it — more." She smiled faintly. To-night even her grief for her mother was lulled to rest. Had not her father first seen her mother under a mimosa tree?

Then his voice came to her.

"Will you come?"

She rose as one still in a dream, and as in a dream she followed him, and she never paused to wonder that he, here in her own home, was leading and directing her.

Stiller than the hush of sunrise, the night lay above, around them, and stiller than the night were their mute lips. Once he paused and leaned down to free her dress carefully from the thorns of a rose-bush growing by the path. She looked down at his bent head and her eyes grew darker and deeper than the night. After a while they began to walk again. Once she shivered and drew the shawl a little closer.

"You are cold?"

She shook her head. Would she ever be cold again, she wondered.

He turned toward the house. How like her face were the moon-flowers they had left!

The sudden sound of heavy wheels and an automobile horn broke discordantly upon their senses.

"It is my father," she said.

Under the mimosa tree they paused. The thick shade hid his ashen face — his deep-set eyes. He spoke as a man speaks who has suddenly awakened.

"You will say nothing to any one about Joe Blackie? Only a very few know the real truth."

"I will not betray you," she said very gently, wondering what made his voice so strange.

The words cut him as a sudden thrust cuts — sharp and deep.

"I can trust you always," he said, and then as by a mute consent he turned and left her beneath the mimosa tree, and made his way slowly towards the house.

For a little while she stood where he had left her, looking out on the garden, and then up to the far-off worlds in space. She had never known before all that beauty stood for, and she knew it to-night as she never would again.

By and by she crept into the house, the soft white shawl about her, her hands clasped against her breast. She walked as one might walk who bears an alabaster vase of priceless ointment — as though one misstep or any undue haste might shatter the treasure at her feet. . . . She went the length of the great hall, passing the library, from where she heard his voice. She smiled. Then she mounted the big staircase, and still smiling she reached her room. She did not turn on the lights but crossed the space to the window and sat looking over the garden again and waited to see his car go down the long driveway.

How long she was there she did not know. For her, time no longer existed. By and by her ears, acutely keen, heard her father's footsteps and his descend into the courtyard. Then there came to her their voices in parting — she was conscious of only his — and then the sound of his car as it emerged and started down the driveway.

Stone, his hand on the steering-wheel, looked neither to the right nor the left. The breath of the late roses from the garden came to him upon the night's breeze and turned him sick. Could he ever see or smell a rose again, he wondered.

Once past the entrance gates and out on the main road he slowed down and looked up at the white cold stars. How fearfully cold they were, he thought, — how infinitely far away.

"My God!" he said. Then more slowly, "Oh — my — God!"

And up in her room, Blair Martin stood by the window before she drew the white curtains to, looking out on the garden where stood the mimosa tree and where the moon-flowers cast their shade.

V.

THE summer sun rose warm and bright and lay in patches on the lawn shaded by the trees. A soft breeze stirred their branches and played among the flowers in the garden where Thomas worked uninterrupted by his mistress.

At ten, Andrew Martin drove off to the mills in his car. At one, the maid brought his daughter a lunch in her room on a big silver tray, which she allowed to be carried off half an hour later, untouched. As the sun began to sink and the shadows to creep over the garden and the lawn, she dressed herself for the evening and went downstairs. All day she had kept her room, living in the dream of the night before and watching the turn in the long carriage drive from her window. Once she glanced from the west window towards the garden. She would go into the garden again — with him — when he came. At five she heard her father returning and went to meet him. It might be that he had picked up some friend and brought him out to dinner; but her father descended from the automobile alone, and had he not been so preoccupied with thoughts of business he would have been struck with a new look in her face.

At half after seven they went into the big dining-room and sat down. She had never noticed before how big and lonely it was, and she began to shiver in spite of the warm evening, and sent Brewster for a shawl. He brought her the white silk one from the settle in the hall and she trembled as she put it around her. It helped her, though, as a human touch helps when one is in need.

Later, Brewster brought the coffee out on the terrace, and she sat by her father, not heeding what he said and looking far off toward the driveway. After a while the Scotchman rose and went into the library, where he sat down to smoke and read the papers. Now and then as he turned the pages he paused to wonder what made Blair's face so white. For a while she sat with him and then crossed the hall to the music room, where she took her violin from its case and abstractedly drew the bow across the strings. One low sweet tone came forth from the inanimate thing like a human call. It startled her and she put the instrument back and closed the lid. She could not play to-night. She could not go into the garden. She turned off the lights and stood in the darkness by the window. It seemed to her that all day, and now, she could do nothing but watch the driveway and its turn.

The night passed — she knew not how — and day succeeded day and night succeeded night, and a whole week passed and still Stone did not come. The week slipped into two and the two weeks into a month. September came and brought cooler days and nights, and from her west window she watched the moon rise to its full, then wane. Some of the trees began to turn their leaves, and in the garden, in spite of the able care of Thomas and his assistants, the moon-flowers and the roses drooped and faded.

She never questioned her father as to his whereabouts — exactly why, she did not know. One night in October the Scotchman looked over his glasses at his daughter as he laid his paper [illegible] with the remark:

“Did I tell you — Stone went away last [illegible]

He watched her closely and she was conscious of the glance. After a little she picked up [illegible] fancy work lying idly in her lap and commenced slowly to sew.

“Is that so? Where did he go?”

“How should I know?” said the Scotchman, a little shortly. He had noticed that Clair's hands were trembling in [illegible] of [illegible] quiet [illegible] “We had a disagreement when he was here [illegible] — [illegible] nothing serious,” he added hastily, [illegible] his daughter looked up in surprise, “only I could [illegible] agree with him in [illegible] some of his views [illegible] I never will. He's a socialist and barbarian, as I've said before — and that's [illegible] about it.”

She [illegible] What could she say and hide her secret still?

“He's visionary [illegible] unpractical, as they all are,” went on the Scotchman irritably: “think they can tell us, men double their age, with five times their experience, how to run our jobs, and all the time they dress immaculately and drive expensive cars."

She opened her lips in quick defense, remembering the discolored hands. Then she shut them again and went on with her work.

"It's ridiculous — that's what it is — and it puts me out of all patience."

Some personal note in her father's voice arrested her. She put her work down in her lap and looked at him from across the library table.

"Has he said anything about the mills?"

Martin picked up his paper suddenly. He was acutely conscious that his daughter was looking at him and waiting for an answer.

"Oh, he talked a lot of rot he knew nothing about. Don't worry your pretty head over it, my dear."

She said no more and he was grateful. Blair had an uncomfortable way sometimes of plying one with questions. He sighed a little in relief as he turned to the political news, and by and by, when she left him to practise for a while, he thought she had forgotten.

She did not pay much attention to the exercises that evening, and for the first time in weeks was absorbed in something other than Stone's comings and goings. She had not questioned her father further for two reasons. Experience had taught her no information could be extracted from him in such a mood, and again she had no desire to have him learn by long discussion just what was in her heart.

But she pondered over his remarks to the exclusion of her music, and she was still thinking of them when, at half past ten, she went upstairs to bed.

In the big library Martin laid his thoroughly read paper down, and replaced his glasses in their case. He sat for a long while staring straight ahead of him. In the last month, in the stress of increased activities at the mills, he had almost forgotten Stone until to-day he had seen in the papers an item as to his return. He had not shown it to his daughter for various reasons. He was trying to fit the pieces together in the enigma once more — a task that he had for a while abandoned. He was remembering his daughter's face as it had looked to-night, and how white it was. With an impatient gesture he rose quickly.

"Damn that man," he said.

VI.

ONE morning towards the end of October, Blair Martin came down the steps of the Conservatory, violin-case in hand, and crossed the pavement where her roadster stood by the curb. Two or three of the other pupils, shabbily enough dressed, nudged each other as she passed in her plain well-fitting tailor suit. Two small boys of the streets were standing by the car talking in earnest voices. They jumped quickly to one side as she came towards them and stowed the violin case under the seat, and then proceeded to tie on her big blue veil. She had not heeded the other students on the steps, but something in these children's faces arrested her attention.

"Want me to crank up, Miss?" asked the eldest.

The younger pulled at his coat.

"Say, there! Leave de lady alone."

Blair Martin looked toward the first speaker.

"Do you know how?" she asked.

"Sure I do. Give me a try?"

The eagerness — the pride was unmistakable. Blair Martin smiled.

"All right. Go ahead," she said.

The boy went to his task with a will, his companion and Miss Martin watching him with varying emotions. How shabby his shoes were — how thin his coat — how rough his hands — something like — like Hector Stone's hands.

The engine began its familiar pulsing tune and Miss Martin started to step into the car. A fee was in her hand. Then she saw the other boy — the smaller of the two. If possible he was shabbier than his companion and there was a look in his eyes she had once remembered seeing in those of Ajax, her prize St. Bernard, when he had been stolen and had not been recovered for a week. She remembered hearing Brewster say he had been — starved.

With a sudden impulse she turned to the two children.

"Want a ride?"

They glanced at each other, a queer look slowly spreading over their faces. Then the eldest gave a nervous laugh.

"A-h — quit kiddin' us," he said.

Something in his twitching lips belied the bravado of his words.

"I'm not fooling — indeed I'm not," said Miss Martin. She was hardly aware herself how earnest was her voice.

They looked at each other again. Then with a defiant shake of the shoulders the eldest stepped in and took the seat beside her.

The smaller boy watched his companion half fearfully, then he hopped into the rumble and Miss Martin let in the clutch and started.

In silence they passed the Children's Hospital on the corner, some of the little patients watching them curiously from their wheel-chairs on the black iron porches. Miss Martin glanced away as they passed. She had always given liberally to the children's cause on the first of the year, and on Christmas Eve she had gone there and distributed a big basketful of toys. At Easter she had sent ice-cream and oranges and gone herself in the afternoon to see that no one was forgotten, but it seemed to her she had never known what the children's cause might mean in all its entirety until to-day. She turned a corner carefully, remembering the boy in the rumble, and then, as block after block they left the city streets behind, she let the car out to greater speed, but her thoughts ran faster still. So engrossed was she with them that she was not aware she had not spoken since the ride began, and it never occurred to the children to break the silence.

By and by she was aroused by seeing the boy beside her lean forward intently and look down the long winding suburban road in front of him.

"What is it?" she asked. "What do you see?"

He looked at her, a quizzical smile breaking over his face.

"I 'spect it ain't anything wonderful to you, but gee — them houses and them trees!"

She stared a little. Was it possible he was in earnest? And she had seen those houses and those trees nearly all her life.

"Are you brothers?" she asked irrelevantly.

"Naw" — apparently surprised at her lack of discernment. "Tim's just my pal — even if he is little — that's all."

"So you're just friends. Good friends are pretty nice things to have."

"You bet yer life." Then hesitatingly, "Do you care if I chew gum?"

"Why — why, I suppose not, but we can't get any around here."

"Oh, me and Tim picked some up on the street while we was watching de car." And the boy beside her took something out of his pocket and put it in his mouth. She was conscious that Tim, behind her, was following his example. She slowed down a little, a sick feeling in her stomach.

"How old are you?" she asked, keeping her eyes rigidly in front of her.

"I'm eight — my name's Chris. It's really Christopher Columbus, you know, but I don't let de gang know — 'cept Tim, of course — dey'd guy me. Tim's six," and Chris settled further down in his seat and began to munch on his gum in earnest. His attitude and face suggested that he did not wish to be further disturbed. Still Tim in the rumble said nothing, but he could have told you the exact shade of Miss Martin's veil and how many hat-pins were hidden beneath it.

Miss Martin turned to him suddenly — so suddenly that Tim, who had been counting the polka dots on the two neat quills of her hat, jumped and nearly lost his balance.

"Take care, Sonny."

Tim smiled tremulously. It seemed to Miss Martin she had never seen a smile like that on a child's face — certainly she had never seen the children of her friends smile so. It lighted up the pinched face as a ray of sunlight lights up the grayness of a cloud. She could not meet his eyes.

"A little way from here there is a drug store. How would you and Chris like to have some soda water?" She mentioned them both, but she was thinking just then of Tim. "Have you ever had any soda water?" she asked gently.

Tim carefully stuck his bit of gum to the side of his cheek by aid of his tongue. He gulped a little.

"Yes'm, — once," he said, "but — "

He hesitated.

"Yes?" she said kindly.

"If you don't care — maybe Chris wants the soda — but I'd — I'd rather have a wienerwurst sausage."

She met his eyes now.

"I — perhaps I don't quite understand — " she began, unwilling to admit a truth Tim's eyes had been forcing on her from the start.

"A-h, why don't yer tell de lady yer ain't had enough grub?" put in Chris curtly, and turning around in his seat to speak to Tim. "He don't mean ter be unthankful, Miss," he added in a milder voice to Blair Martin, "and I 'spect the fizz stuff'll taste crackin' fine by and by, but he's jest holler *now.*"

Miss Martin did not turn to him as he was speaking; she only kept her eyes on Tim, whose small pinched face suddenly became scarlet.

"Is that true?" she asked him. Her voice was the gentlest he had ever heard.

"I'm — I'm right — empty," he said.

That night, sitting by her window, she thought it all over, and something of what life was and meant came to her, and she awoke dimly to a knowledge of what Hector Stone was working for. Not until to-night, looking out over the garden where only a few chrysanthemums slept, had she permanently connected Stone's labor with his life. Not until to-night had the desire of sharing it with him come over her. At least, if he failed to come — if he had forgotten that summer night that had meant so much to her — this much was left, a sharing, although unknown to him — of his life and aims. Strange thoughts had crowded on her in those long hours since she had parted with the children — had seen the street whereon they lived. How could any one ever be glad again, she wondered, after seeing that, crush back the dumb resentment against the scheme of things? Did there exist a philosophy that had grounds for being, that could reconcile and weigh with a Justice without reason and beyond question? — Was there a Mercy working — evolving upward from the clod — in the street she had seen to-day?

She leaned forward in her chair, her forehead against the window-sill, and closed her eyes as one in pain. The October night wind sighed through the tree tops on the darkened lawn without, and she was unconscious that it was the only sound that broke the stillness except the dull heart throbs in her breast. Darker than the moonless-night skies was the sea whereon the frail bark of her faith was drifting, and every spar of Church or Creed she reached for, turned as rotten driftwood to her hands.

At midnight she was aroused by cold, and got up slowly, as one awakened from a stupor. A late cold moon was floating in the sky. She stood watching it as it sailed into a bank of clouds and emerged again. Some words of Hector Stone's came back to her.

" She will teach you if you really want to learn — slowly, and not more than you can bear at a time," he had said.

Could Georgiana Smith teach her, she wondered. Was she strong enough to bear more than the glimpse she had had to-day and still live in a world from which the very foundations were crumbling to their fall?

VII.

THE next three months passed for Blair Martin as a panorama passes — as something separate and distinct and apart from her own life. If there were ever moments when it wove itself about her own existence — the luxuries and the pleasures that she knew — she fought them away, and went dimly, dully on her way, observing — learning from Georgiana Smith, who in silent pity watched her, and in mercy only showed her such sights as she could bear. But later there came an hour — as Georgiana Smith had foreseen — when Blair Martin was no longer willing to be shielded, and where the elder woman would not send her, Blair Martin went herself, unasked. Once she stayed at the Settlement House for a week. There lived none that had a right to question her comings or her goings but her father, and her father was much too busy with matters at the mills to think of questioning his daughter when she announced one day that she was going to visit a friend for a week. It was perhaps Hannah alone who worried at the strange new look in Blair Martin's face — at her long absences — at the fatigue that bordered on prostration at her returns — and who with many misgivings packed the steamer trunk of simplest clothes, and at her mistress' orders left untouched the new and unworn gowns of fragile beauty that had only recently come from the dressmakers' hands.

If Blair Martin's face grew thinner in those days, she grew to learn that loss of flesh comes from many causes — not the least, from hunger. If her face was whiter and her eyes darker and more sad, she was instinctively conscious of the fact in other faces — men's and women's — and if her laugh came less often it was because she saw less to rejoice over in those months when she was learning — in those months when she waited in vain for a glimpse of Hector Stone.

By and by the sights, the smells, the sounds that had at first been an agony to her, seemed to merge into the panorama she was watching — to become its color and its life and tone. She spent a month in travel, in the great cities of her own coast and inland, and she came back to the Anchorage more still and sad. Christmas came and went, and for the first time since she was a child herself she failed to go to the Children's Hospital with toys, but sent Brewster and Hannah instead. Did not the children of those loathsome darkened places need her more than these? For the first time she failed to head with a liberal donation the subscription list in the church which she had once attended, and of which her father was a vestryman. How had she ever given such sums for the decoration of a church when there were countless homes which never knew a bed or chair? For the first time since she had grown to be a woman, her dressmakers waited in vain for her orders for opera dresses. How could she bring herself to show her own white throat and neck when at Hull House in Chicago she had looked upon the back of a Russian girl scarred with the lash of the Cossack soldiers, and in Milwaukee she had seen a man walk in the lock-step, serving out ten years because, when starving, he had stolen bread? For the first time she returned the gift of flowers — bought at a fabulous price — and sent her on the New Year for the past five years by a man she knew, a friend of her father's. Had she not learned how he had amassed his millions on the blood and sweat of others; had she not for ten almost intolerable minutes watched, unknown to him, the men he employed stripped to the waist before the glaring furnaces, watched them, enveloped in white steam and paralyzing heat, by the streams of molten iron, scarcely ceasing through the interminable hours; great shadowy forms of men working mechanically beneath the awful strain, no time to rest, no time to pause even to wipe away the sweat that ran in great streams across half-blistered flesh?

Stone she never saw. Of his movements, of his work in the slums, she sometimes heard either from Georgiana Smith or some of the other people she encountered. It was perhaps only Georgiana Smith who even knew of him as the man of money. To the others he was Joe Blackburn — Blackie. As she walked to and fro from one horror to another, either alone or with some other worker, she used at first to scan the faces of the men as they passed on their way to work or on their return from toil. By and by she ceased to look for him — for he never came — but the faces of the men she watched became a living book to her, and in those hurried glimpses she grew to learn the lines of tragedy — of dark crime and grim want and terrible despair.

But always, somewhere, shielded from all outward touch of harm, the remembrance of him lived with her, sleeping or awake.

VIII.

THE winter had set in early and it lasted late. Blair Martin had never known before what a cold winter meant. Wrapped in her great furs and driving her own sleigh, to return to warmth and luxury, light and food, winter had held no terror for her in spite of her mother's blood. But for the first time — it was the first time in so many things — she saw winter as it could be — stripped of its beauty — she saw it as the poor see it, as something grim, foreboding and walking in the van of Death. It was then that the helplessness of things came over her. There was so much want, and the money — it would not go everywhere. She grew then to know at once the power of money and its limitations, and she knew that the answer to the problem could not, and never would find its solution even in vast piles of divided wealth.

Georgiana Smith watched her — in silence still — knowing that words were useless at this stage, and knowing, too, by suffering and the experience of many years, that for Blair Martin the flame was burning at too fierce a heat.

"She will learn — as we all do," she thought, as she sorted out a pile of half-worn clothes and laid some infant's things aside along with a blanket and a shawl, "but while she's learning — may God help her."

To Blair Martin she only said:

"Tom O'Brien will carry the food and heavier things and be grateful for the dime. The baby's clothes — "

Blair Martin interrupted her.

"Let me take those," she said.

She trembled as she picked them up and walked through the early morning streets with Tom. She remembered seeing yesterday a scrub-woman in an office-building and the marble floor over which she bent was wet with milk that mingled with the dirty water. The crime of it — of the waiting starving child at home — dyed her cheeks as the maternal in her cried out against the shame.

For some time she walked along in silence, which Tom, usually so communicative, was afraid to break. She had never gotten to the heart of Tom or of any of his kind — she did not know how to appeal to them. She was conscious of the lack in herself and sometimes when she could not sleep at night for the horrors that she had seen, she would remember what Hector Stone had said. Some day perhaps she would learn this foreign language too, learn to reach them in reality, in some way other than with food and clothes — perhaps as Georgina Smith reached them with a word, or, as they had sometimes confessed, Joe Blackie had reached them with a smile.

After some little difficulty they found the place, and used as she was by now to the type of so-called homes in which these people lived, she could not remember having seen in all her months of work, an entranceway more loathsome and more dark. The creaking stairs were so narrow that it was only with infinite patience and labor that Tom got to the top with the bundle that he carried. The smell of vermin and of rotted food and of fifty people living where twenty would have been too many, overpowered her for an instant and made her ill and faint. Tom saw it and with a ready sympathy laid down his pack on the first landing and begged her to return. She mutely shook her head. The small, dark, dirty doors which they passed were closed and all the house was silent. She remembered it was a Sunday morning. Of late Sundays had meant nothing to her except a day whereon the women who worked all week in the sweatshops cleaned their homes, or the men who toiled for six days rested from an exhaustion that it would have taken twelve months to relieve instead of twelve hours. The inside of a church she had not seen for months. How could she worship — What?

They reached the top at last and through the stillness came a broken, feeble wail. Tom laid down his burden and turned questioningly to Blair Martin.

"Please don't wait," she said. "I can manage very well alone — I would rather be alone. And — and I know what it would mean to you to be with your friends to-day."

An odd light swept into Tom O'Brien's eyes.

Perhaps this strange woman with the white face and dark-shadowed eyes sometimes understood.

She waited until she heard him step from the last rickety stair and cross the lower passageway and slam the door. Still the feeble wail went on. She glanced once at the bundle of food and clothing at her feet, at the package in her arms, and then she knocked gently on the door. There was no answer. The wail of a moment before had sunk to rest. She knocked again and louder, and the stillness weighed upon her until her nerves began to quiver beneath the strain. Again she knocked and she was answered by the feeble wail. She turned the unresisting knob and entered.

Upon a pallet made of filthiest straw was stretched the form of what once might have resembled a woman, distorted now by years of crime, of bitter battling against poverty and woe and recent pain. The lips were drawn back from the teeth in a ghastly grin. One lean hand was stretched forth and touched a dirty bundle on the floor. From the bundle came a plaintive cry.

"Poor soul, she is asleep — she needs it and I will let her rest until the district nurse comes. She said she would be here within an hour. The baby —"

She leaned down over the dirty bundle on the floor, her hands trembling as she touched the rags. It was so little and so helpless. Had she ever seen such a helpless thing before?

The wail ceased suddenly. With one arm Blair

Martin held the child to her, warming its cold face against her bosom. With the other hand she tore the wrappings from the bundle, looking around her for some sign of water. She saw a little near the woman in an old tomato can.

She never very clearly remembered the next twenty minutes. She gave up all thought of washing the child until the district nurse should arrive, and she wrapped it in a warm shawl and held it to her that it might share her human warmth. Now and then it wailed feebly. She wondered if it were hungry — everything seemed hungry in this underworld into which she had stepped — and she thought of awakening the mother. The district nurse, when she came, would surely have them both taken to the hospital. The child went off to sleep and Blair Martin crouched with it on a low broken stool waiting for the district nurse, and for the mother to awake. By and by the utter stillness of the place broke through her thoughts and outer consciousness, and she raised her eyes to where the woman lay.

With a sudden cry she rose, and still holding the sleeping baby close, she leaned over and touched the long thin hand.

"Dead!" she breathed. "And I never knew!"

After that she remembered nothing except that the room was very cold and that she must warm and soothe the helpless new-born thing that lay within her arms. She did not even move when some one turned the knob and entered, closing the door behind. By and by she began to wonder dimly why the district nurse, whom she knew, did not speak to her — offer to do something. Then she became aware that it was a man facing her. With an effort she swept away the veil that had fallen over sight and sound and she looked up and met Stone's gray eyes regarding her.

Still crouching on the low and broken stool with that helpless bundle at her breast, she looked up at him — giving no token of surprise. Across the chasm of the months she looked at him, and in her eyes he found no dimmest resemblance to the eyes that had looked at him from under the mimosa tree. These eyes to-day were dark with the world's pain, deep with the experiences of life, as sorrowful and brooding as the eyes of a woman who had been a mother and lost her child, and the most wonderful that Stone had ever seen.

Without comment she motioned to the bed, and then gathering the new-born thing she held closer to her bosom, the eyes were lowered as Blair Martin bowed her head.

IX.

TWO hours later Stone called for her at the dingy drug store a block away, where he had taken her and bidden her wait for him. She had obeyed him now as she had obeyed him that night in August in the garden at her home. She had neither questioned his wisdom or his judgment in bringing her here until he could adjust things and see the child in the care of the district nurse who had arrived a few minutes later. Neither did she question how he had found her or where he had come from, and she had only dimly noticed that he wore a shabby suit of brown — such as a mill hand might wear for a Sunday best.

"Come," he said, with the quick decision that had been one of the secrets of his influence in the upper as well as the lower strata of the lives he lived. And she never dreamed to pause or question.

Once out in the streets she followed where he led mechanically. In the more crowded districts through which they passed signs of active life greeted them. Into less frequented ways he led her with an evident knowledge that at any other time would have surprised her. They crossed a small, dingy square, dignified by the name of park by the city officials — one of those few small breathing spaces where the poor congregate. It was deserted at this early hour and was too cold for even the men and women who breathed foul air all the week to take advantage of at present. The snow that had fallen the day before was trampled and blackened where a horde of children had played. Across the little square she saw an automobile waiting. He led her to it and helped her in. The man who had been guarding the car cranked up and then came back to where Stone stood and helped him into a great fur coat that completely covered the suit of shabby brown.

"That is all, Wilson. You may go now, and have my things ready by noon — the gray suit and the dark tie. I am dining out."

The man touched his cap respectfully and crossed the square. He had been too well trained to evince the surprise he felt at seeing his master bring a lady — shabbily enough dressed, but certainly a lady — from those haunts that Wilson could not have been hired to go near except to serve Stone. The lady, he thought, in spite of her thick veil, looked remarkably like the daughter of the multimillionaire, Andrew Martin.

"It's tempting Providence to meddle with states of life you weren't born into," he muttered to himself, boarding the first car. He was conscious of being glad as block after block carried him further away from the crowded sections into the upper parts of the city that were better known to him. He was conscious, too, that some pretty shop girls opposite were regarding his overcoat — a last year one of Stone's — approvingly.

With a tact that was partly inborn and partly the result of long experience in dealing with living men and women, Stone did not break the silence at first, and when he did it was to tell her in a few brief words the things she would want to know.

" The doctor says with proper care the child should live. It is to go to the good sisters. The woman — " he had paused and looked down the street through which they were passing, thoughtfully, — " the woman is to have a decent burial."

Still she neither spoke nor moved.

He guided the car with a knowledge born of long acquaintance from the roughly paved streets of the poorer section to the smoother asphalt of the broad main avenue. Here palatial homes looked at one another across a well-kept park with big shade trees that ran through its center from end to end.

Once he saw her lift her eyes to the big houses standing with closed blinds in the hush of the early morning, and she shivered suddenly as she turned away.

" You are cold? "

She shook her head.

" I understand, still — put this on."

He slowed down a little and reached under the seat and pulled out a big fur coat and gave it to her. Mechanically she took it, conscious of a new warmth creeping through her, at his care of her. He helped her into it.

"There, that is better. I should have remembered."

They were on the outskirts of the city now, and stretches of country road with wide fields, white with untrodden snow, lay on either side. The branches of the bare trees overhead were weighted down with the same white burden, and the morning sun lay bright and warm over all. The roads were almost deserted and as they pulsed along in the big car they did not notice the few they did pass who looked curiously at them, — people to whom storm and fair weather were the same.

Still she had not spoken.

"I met Tom O'Brien on the street — Tom and I are great friends —" Stone smiled, "and I asked him what he was about. He told me that some unknown waif had called at daybreak at the Settlemen House for help for the woman. I wonder how the woman got hold of the waif — and what became of him."

She shook her head again.

"Just one of the mysteries of the slums," he went on in a low voice. "The floor on which she lived was deserted. I understand that the family was evicted yesterday."

She clasped and unclasped her gloved hands, with a gesture of passionate pain.

"And then Tom told me he had left you, that you insisted on his going off for his holiday. I came because — because I knew the neighborhood and I thought you might need my — some help."

"Thank you."

The words were breathed rather than spoken. Stone smiled strangely.

"Would not any — friend have done as much?" he asked. A light that had been flickering through her eyes suddenly died.

"Perhaps," she said. "What were you doing at that hour down there?"

He hesitated.

She turned and looked at him and her eyes compelled an answer.

"I had been up all night with a man I knew — a mill hand who —" he broke off and turned his face away.

"Yes?"

"Who was scalded yesterday by an explosion where he worked."

She shuddered.

"There, do not grieve so. When I left his pain was over."

"His family — he left a family?"

"A wife and four children. They are to go back to Italy."

Stone slowed down a little, and the car, like a horse that knows its owner's touch, seemed to run with little guidance from the steering wheel. When he spoke again she started. She had never heard his voice so stern.

"They call America the melting pot of nations and she is unworthy of the name. They come to her with their wounds — the crushed and the downtrodden of the earth — as hurt children run to the shelter of a mother's arms, and instead of healing them, America fastens on them as a vampire on its prey, and drop by drop their blood adds to the wealth we know. She holds out her arms to them and bids them come to her, and she boasts of a freedom that they only know in name. She does not have czars and kings, but she has political bosses who run her cities and her states. She boasts that she has no Siberias and no fortresses like Saint Peter's and Saint Paul's, but in some of the modern penitentiaries where she fancies she is curing men of crime, the inmates labor all day, and at night are sent to rest in vermin-infested cells — oh, I know — and she has one law for them and one law for the men of money who betray her trust. They come to her and she puts the women — the future mothers of the future race — ankle-deep in blood in Western slaughter houses, and the little children in their feeble strength to bear the burdens for the rich. She gathers them all in and she stands by — this America that I love in spite of all, that might be as great as she is mighty — and she guards the melting pot, but in the process of refining she lets the gold go with the dross."

He stopped. The words had fallen quick and throbbing on the silence of the early day.

By and by she spoke. Her voice was low and strained.

"How can we live — how can we be glad — when such things exist?"

He turned to her with his slow smile. There was a light in his eyes, as though they saw the solution to the soul's problems, that she did not understand.

"You will learn to be glad for life, Miss Martin, and for joy and even — wealth," he said.

"I can never enjoy all that wealth brings again," she answered. In her eyes was the dawning of an age-long pain. "I shall always see before me — the things I have seen!"

"You will never feel quite the same again perhaps — you will never want to," he said.

"I shall never want to," she told him, and it seemed to her she saw before her a vast procession crossing the white fields of snow — an army of men and women, starving and in rags, and of little children dropping by the way, and as they passed her with averted heads, they all paid tribute to a vast pile of gold lying at her feet.

"What can I do?" she murmured, and in the stillness of the early day her voice fell upon his ear — an anguished prayer.

"Listen," he said, the strange light of revelation still in his eyes, "and I will tell you what first helped me."

For a moment he looked down in silence at the steering wheel. He had studied men and women as some study books, and he knew that for her the awakening had come. Then he began to speak, but his voice was no longer stern — accusing, and she was conscious that there was a quality in it that

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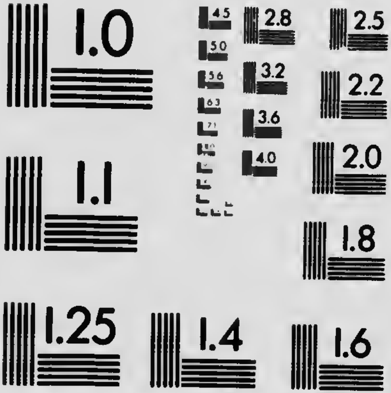
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gave her benumbed senses added strength. Years afterward, she recalled his every word.

"I felt as you do — we all do at first," he said. "None of us — and you would be surprised, Miss Martin, could you know the number of rich men and women who have given up their lives for those of the underworld — are ever quite the same again, and as I have said, we do not want to be. It takes most of us some time to get over the shock of things — to readjust our preconceived ideas of a deity and life. There are a few who never do — brave souls that go down to the grave with the crushing weight of others' woes upon them. Then there are some who patiently submit and do all they can, and others, — strong rebellious spirits — that fight every inch of the way, and life finds them unsatisfied and death rebellious still." He paused for a moment as though weighing his words. "I have learned to be grateful for the experiences. I have learned to be thankful for the wealth and all of comfort and peace and beauty that it brings to others, and — myself." He hesitated and looked out across the wide, white stretches of the fields.

"Oddly enough, it was a Catholic priest in France who first showed me the way. He is still living. I hope some day that you two may meet. His philosophy and wisdom and understanding are as profound as his love for humanity is deep and true. He will never win me to his Church, but he won me back — to God."

"*Is* there a God?" she questioned with white lips.

"Just now, to you, there is no God, Miss Martin," he said gravely, and his voice was very low, "and to-morrow and to-morrow, and to-morrow still, you may feel He does not exist. But some day you will learn a philosophy, to you, new — although it is a philosophy as old as men — and you will know Him as I know Him — as Pierre Lamoré in France knows Him — as the true Mohammedan, the true Hindu, the true Christian knows Him — with a knowledge separate and distinct from time and sphere and space and creed — you will know him as the breath of All."

An hour later the big car slowed down as he turned into the courtyard of the Anchorage, and when it stopped he helped Blair Martin out.

The courtyard was deserted except for Ajax, who lay asleep in the warm winter sun. Stone held out his hand in parting. She put her own in it and looked up at him.

"Thank you," she said simply, "for all that you have done to help me. I fancy some day I shall be even more grateful — when I can understand better. Won't you come in? My father will be back from — " she broke off for a moment, "from church in a little while."

"Thank you, I cannot stop to-day," he said, and she wondered what made his voice so strange.

A sigh escaped her of which she was not aware.

"You — you will come some other time — perhaps?" she asked.

"Perhaps," he answered, and to himself he said, "When I come again I will tell her the truth."

He got into his car and she stood watching him as he drove out of the courtyard and down the carriageway. One thought — strong and insistent — beat on her senses — the thought of the mill hand, scalded, who had died.

She stood still, her hands clasped tightly together.

"Spare him -- spare him," she breathed, speaking to she knew not What.

X.

THE winter that had set in early gave way to an early spring. Each day in February found the earth a little warmer than the preceding one, and only an occasional light flurry of snow appeared to suggest the bitter coldness of the earlier months. Blair Martin found herself watching for the first traces of the budding green with an eagerness of which she was only half aware. Since that ride with Hector Stone a few weeks back, life and its problems had assumed a healthier tone. He had not paid another visit to the Anchorage, and she had given up looking for him there. The intense expectation of the late summer and fall, in which every sound upon the carriage drive had sent the warm blood flushing to her face, the dull resentment that had followed, and the still duller sense of pain, had gone. She found many excuses for him — his labor with the men — his unwillingness to partake further of hospitality from a host who so radically differed from him in his views. She never admitted to her own heart that he did not come because he did not wish to see her. Of late they had met occasionally at the Settlement House on Sundays. They rarely met alone, and personalities, as by tacit consent, both avoided, but in those hours life took on new meaning for her, and his work became her own as it never had done before — not as a panorama to be watched with varying degrees of interest and pity and of horror, but as a part of her — and him.

"May I call next Sunday afternoon?" he asked her as he was helping her into her roadster; "there is — something that I feel you ought to know — why I have not called — oftener."

His broken speech, unlike his usual decision, confused her, and her low assent was hardly audible.

How the week passed she did not know. She did not see him in the interval and the days dragged as with a leaden weight.

When Sunday came she hardly touched her dinner, and after her father had gone to the big library for his usual holiday smoke and nap, she slipped on a warm loose cloak and went out into the grounds. Once she looked in the direction of the garden and she shook her head.

"I have waited so long," she thought, "I will wait just a little longer," and she wondered at the cold fear that crept into her heart.

Now and then she watched the carriage road for the first glimpse of his car as it rose on the crest of the incline, but the carriage road lay in its long winding length with no sound or sign of life upon it.

He came upon her unawares from the foot path that ran to the left of the broad way. He was in stout walking boots and puttee leggings and a corduroy Norfolk jacket and cap, and had not her heart-beats told her it was he, she would not at first have known him.

She stood quite still under the bare trees waiting for him as he came up cap in hand. On his face rested the grave smile she had grown to think a part of him, and his look was all for her.

"Are you wondering who the stranger is?" he asked lightly. "Joe Blackie sometimes spends his Sundays so and gives the car a rest. It's back to the fundamental things of life — isn't it? But the walking does me good."

"You have walked all the way from town?"

"That is not so far when one has been used to Alpine climbing."

"True. I have never climbed the Alps."

"I hope you may some day. One gets an idea of the breadth of life from those dim heights."

"I shall remember that. I had thought of going abroad this summer. Oh, yes, I have seen Paris — and I was three years in Brussels at school when a girl — and I have 'done' London on a tram, and all that part of it — and once I went to Lucerne." She paused a moment and looked off across the grounds. "I fancy I was too young then to know all that beauty meant. I was very young — it was before I had suffered any — before my mother died."

"You will see Lucerne with different eyes when you go again," he said.

"Will you not come into the house and rest?" she asked after a pause.

"Thank you."

"I will ring for a cup of tea or — would you rather have black coffee?"

"Coffee, please."

"When my father awakes he will doubtless take you into the library and offer you something else," [illegible] smiled.

"He knows I am coming?"

She was grateful for the shadow of her little tea-room that hid the color that sprang to her face.

"I did not tell my father."

"I am glad. [illegible] did not come to see him to-day, Miss Martin," the light of greeting had died out of his face, and for a moment it looked old.

She threw off her loose wrap and drew up a big chair to the cheerful blaze upon the hearth.

"What were you doing when I came on you so unexpectedly?" he asked, moving restlessly about the room.

"Looking to see if there were any [illegible] of the early violets — foolish, wasn't it? — [illegible] watching for you."

She leaned nearer the fire and began to play with it gently with a poker.

He stopped by the mantel and leaned one elbow upon it.

"Was I not on time?" he asked in a low voice.

She looked up with a smile, the glow of the firelight upon her face.

"I am not sure. I had no watch, but —"

She broke off in confusion.

"*But?*" She could not disregard his voice.

"The time seemed long. It is a long while since you have been to the Anchorage."

"A very long while," he said slowly.

He did not speak again, and a sudden tremor seized her.

"Will you press that bell, please? There, yes, that one, thank you." And when Brewster appeared she ordered black coffee in an odd strained voice.

"The grass shows signs of awakening," he said from the window, "even if the violets are still asleep."

She rose and crossed the room to the window and stood by him looking out.

"I never appreciated what grass might mean," she said gently, "until one day last fall I brought a small child out here and showed him the grounds. He knelt down near the grass and patted it softly with his hands, and when I told him to go and run on it, he asked if it would hurt it. It seems incredible, but it is quite true."

"I do not doubt it," he answered, "only those doubt — who have not seen."

"I shall never doubt any of those things again," she answered; "anything any one might tell me of those barren lives stripped of all beauty."

"I believe it is for that that I have learned to prize beauty more," he said. "It is a great softener and a great educator, and I do not despise it as some of the rich men do who have gone into the underworld. We must have ideals for them to strive for if we would help them permanently — we must have ideals to come back to when the tragedy and sordidness of our day's work is over, else we descend lower than their low level, and forego the aspirations to which we have been born. It is because of this that I am Joe Blackie through the day, and at other times dress well and ride in my own car as Hector Stone. Do you think you understand? I have wanted you to understand," he said, still looking out of the window.

"I think I do," she answered. "I shall think of that when I pass the — others, walking in their rags, as I ride by in my car — wrapped in my furs."

"It will help to adjust life for you," he said. "We are all born in the environment to which we are best fitted — with capabilities that could so well develop in no other soil. It is the one true philosophy of the ages — whether you read it in the books of India or in the parables of the Christ."

"I wish I understood such things better. I would be happier, I think."

"I sent you to Georgiana Smith to know and see life as it really is for some of us," he said, "but I fancy you will have to meet Pierre Lamoré some day if you want even dimly to realize what the Eternal means."

"Tell me something of him."

"I will," he answered. "Come and sit by the fire with me. Pierre Lamoré is indelibly associated with my life — with a life of which you know nothing. It is because I thought you ought to know that I have come to tell you something of that life to-day."

He pulled out the big armchair for her as Brewster entered with the coffee on a silver tray, which he placed on a small table by Miss Martin's chair.

After he was gone Stone took a chair opposite and watched her in silence while she poured the fragrant amber drink from a Persian coffee pot into cups of fabulous price. The rich simplicity of the room and of the service seemed a part of her and of her pale gray gown. The late sunlight streaming through the western window fell on her hands and lit up for an instant the sapphire ring she wore — a gift from her dead mother. It was her only personal adornment except her long string of white pearls.

He took the cup she handed him in silence.

"I have a fancy," he said after a pause, "that some day you and Pierre Lamoré will meet. He stands as a type of a great faith — irrespective of church or creed — and the symbol of a great wisdom that at present the world is too blind to fathom or to comprehend."

She listened, the coffee untasted by her, her hands folded in her lap.

"In his veins is the blood of the nobility of France — of Russia; he has the manners of a courtier, and he is versed in the philosophies of the world, but he wears the dress of a Catholic priest and he lives on an island — it is called the Island of the Angels — in the Mediterranean, in a cottage with a sanded floor, with a middle-aged housekeeper and a young boy, named Anthony, whose face is like one of Botticelli's choristers. He goes about in a rickety old chaise drawn by a horse he overfeeds from kindness, and he preaches at a little village church to a couple of hundred peasants and their children, and he visits their sick and christens their babies in the name of Christ, and buries their dead and weeps with them, and in all things shares their lives. And for all this — or because of this — he has refused a bishop's see and a cardinal's hat."

Stone put his empty cup of coffee down. The slight stimulant seemed to give him new strength. He was conscious that Blair Martin's eyes had not left his face.

"How did you ever run across him?"

"Years ago when I was a midshipman," he answered in a low voice.

"An Annapolis man? I did not know . . ."

"It is all so long ago, Miss Martin, I hardly know myself. It was on one of the cadet cruises to Marseilles. I got a short leave and went on a tour by myself, and I came on the Island of the Angels and met — " he broke off. It seemed to him he could not go on.

"Oh, Pierre Lamoré — how interesting! What made you give up the service?"

He turned and looked at her as a man looks who has been granted a brief respite. He was silent for an imperceptible instant.

"Do you think I was made for the service?"

A smile of infinite beauty crept across her face. He could see it in the failing light.

"I am not sure how you would have taken orders from your inferior superior officers. Yet — you were born to be a leader of men."

"It was a big question to me, Miss Martin, that decision, and I was very young. I — could not altogether decide it for myself. There was some one else to be considered, and — just then — a year before graduation — the money came from my childless uncle. Even then I was conscious that it brought with it its trusts and responsibilities. I graduated and then — resigned — but I have always loved the sea."

"Tell me more about Pierre Lamoré and the Island of the Angels."

"What more is there to tell that some day you will not see for yourself? There is a wonderful chateau on a high bluff at one end of the island, overlooking the water, and not far from it is a memorial church — built to the memory of a child, where every night they hang a beacon to light the travelers on the sea. And down in the valley with the vineyards Pierre Lamoré lives and labors."

"Some day I must go there."

"Yes — some day."

After that he fell into a silence and by and by he stooped down and picked a fresh log from the wood basket on the hearth and laid it on the big brass andirons. They watched it, as the shadows behind them began to creep into the room, until it caught and commenced to burn.

"One could say a good deal more about Pierre Lamoré and the Island of the Angels, but what is the use? Some day you will see for yourself. It is growing late and there is something else I came to tell you."

His voice was more earnest than she had ever heard it. Into her heart again unbidden stole that faint cold fear.

"It was while I was on that cruise to Marseilles — that I met a girl —" he broke off and rose suddenly and stood by the mantel looking down into the fire.

"Yes?" she said.

"That I thought I loved."

"Yes?" she said again.

"That the next year — after I had been graduated and had resigned — I returned and — married."

"She is living?" Her voice was as quiet as the soft wind that played through the bare branches of the mimosa tree outside the window.

"Yes."

She did not speak again although he waited.

"We have not lived together for seven years," he said, after what seemed a year of silence broken only by the crumbling of a log upon the hearth. "I cannot tell you all the details to-day — perhaps some day — some day I hope I may be free to do so. It may be that until then you will trust me as one friend trusts another? For now — this is enough."

"It is enough," she said, looking into the fire, "and trust — I will always trust you."

She waited until she heard the front door close on him and his step die away along the gravel foot path. Then in the dusk she slid from her chair to the floor in front of the hearth, and with wide eyes dumb with pain, watched the log he had placed there burn to ashes.

The room was very still, but there was an odd bursting sensation in her head, that ached and ached. She had felt it days before, and again that morning, but had put it from her by the thought of his coming. He had come and — gone, and the agony had returned, fiercer than before. All life was gone, it seemed to her, leaving just this dull agony instead. She had looked for violets as she had waited for him. Would the violets ever bloom again, she wondered. She had waited for him, her heart burning at a white heat — she had found that while the white heat glowed it made and left its ashes.

"But I will always trust you," she said again, as the last log broke and she sat crouching in the dark.

XI.

IT was the next day that the accident at mill fifteen occurred. A detailed account of it, with startling headlines, appeared in a dozen extras two hours after the boilers had exploded and the maimed and dying had been carried from the wrecked building where the huge belts, suddenly freed, vied with the harsh grinding cogs and wheels in bringing death or injury to the helpless men.

Blair Martin heard the extras called the length and breadth of the streets as she stepped into her roadster and took her seat by Willis, the chauffeur, after an afternoon of shopping. She was suddenly arrested by the words the boys were shrieking.

"A-l-l about the big explosion! *Extray!* One of Andrew Martin's mills — mill fifteen — blown up! Extray! *Extray!*"

She hailed a boy in passing, and not waiting for the change, stepped into the car again.

"Home," she said briefly to Willis. The paper for a moment lay folded as the boy had given it to her in her nerveless hand.

After a while she unfolded the paper and commenced to read. Instinctively she looked for the list of dead and injured. At the foot of the list of injured she read the name, Joe Blackburn.

The old pulsing pain she had felt in her head for days still went on in its uninterrupted way, but otherwise she was not conscious of an unusual tremor or a sigh. It seemed to her she had known it would come, and she was not surprised.

By and by when they had left the more crowded thoroughfares, the noises of which strangely confused her aching head, she went back and read the account of the accident through. It was all there — in its cruel and glaring details — even the editorial's scathing denouncement of her father and the state inspectors. But none of it seemed to touch her inner consciousness except the brief account of one foreman, by name Joe Blackburn (generally called Blackie) and of his injuries. He was one of the few they had been able to move any distance, and he was now at Saint Vincent's Hospital in the east end.

After she had finished it all, she carefully refolded the paper and laid it in her lap without comment of any kind. The action was unconscious, but Willis, who had seen the glaring headlines and guessed something of the truth, drove the car with unusual care over the rough stretches on the homeward road.

Once in the courtyard of the Anchorage she descended from the automobile mechanically and made her way to the library. The paper was still in her hand.

The library was empty and she sat down in a big chair to wait and think. Thinking seemed difficult

She supposed it was this strange ache in her head that kept the thinking back. After all, what was there to think of except of Joe Blackie? She pulled off her gloves slowly and carefully smoothed the fingers out. How still the room was and how warm! She rose and went over to one of the big windows and tried to open it. Her hands were oddly weak. She tried again and the window yielded, and she stood there by it breathing in the February air. It helped the strange aching in her head and she was conscious that her thoughts were clearer and more collected. After all, there were other things to think of besides Joe Blackie, if one were strong enough to bear them. The engineer had been killed, and the paper said he left a wife and new-born child. The assistant engineer had been scalded — horribly scalded, the paper had said — and the doctor gave no hope. Two other men would die. Another had lost an arm — a working man maimed for life. Several had received minor injuries, and Joe Blackburn had been badly cut about the head and neck. And all because the State inspector had passed shaky boilers and machinery innocent of safety devices. Who was responsible? She stopped thinking here, but the horrible ache went on, and by and by the thoughts forced themselves back upon her consciousness. Who *was* responsible? Why, Jenkins, the manager, of course — Jenkins and — her father. Her father! And he had done this thing! Was it possible that the papers and his workmen and — Joe Blackie knew her father better than she did? Had she ever known the real Andrew Martin at all? Was his blood her own?

She closed the window suddenly, shivering as with a chill, and went back to the chair to wait. She did not even try to fancy what his homecoming was to be. She looked about the room. She had taken such pride in its fashioning — in its heavy wainscoting, and few fine paintings that blended so well with the carved wood and the massive furniture. He had left it all to her, as he had left every detail of the home, and he had never questioned the expense or her taste in choosing. How blind she had been — how the money had slipped through her fingers. She wondered if the big chair in which she sat would have paid for a safety device for the machinery on the third floor. It had cost a great deal of money, she remembered.

By and by she grew tired of thinking and she leaned her head back against the big chair and fell into a fitful doze. She awakened to find that the early February dusk had fallen. For a moment she sat without moving, looking at the dark wainscoted walls and the big dim pictures showing forth from their gold frames. The odd throbbing in her head had increased, and then came — memory.

She rose to her feet with a low cry and groped her way out of the room, upstairs.

. . . .

Her father did not return that night nor was he there when she came downstairs to breakfast. Her father better than she did? Had she ever known the real Andrew Martin at all? Was his blood her own?

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Her father did not return that night nor was he there when she came downstairs to breakfast. Her eyes were heavy and it seemed to her she walked on air. She could not touch her meal.

Afterwards she ordered out her roadster, which she drove herself. She never remembered how she found Saint Vincent's, nor could she very distinctly remember the Sister in charge who met her there and to whom she stated her errand.

"My name is Miss Martin," she said, "I am — I am Andrew Martin's daughter. I have come to inquire about the injured men brought here yesterday — especially about one by the name of Joe Blackburn. May I see him?"

The Sister in charge hesitated.

"There have been many inquiries for him from the other men," she said, "but no one of his own has been here since he was brought in injured. It is against the rules to allow the ward patients to see other than their own people out of visiting hours, but — " she broke off, "you know him?"

"Yes," said Blair Martin. "Will you take me to him?"

The Sister in charge touched the rosary that hung from her belt. She was old in the service of suffering. She had grown to know that there was even greater suffering than that which Saint Vincent's walls sheltered.

She spoke slowly.

"Come with me."

She led her to the elevator and on the second floor motioned the boy to stop. They got out together — the woman of the world and the woman of the church — and together they walked the length of a long hall.

At the main door of the men's ward she stopped.

"When he was brought in yesterday he was unconscious from loss of blood. In going over his clothes to find some relative's address, we found considerable money. Later, he may want a private room, but I fancy not if he is a mill hand. I must caution you not to startle him — when one's sight is threatened — "

"His eyes are injured?"

"Not permanently, we hope, but the wound in his head came very near to blinding him for life — " The Sister in charge crossed herself. "Sister Simeon will take you to him." She motioned to the ward Sister as she spoke.

His bed was at the extreme end of the room, partly screened to keep out the strong light. As the footsteps came nearer and paused at the foot of his bed, he stirred a little and put up one hand feebly to his bandaged head.

Sister Simeon moved on to another bed.

Blair Martin came to the side and stood looking down at him. She hardly saw the chair placed there for her use, nor was she conscious that some of the other men, who had seen her enter, were regarding her curiously.

"I have come to see how you are," she said, and as gentle as was her voice, and as low, he started.

"You! You have come alone?"

"I am quite alone," she answered.

"How did you know — I fancied only Wilson knew," he said. "After all, your father — all the world — can know now."

"I read about it in the papers last night."

He hesitated.

"Your father — "

"I have not seen my father. He had not come home when I left this morning."

"Ah!"

She sat down in the chair by the bed. She felt suddenly ill and faint.

"I knew it would come," he said after a pause, "it has been threatening for months."

"And you exposed yourself!"

"Would you have had me run away?" he questioned. "I could not leave the other men to face it alone."

"Did they know the danger, too?" She seemed to be speaking impersonally.

"Of course! Every one — *every one* knew."

She began to draw a pattern with the tip of her gloved hand upon the coverlet.

"Did — my father know?"

He did not answer.

"How long since he has known?" she asked, after a little. Her voice was very calm.

"I warned him last summer. It was for that I — I first visited the Anchorage."

"Thank you."

She looked at him in silence for a few moments, and in silence he waited.

Then she gathered strength to ask him what had been trembling on her lips since she first saw him.

"Are you much hurt?"

A ghost of a smile played about his mouth for a moment.

"That depends. They tell me my eyes will be all right in a few weeks if I use care, and that the wounds will heal, but —" he broke off.

"But what?" she breathed.

He stretched out one hand impulsively over the spread, then drew it back hastily.

"Would you — care," he asked very slowly, "if I should tell you that I shall be scarred for life?"

Somewhere in the ward she heard other voices. They seemed far away. The odor of ether from somewhere near crept over to her. She tried to speak — to control her voice — and failed.

"I could not bear it," she said brokenly.

"You will learn to bear it — as I shall," he said in a low voice.

By and by Sister Simeon came up and gave Stone some stimulant from a covered glass standing on the table by his bed. Blair Martin watched them both in silence. She could see the hot flush of shame overspreading Stone's partly covered face, as the Sister raised him in his weakness as though he were a little child. Something in that flush, as in the Sister's act of mercy, touched her with an unutterable pain and she turned her face away.

After the nurse had gone she spoke to him.

"Is there — anything I can do for you?"

He hesitated a moment. Then he put out one hand and began to grope for something on the table.

She rose.

"What is it?" she asked. "What is it that I can get for you?"

"Are there not some letters on the table?"

She shook her head, and then, becoming aware that he could not see the motion, she answered:

"I do not see any there. Shall I ask the Sister?"

"Oh, I remember now. I put them under my pillow when Wilson left the package this morning directed to Joe Blackburn. Poor Wilson — he need not be afraid of betraying me now. I can't keep the thing secret any longer. One of the workmen who reached me first found a letter on me in my own name and some visiting cards I had forgotten. After all I don't suppose it matters much except for all the newspaper talk and fuss, and I'll miss most of that."

"You do not care who knows?" She was thinking of her father.

"Why should I, when there is so much else worth while? I've tried to make it good to the men."

Then after a little:

"There is something you might do for me — if you would —" he broke off.

"I shall be glad — oh, so glad," she said eagerly.

He groped under his pillow until he found the bundle of letters.

"Will you read the postmarks to me, and any return addresses in the corners? I have never felt such need of a secretary before. Will you play secretary to me now?"

She took the bundle from his hand and undid it.

"There are four," she said.

"Yes?"

"This one seems to be from a tailor — it is postmarked the city and bears the name of Smith and Brown."

"Unmistakable," he said, with a slight laugh, "a receipted bill. It can be laid to one side. Wilson will file it for me. The next, please?"

"Postmarked Philadelphia. Undoubtedly a wedding invitation. Shall I open it?"

"Do not trouble about it. There is another?"

"Two more. This one is an advertisement notice from a haberdasher. It bears the city postmark and is unsealed."

"Tear it up, please."

She did so and carefully piled the scraps on the table by his bed.

"The other one?"

She sat down again and picked up the remaining letter. She turned it over once or twice to be sure of the postmark.

"This seems rather personal," she said doubtfully, "and I can't quite make out the postmark. It bears a Canadian stamp — "

"A Canadian stamp — from Montreal?" with a sudden strength he sat up and reached for the letter. "Let me have it," he said, almost harshly. She gave it to him and her hand trembled as she did so, and she knew not why. For a minute he lay holding it tensely in his hand, and once it seemed as though he would have torn the bandages from his head and eyes.

"I cannot see—" The words were fraught with a pain she sensed, but could not understand.

"Let it wait until—your eyes can bear to be used," she suggested, "or until some friend or—Wilson comes."

"I cannot. I have no friends near enough for that. It may be weeks before I can use my eyes. Wilson—I could not bear for Wilson to know the details and—I dare not wait."

"Could I read it for you? It would be as though I had never seen it."

He bit his lips for a moment.

"If I could be quite sure of that," he said, "*quite sure*—"

"Try me."

"I will," he answered. "Draw your chair closer that no one else may hear. Tell me first, is the envelope marked in one corner?"

"Yes. It requests that if not delivered in five days it be returned to The Hotel des Invalides, Montreal."

"Go on," he said briefly, and he turned his face away.

She opened the envelope carefully and undid the closely written pages. They were in a woman's firm, clear hand. It was dated four days back and read:

"MY DEAR MONSIEUR STONE: While I am aware that only recently I sent you the monthly bulletin regarding your wife's condition —" The pages suddenly fluttered to the floor, and Stone, arrested by the faint noise and the ceasing of Blair Martin's voice, asked hastily:

"What is it?"

"It is all right," her low voice came back, "I carelessly let the sheets fall. If you will wait a moment I will soon have them so I can begin again."

He waited in a tense silence. Then her voice went on:

"regarding your wife's condition, but such unusual developments have taken place of late that I thought you should be notified. The case, as Monsieur knows, is one of the most remarkable we have ever cared for, for even in the hours of Madame's greatest mental darkness there have been rays of pure reason shown. Our own doctor here has never agreed with the specialists Monsieur had sent from Toronto and New York, who pronounced the case one of hopeless insanity, and it would seem that our own good doctor may be right after all, and Monsieur meet with the reward his faithful care of Madame merits.

"A fortnight ago Madame's condition was not encouraging — there being symptoms of a return of the lung cough she had so severely when you first brought her to us. These symptoms have not abated as much as we would like, although Madame is somewhat better in her cough to-day, but her lucid moments have returned more and more often. To-day she refused to play with the new toys you sent her last month, and once she spoke of you and asked when you were coming to take her home. She also attended chapel this morning and her special nurse, who never leaves her, tells me she heard her quite distinctly pray for the soul of the boy you lost. I left her only a few minutes ago by the window in her sitting-room overlooking our beautiful river, and she spoke of it and of the sunset, as Monsieur himself might have done.

"Monsieur may be assured that he will be kept posted as to the slightest change. When I spoke to our doctor about it to-day, he smiled a little. 'You may tell him from me,' he said, 'that I think the waiting is nearly over.'

"I can fancy what this hope will mean to Monsieur, whom we have never forgotten as the husband of Madame, or as the liberal contributor to our new chapel when it was built.

"I commend you and Madame to the mercy of God.

"MARY FRANCES, Mother Superior."

In silence she folded the letter and placed it in the envelope, and then very gently laid it in his hand. His hand lay limp upon the coverlet and she took his fingers and folded them over the letter. Still he did not move.

After a while she rose.

"I am afraid you are tired. Is there anything more I can do for you?"

He turned his head wearily on the pillow.

"Nothing more, thank you," he said slowly.

"Does — the letter require an answer?"

"No answer, thank you, Miss Martin."

She looked down at him then and it seemed to her that he was miles away. Her own voice when she spoke again sounded far off and indistinct.

"Good-bye."

"Good-bye." Further off still came his voice to her, and it was as the voice of one speaking from a great abyss.

XII.

AT midnight Blair Martin awoke from a fitful doze and rung the electric bell by her bed for Hannah. Hannah, whose rest was rarely disturbed by her mistress, but who always slept with one eye open in case of need, hurried down in anxious wonder. From the bed Miss Martin looked at her with burning cheeks and shining eyes.

"Call the doctor, Hannah, I am ill."

They were the last conscious words she said in weeks. An hour later, when the doctor hurriedly arrived, he found her raving in wild delirium. Until daybreak, he and Hannah sat with her. Then the trained nurse arrived. At five in the morning, Lorimer, the doctor, descended the broad steps. His face was grave and troubled. He had known Blair Martin since she was a child — her mother before her — and he had watched with an almost personal interest the rise of Andrew Martin and his fortune. As he reached the lower step, Martin came out of the library door, and for a moment the two men faced each other in silence.

"How is she?"

"Very ill — typhoid without a doubt. She must have had it in its walking form for a week."

"She — will pull through?" Even Lorimer

scarcely recognized the voice or the face of the man before him. His clothes were awry, his hair disheveled, his eyes red from sleeplessness and the horrors they had lately seen, his face ashen with the weight of a new fear.

Lorimer drew on his coat slowly. He did not meet Andrew Martin's eyes.

"She is very ill," he repeated. "I have telephoned for Curtis, the great typhoid specialist. He is to meet me here at nine. Also another nurse. If she *can* be pulled through — " He broke off.

"May I see her?"

Lorimer hesitated. How could he repeat to the father before him the wild ravings he had listened to through the night — ravings of the explosion; of sufferings personally witnessed; of sights he had never even dreamed she knew to exist — of a cringing fear and loathing lest her father come to her?

"She would not know you," he said after a little; "it would only be painful to you, and you can do nothing — "

Martin interrupted him.

"You mean — "

"I mean," said Lorimer slowly, and with more of sympathy in his voice than he was aware, "that from her delirium I gather she has not seen you since the — the trouble at the mill. Is it so?"

Martin nodded his head in assent.

"Ah — I thought as much. Better leave her to — time."

Andrew Martin drew a deep breath and turned back to the library door, and in silence Lorimer crossed the great hall to the courtyard. When his hand was on the latch he was arrested by Martin's voice, and in that moment he barely recognized it.

"Wait, Lorimer, there is just one thing. There is no expense to be spared — you understand that? What money can get for her — " he broke off and paused a moment.

"I understand," said Lorimer. "Wealth can do much — sometimes."

The Scotchman looked at him still with those red sleepless eyes that had already witnessed horrors — still with his ashen face of fear.

"Lorimer, two days ago I fancied money could buy almost anything. I know now it can never buy — peace."

Then he went into the library and closed the door.

Inside he sat down by his big flat table desk where he had sat all night, awake and alone. His money had never brought him the son and the heir to his name that he had wanted years ago; it had not kept Mary Blair with him. It could not purchase for him now the easy self-satisfaction of these last years. It could never wipe out the horrors he had seen at the mill and in the vicinity, and the horrors of the last two days and nights. It could not lift one ounce of the crushing dread that beset him now. After he had gone — after he had exhausted all the luxuries and the ease and the complacency that wealth had brought, and had passed on to — What, what would the vast pile be worth to him if Blair and her children's children did not exist? After all, what had he been striving for all these years if not for Blair and her unborn children? He himself had been too busy really to enjoy more than the personal comforts his vast wealth had brought. He had never had time for travel, or for art or for the finer things that seemed to make life worth while to others and to — Blair. And Blair — would she ever speak to him again except through necessity — would she ever want to touch his hand — it was blood-stained, he remembered suddenly — or to look into his eyes or caress him as of old? There had always been depths in Blair's nature he had never fathomed, as there had been depths in her mother's life he had not touched — he had always known that, and yet now the knowledge came to him as the swift stroke of a knife might cut — suddenly and deep. His had been the lesser nature. To-day he knew that. Was it because he had been too busy watching the vast pile roll up on itself to try to understand? Could all the luxuries and the gold and the power he had striven for as a youth wipe out one remembrance of the horrors he had seen, or grant him happiness if Blair were to die without forgiving him? Would she, with her ideals of life — forgive — all this?

At nine Lorimer returned with the specialist, and later there came another nurse. He heard Brewster admit them, and listened as they made their way upstairs. After what seemed to him hours he heard them descending and he went out into the hall to meet them, as earlier in the day he had gone out to meet Lorimer.

The specialist stopped on his way to his car, waiting at the door to answer the unspoken question in the Scotchman's eyes.

"You are naturally anxious, Mr. Martin, for news. It is really too early to tell you anything definite. There are symptoms I do not like — a brain complication — evidently the result of some great shock and — I might say personal loss, although of the latter her delirium tells little. Your daughter — has had no sudden bereavement — perhaps an unfortunate love affair?"

The Scotchman swallowed hard. The face of Hector Stone rose up before him. After all, how little, next to nothing, he knew about the heart of Blair. All these years he had been too busy making money for her lavish gowns —

He shook his head.

"I think not," he said, and he knew that he was ashamed, and that he had told a lie.

"Curious — curious," said the specialist, slowly, and looked towards Lorimer, but Lorimer's face was turned away.

"Lorimer will keep me posted. I will come out again later. We will hope for the best, Mr. Martin. May I extend my sympathy? This on top of the mill trouble —" He broke off. Something in the Scotchman's eyes forbade. With a bow he picked up his hat, and followed by Lorimer, he passed out of the front door and entered his car.

The morning wore away. At one, Brewster brought him his luncheon, but was curtly dismissed. He walked the length of the great room again and again, pausing now and then to look out of the long casement windows to the February scene without. Strange thoughts came to him as he walked and looked. The bare, gaunt trees assumed human shapes of worn and ill-fed men. He could not forget the homes that he had seen or the horrors they contained. And he had always boasted of his mills — of Jenkins' management. He had boasted of it to Hector Stone. Stone! He wondered what Stone would say when they met — he knew what Stone would think, what Stone had thought of him, now. It might be that Stone had known him better than he had known himself. A sudden fierce desire to meet Stone face to face came over him, and as for years all desires had meant their gratification to Andrew Martin, he hurried over to the desk and rang up Stone's chambers. After some trouble he made a connection with a man who said he was Mr. Stone's valet. No; Mr. Stone was not in. Mr. Stone was away. Thwarted, he put the receiver down, and began to walk up and down the room again. At three, Brewster announced his lawyers.

He met them as he had met the doctors — standing. Mechanically he rang the bell, and when Brewster answered it, ordered drinks. He did not touch his own.

The lawyers were old friends. Like Lorimer, through long years they had watched the Scotchman rise and amass his vast fortune. The eldest of them had almost kept pace with his client. He was known as the greatest corporation lawyer of the state.

"I understand your daughter was suddenly taken ill last night? Accept my sympathy. I have always admired Miss Martin, although I have for years had a fancy she never cared for me," the older man smiled a little grimly. He was thinking of his New Year's gift of roses, returned.

"My daughter is ill — so ill she may not live," said Andrew Martin. He spoke with a certain dignity foreign to him. Then, as neither man answered, he rested his hand on the table and bent a little forward toward the older man.

"Like you? I fancy not, Hadley." He spoke very distinctly and very slowly.

Hadley's expression of self-satisfaction fell from him like a mask. He put down his brandy and soda quickly, and half rose from his chair.

"Oh, I'm not saying anything against you I don't say against myself," said Andrew Martin. sinking into his chair, and leaning across the desk with a contemptuous smile on his face. "My daughter is of finer clay, Hadley, than you or — I."

Hadley moistened his lips with the brandy and soda and waited. The younger man stared.

"We've been playing a poor game, Hadley. I never knew just how poor a game until — two days ago. You've come to see about a settlement for damages — how little we can buy the injured men off with — how little we can pay the women and the children of the men who — died. Oh, yes, I know — it's all in my own interest. You're doing the work I hire you to do — " he was aware that Hadley winced, and he was filled with a fierce pleasure, the first he had known in hours, — "but I'm simply not going to make any so-called settlement. I've never estimated before what a working man's arm might mean to him, or the money value of a woman's heart, and the worth of children's empty stomachs. Here are some cheques I've drawn up for the different families. I've — I've investigated each case myself, but I'm new at the business. I've added fifty per cent to what seemed to me just — *just,* mind you, Hadley, not business-like or expedient. If it doesn't suit, you can come back with the cheques and I'll add to the amount."

He stopped and walked over to the fireplace, and stood there looking at the smouldering logs on the andirons, his back to the room, his hands folded behind him, his head bent a little forward. Hadley's voice reached him quite distinctly where he stood, and neither the words nor the sneer surprised him.

"Turning parson, eh? Suppose the men and the women refuse the cheques — refuse to let you add to them — and take their cases to the courts? Buying them off is one thing — and not such a very hard thing when men have what we have, Martin, but the public these days is acquiring a pernicious habit of demanding investigations and punishment of responsible parties."

"I'm prepared for a fine, Hadley."

Hadley leaned back in his big chair, crossed his legs comfortably, and carefully measured his finger tips together and puckered up his lips. He was conscious that he was giving the great millionaire a bad quarter of an hour. He thoughtfully reflected that it was wholesome treatment. He also made another mental tabulation on an event that had rankled for many weeks — the return of his roses by the woman lying ill upstairs. One could not fight a woman, but one might reach her through the man of the family.

"One cannot always get off with fines," he said at last, significantly. He wished the Scotchman would turn that he might see his face. The quiet voice of the Scotchman when he spoke, disturbed him. Perhaps, after all, he had not bagged his game.

"I have thought of that, too," said Andrew Martin, still looking into the fire. "Some men, when they have been rudely awakened to a wrong, and learned a principle of life, would be willing — to give themselves up. I am not man enough for that. All my life I have fought for what seemed to me worth while. I shall continue to fight — as I think best. Dishonor is one thing, Hadley — and I have thought to-day that the world's standard of honor is not over high — and disgrace to one's only child is another."

"I fancy Miss Martin, with her high ideals, would hardly be able to distinguish between the two," said

Hadley. His voice was studiously polite and solicitous.

The Scotchman wheeled around suddenly and faced him. A flush not wholly from the fire crept over his face.

"You are quite right, Hadley. One can often read in others the qualities lacking in himself."

"Thank you. We were talking about — "

"The possibility of a prosecution. Quite correct. That's rather fine talk for the gallery, but the threat hardly does here. You're a pretty big stockholder yourself, you know, and your own great steel interests are not over clean. It would certainly be best to defend the case. The State inspector, too, is not altogether unattached. We're pretty well within — the law." He stopped for a moment, and he smiled sarcastically. He was not looking at Hadley now, but out of the window on those bare, gaunt trees. "The law! What a farce it is sometimes! Stone once said that there was one law for the rich and one for the poor. I never thought of it before. Stone is of the caliber that would — give himself up for a principle."

"I fancy it will be some time before Mr. Hector Stone airs his views again. When one has been nearly cut to pieces — eyesight endangered, and permanently scarred — a long rest in a hospital seems best. I imagine his principles will wait for some time," said Hadley.

The Scotchman's gaze quickly left the view from the window, and he looked straight at Hadley.

"I don't understand you," he said slowly.

"Oh, come now, self-possession and grit are all right, and I don't mind saying I rather admire the way you're taking this thing — especially with your daughter so ill — but that won't go."

"I don't understand," said the Scotchman again, looking straight into Hadley's eyes.

"Do you mean to tell me that you don't know what all the papers are shrieking in glaring headlines, by now?"

"I have not read the papers. I have not had time or — wanted to."

"Do you actually mean that you don't know that Stone is lying injured in Saint Vincent's Hospital in the east end?"

Martin's hands clasped and unclasped themselves nervously. He gave no other sign of agitation.

"He has been hurt?"

Hadley rose with a suppressed oath.

"This is really too much. Don't you honestly know that he was one of the foremen in mill fifteen?"

Martin's hand went up to his collar quickly. He drew a deep gasping breath. He did not speak.

"He's worked there for months under the name of Joe Blackburn — the men called him Blackie — they found his card on him, and sent it to the hospital later —" Hadley broke off, suddenly conscious that the Scotchman had walked over to the window and thrown it wide open; his eyes seemed staring into nothingness.

"His hands! *His hands!* and — scarred for life!" He spoke aloud, but as though he were alone.

. . . .

After they had gone — he was not conscious when they left, Hadley and his silent partner who had scarcely spoken more than a word of greeting — he continued to stand there staring out of the casement window. By and by he began to walk the length of the room. He wondered dully if he would ever be tired again. The motion helped somewhat the tension in his head.

So Stone had worked in mill fifteen for months — Stone with the six-cylinder car and the immaculate clothes and the Chesterfield manner — when he wished to assume it — and with the blackened hands. And for months — how many he neither knew nor cared — Stone had received on a Saturday night his pay envelope doled out from the mill pay window. A hot flush swept over the Scotchman's face. That pay! Had it even kept him in cigars? Why had he stayed — knowing the danger — why? Why, if not to stand by the men he had come so often to argue for, here, at Martin's house? How he must have despised him! It had been one thing for Martin himself when young to fight upward each rung of the ladder — had not ambition and the hope of wealth been goad enough to urge him on? But for this man — for what had he served? He could not have liked the monotonous manual toil of the long days. The pittance that he earned could have meant nothing to him. He had given of his labor and his strength and his time and brain fitted for better things — to what? Was a principle of life a tangible thing after all? Was this why Blair was raving in delirium upstairs. Did she know? Scarred for life! And he, whenever he should see him again — whenever men should look, they would see that red mark of courage on this man's face — and the sign of his own dishonor.

He stopped walking at last and threw himself in a chair, and in the dark sat watching the glowing embers on the hearth. He was not of a caliber like that. He keenly realized he never could be. He was not sure he desired to be, but he was conscious that the world had been changed for him by the knowledge of a scar upon a man's face.

He dismissed Brewster shortly when he came to turn on the lights, and he did not go to dinner. He was conscious of neither hunger nor fatigue. Would not Blair's place be empty — the place she had taken when her mother died — the place she herself might never take again. He was glad — with a fierce gladness — that Mary Blair had gone. He went back over their lives together — the first meeting — it had been under a mimosa tree, as had been the wooing — in those days when he was penniless, except for a meager salary — a salary a trifle more than Hector Stone had drawn from him for months. Yet had he ever known perfect happiness since then? The realities of life had swept in, and an ambition and a craze for power had possessed him. There had been little time for love in that swift race for wealth. He had always felt in a dull way — and to-night he felt it keenly — that she had loved him to the end as she had in the beginning — and he had been so blind! He had never forgotten her, but the work had been so paramount — it had seemed to him that if one must work to win one must starve love from one's life. He had won and she had died, and he knew now, that, except for Blair, in spite of all the wealth he had lavished on her, she had been glad to go.

In the dark he rose slowly, and slowly crossed the room and the hall beyond and climbed the stairs. He walked as an old man walks, with bent shoulders and bowed head. At the landing that led off to the wing where Blair's apartments were, he paused, steadying himself with one hand on the newel-post of the staircase. A dim light glowed from her bedroom, and as he listened, wild incoherent ravings reached him, and he shivered as with the palsy. Then, haltingly, he turned into the passage that led to his own rooms and passed in and closed the door.

XIII.

THE hours dragged themselves out into long days and nights, and the nights and days passed into weeks. Outside in the grounds of The Anchorage, the last vestige of snow melted from the lawns, and the violets came and went as silently as souls at death creep forth from outer forms. The first soft green hung on the willows by the stream in the pasture, and in the garden where Thomas and his assistants worked, a miracle of beauty was being wrought from the dull cold clod that seemed almost unwilling to yield up its secrets to the sun's increasing warmth. Inside the great house dwelt a silence more profound than in the heart of outer nature, broken only by faint necessary noises or voices pitched to their lowest key. The shrill discordant cries of delirium, in the room where Blair lay ill, had ceased and had given place to a stillness and a stupor from which it seemed impossible to arouse her. The fever enveloped her body as a sheet of flame envelopes an object that for a time resists its will only later to yield and crumble to its fall. It was as though for her all time had ceased, and spirit and consciousness lay suspended in a vast void. And day and night, unseen by Andrew Martin in his agony, or the physicians or the nurses or the retinue of servants, but sensed by all, stood the Overwhelming Presence by the door, bearing in its hands the scales.

It came — that Overwhelming Presence — to be at last a tangible thing to Martin. It followed him in his comings and his goings — it oppressed him with a weight that he could not lift. In the silences of the night it awakened him from fitful feverish dreams of a burning mill and maimed and broken lives, and stood specter-like above him, and there in the darkness there came at its bidding the vision of years to come, barren of man's regard, of woman's love — visions in which only a vast avenue of gold stretched out in endless miles ahead of him, stripped of all except its own gleaming splendor.

As the aged walk, he walked about the great house until, driven by the Presence, he would creep as some hunted thing, once strong, now abjectly weak, out into the grounds. None of the servants except it might be Hannah or old Brewster or Thomas, dared to address him. Sometimes, half mad, he would hunt Thomas out in the garden and try to talk to him. An odd change took place in their interviews. The old retainer found no trace, in the lined and haggard face, in the stooped shoulders, in the uncertain voice, of the able, calculating, precise master of six weeks ago. Thomas offered the silent consolation of his life work — a garden that grew more beautiful as time went on; that was the envy of all the other big estates for miles around, and in which for years, except for

Blair, he had held undisputed sway. But there came an hour when the sight of the flowers that for years Martin had only dimly appreciated — when the mimosa tree — was more than he could bear, and, bent and shriveled, he would retrace his steps to the great house to be met by the watching, waiting Presence there.

That was the afternoon that Lorimer and the great specialist sought him out in the library and told him that somewhere around midnight they expected a change, that the scales so long suspended must drop either to the side of life or death. They left him as they had found him, a crouching object of a man in his big chair in the wainscoted library.

The hearth below the high mantel was cleanly swept, and stretched its tiled length in front of him. The fireplace was filled with growing plants, where earlier in the year the great logs had burned. A chill took possession of him, and he glanced around the huge empty room. In it, in all the house, save Blair, there dwelt no human creature of his own; there existed in all his life no one upon whom now in his weakness he might lean. Had it come to this, he wondered dimly, the impotency of gold, that it could neither buy back men's lives nor mend widowed hearts nor return to children the fathers they had lost — that had no power to make a man's arm grow again where it had been wrenched off — that was of too base a coinage to buy human ties or human loves; that was powerless to save Blair if the Presence chose to drop the scales the fraction of an inch; that never in this world could wipe out the scar on the face of Hector Stone.

He started and leaned forward suddenly in his chair, gripping its arms with his fingers, and he stared and stared into the fireplace of flowers. He had never seen the scar; he had never heard from Hector Stone since this desolation had come to him.

He got to his feet and made for his desk telephone. An overpowering impulse to see Stone came to him — to look upon his work, the scar. An overpowering sense of fear such as he had never known swept over him — the need of some one (and in that instant his groping soul reached out and sensed Stone's own) for some one who *cared* to watch out this night with him.

At the telephone he hesitated. After all where was he to be found — at the hospital — at his old chambers? Feverishly he rang up both. From Saint Vincent's came the word that Mr. Stone — Joe Blackburn — had been dismissed a fortnight ago. From the chambers came the word that Stone had moved, and had left behind no address. The information department of the telephone system gave no clew.

He slipped back into his desk chair, his nails against his mouth, a thwarted and a half-crazed Thing. His brain — that brain that had devised such vast schemes for self-enrichment on other creatures' woe — had it forsaken him now? He closed his eyes to hide from himself the Shadowy Presence facing him; behind it stood the gray ghosts of mill men looking at him with haunting eyes. Then as a tree might suddenly snap in a storm, he flung his head and arms on the desk and cried, as he had only cried once in his life before, down in the far south alone in the darkness of a Mississippi night under a mimosa tree, the hour Blair had been born.

When it was over he began to think more clearly than he had done since the accident to mill fifteen. Something of the old ability to marshal his forces came back to him and for a brief space the Haunting Presence and the ghosts drew back and were forgotten. He reached for pen and paper and wrote to the Chief of Police — a personal letter — and another to Hector Stone. Then he rang for Brewster. Through all the years of service, Brewster had never failed him.

At ten that night he heard the sound of an automobile in the courtyard, then Brewster's voice in the hall. The impatience, the earlier hope, suddenly fled. What was it he had done? How could he bring himself to face the scar? He switched off the lights and only one with a leaded glass shade of Tiffany ware cast its soft glow and shadows on the desk at which he sat. The rest of the big room was in darkness. He could hear it — the step he remembered — he was almost at the door. Then Brewster's voice.

" Mr. Stone, sir."

He rose as Brewster closed the paneled door behind him and stood by the desk waiting. It seemed to him he could not move to meet him. He was conscious that Stone still stood by the door, his hat in his hand, regarding him.

By and by he left the desk and came forward, and he did not see, or seeing care, the start of surprise Stone gave. Had not his own mirror reflected his changed face for weeks?

"So you have come. It was good of you," he said at length.

"I have come — yes."

Stone remained standing in the shadow of the door and did not offer to break the silence that fell. Martin went back to the desk and began nervously to play with a Florentine paper-knife. He was acutely grateful for the shadows that hid Stone's face from him a little longer.

"Where did Brewster find you?" he asked, trying to speak lightly. Then: "Won't you have a chair?"

Stone moved across the room. The Scotchman knew that he was coming nearer the arc of light, and he suddenly sat down.

"You have a treasure, Mr. Martin, in your man," said Stone, standing by the desk. "He never traced me until after nine, but he wouldn't give up. He found me at Doctor Lorimer's."

"Lorimer's!" the older man started. "You mean you are —" he broke off.

"Staying with Bragdon Lorimer. He was my uncle's best friend. I have known him ever since

I was a little shaver. He helped to care for me at Saint Vincent's."

The Scotchman heard a chair move and knew that Stone was seated opposite. Still he could not raise his bent head leaning in his hand. Still he could not bring himself to look upon that scar. Stone's voice reached him. It held and charmed him still.

"You sent for me. Can I be of service?"

The Scotchman's shaking hand dropped suddenly from his face. Across the length of the big flat-topped desk he looked at Stone.

"I believe I am slowly going mad," he said. "The mills — the dead men — and Blair — and *that* —" he pointed to the left side of Stone's face where, in the arc of light, the long red disfigurement mercilessly stood out.

Stone began to trace patterns on the desk with the tip of his finger.

"It is not a pretty thing — is it?" he asked at length, "but of late I have scarcely remembered it." Then after a pause: "Why have you sent for me?"

The Scotchman's nails went up again to his mouth; he crouched lower in his chair. His hunted eyes rested fascinated on the mark on Stone's face.

"I *am* going mad," he said, "I believe I am mad already. I sent for you because, although I wronged you, I need you to help me through to-night. The dead men — they are always near me — and the women's faces and the children's cries — and Blair — *Blair* —"

He broke off and his face was as colorless as the dead men's they had carried from the horrors of mill fifteen.

Stone shivered suddenly. He had schooled himself for days for this meeting, but the look upon the other man's face — or was it the mention of a woman's name — unnerved him. He turned his face away.

The long silence grew — there seemed nothing but silence — no sound in all the house of which they were conscious. Even the clock on the high mantel had stopped.

"Yesterday," said Stone slowly, "I helped Lorimer with a case in the slums. It was in the midst of filth and want and despair, and he burned an eating sore out of a man's body with caustic —" The slow voice changed a little, growing sterner, "Mr. Martin, there is a filth worse than vermin and decay — a want grimmer and more terrible than that of physical poverty — a despair keener than the bodily needs of men. I live in both worlds; I have worked in both worlds, and I know, and the cancer on the morals of the rich is worse than that running sore. Caustic is needed for both, leaving maimed, incomplete bodies, it is true, but perhaps restoring — health."

The Scotchman dropped his forehead on the end of the desk.

"For God's sake — *stop!*"

Again Stone's voice changed. This time it hardly seemed the same.

"I am here to help you watch through the night."

To himself he said, "I was watching when you sent for me."

"You know then that — that to-night — they expect a change?"

"Yes; Doctor Lorimer has kept me posted from the first."

"Ah!"

Then the silence fell again, and by and by Stone noticed that the bent shoulders of the man opposite were shivering with cold. He leaned forward and pressed the electric bell, which Brewster, who had been haunting the door, hastily answered.

"Some wine for Mr. Martin," said Stone, "and a good fire, please."

Later, as Brewster knelt before the hearth, Stone came up behind him and reset the clock upon the mantel. It was five minutes of eleven.

"Doctor Lorimer is here?" he asked in a low voice, and his hand shook as he replaced his watch.

"Yes, sir, and Doctor Curtis, too. I heard them say they would spend the night. Miss Blair is mighty sick, sir."

"Yes, Brewster — mighty sick."

Brewster applied the match and sat back on his heels to watch that the kindling caught. By and by he looked up at Stone.

"Has she any chance, Mr. Stone?"

"I don't know, Brewster. I — don't — know —" said Stone at length. "Do you?"

Brewster rose slowly to his feet and gave a nervous cough.

"Years ago, sir, my old mother taught me before she died that the first and last chance is — prayer," he gave his attention wholly to the fire, "but we don't think much of those things now, sir."

Stone was silent. Quite irrelevantly he saw the face of Pierre Lamoré in the flames.

"Anything more, sir?"

"Nothing, thank you, Brewster. Wait," as the man would have gone, "get word to Doctor Lorimer that Mr. Martin is waiting news of any change here. That — he sent for me — that I shall wait with him until we — know."

"Yes, sir, and if I might say it, sir, it's mighty glad I am that Mr. Martin's got a friend to help him through to-night — " he hesitated, looked once towards the crouching immovable figure at the desk and then softly closed the door.

When he had gone Stone left the fire and recrossed the room, and poured out some wine. He touched Martin on the arm.

"Drink this," he commanded, "it will help you. Then come with me to the fire."

Unresistingly the Scotchman did as he was bidden. By and by Stone got him settled in an armchair by the hearth. Once he leaned over and chafed the older man's cold hands.

After a little, the warmth of the great fire to his body and the heat of the wine to his brain, soothed and brought to Martin a certain languor such as he had not known in weeks. He stared into the fire, but there came no visions of horror to disturb him now. The Brooding Presence was forgotten — perhaps shielded from him by the strong will of the man beside him, who seemed to give him strength. For this brief time the ghosts remained unseen and he forgot the slow ticking of the clock, the scar upon the face of the other man, and the battle being fought upstairs. He leaned back in his chair, and a brain half-maddened from terror and fatigue, grew calm, as Martin closed his eyes and slept.

In the chair on the other side of the fireplace, Stone sat and waited for the passing of the hour. Then it was that the mask he wore slowly dropped, and in the silence of the room, with none to see, the soul of the man lay bare.

Upstairs they were fighting for her life, those men of skill. How slowly, how quickly the minutes passed! He counted them by his pulse, and each heart throb was for her. Only by chance, by the need of another man, had he gotten in her home to-night. Those others — those trained men and women upstairs — they had a right to her near presence closer than his own. His own! What rights were his?

He leaned forward, his elbows on his knees, his forehead in his hands. And he searched his brain for the philosophy that had sustained him in his work in the under world; he grasped for the hope; the faith that Pierre Lamoré knew and understood so well. For his soul lying in that dark abyss there seemed neither time nor place. Then it was that his consciousness swept into the void where for days her own had lain suspended, and his own reached out instinctively for hers.

"Blair," he whispered, "where are you, Blair? . . . Come!" he commanded.

The void changed into a sweeping overwhelming Sea of Consciousness. He was the Sea — the All and — he was nothing. And she —

"Blair!" he said again. The Consciousness was All. It held her, too.

"*Blair!*" And he breathed it to himself. It was as if he had called upon the name of God.

XIV.

OUT into the new unfolding world of spring, a month later, they carried her, and laid her in a long wicker chair in the sunshine. There she neither spoke nor moved, and except for the yearning earnest eyes with which she looked around on old familiar objects, she might have been asleep. For a while the nurse lingered near and then, seeing that she needed or desired nothing, left her to herself. She was dimly glad when she saw her go, but would have made no effort to dismiss her. Effort was a thing of the past — as was thought. In the low valley of her convalescence the soul of her stood mute and motionless, and for the present the dim heights of health to be rescaled seemed a remote possibility. She was conscious only of a dim awakening in her weakness to the things of outward sense. Had she ever seen the trees so soft and green — how wonderful a tree was — how strong. . . . And the odor of the box hedge, how it came to her sweet and pungent after the night's shower! Then there were bits of delicate color beyond the garden hedge — the flowers — some day she would see them nearer, perhaps, but it was a long walk to the garden and the mimosa tree — once she had thought it near at hand — she could not see the mimosa tree very well. It had no flowers as yet. . . . What was it about the mimosa tree that once had made her sad. . . . How tired she was — how tired was her brain. If the nurse would only come with old Brewster to carry her upstairs. . . .

Each day they brought her out and each day she lay a little longer in the wicker chair, and each day the opening world of spring grew fairer, and she read an inner revelation she had never seen before, as she watched the thickening foliage of the trees, the increasing bulk and beauty of the flowers Thomas brought daily and placed on the porch table near her.

Slowly, as one awakens from a half-conscious doze, she awakened to the realities of life again. It was the day Thomas had added to his offering of flowers one slender spray from the mimosa tree, that the first keen consciousness came back. After he had gone she lay staring at it — then she half rose in her chair and touched it. She was acutely aware of her weakness. Unseen she laid her head down on the porch table near and prayed for the gift of tears.

She had never once asked for her father. And Lorimer, fearing a relapse, had kept him away. Martin used to look at her sometimes from a curtained window or shadowed doorway, as old Brewster bore her past him, white and emaciated, in his arms.

Besides the money and the mills what had his life held but Blair? And now Blair seemed unconscious alike of his existence or his need. That his need for her had become paramount, he grew to know with an overwhelming knowledge. Sometimes he drove over to the mills and he would creep into Jenkins' office, shame in the eyes he never lifted, if, by chance, any passed him on his way. Experts had been working for weeks on the new safety devices for the machinery through all the twenty mills — otherwise things were much the same. He had never recrossed the thresholds of the stricken homes. He knew that each month Hadley sent them the pensions. He did not know that there were those in that vast throng of working men who each morning and each night filed in and out to labor — puppets to a shrill whistle's call — whose eyes looked with envy on the pension Griefstin drew for his maimed arm; or that there were hearts beneath the grime and sweat that beat faster with the divine longing to renounce their lives as the other men had done, that sometime their women might have time to rest — their children have more cause to smile.

Once in a shamefaced way he mentioned to Jenkins an increase in their pay, the possibility of shorter hours, but with a business instinct and a business logic that had drawn Jenkins to him long ago and held him for twenty-five years in his employ, the manager had talked convincingly of the folly of such a deviation from the accepted schedule. When the Scotchman had hesitatingly asked if some other mill owners had not of late been trying such experiments, Jenkins met him with a knowledge of statistics as to the loss per annum such experiments caused — of the falling away of political influence — crushing defeats from the Interests — and Martin stood appalled. Of course if Mr. Martin wished to face all this — to curtail his power for a wild experimental dream and turn a thriving industry, that now yielded him a fortune every year, into a losing investment — if he wished to incur the enmity and ridicule of men even more powerful than himself in the world of finance — the mills — unmortgaged, uninvolved in any way — a modern mine of gold — were his to do with as he liked. In that case, he, Jenkins, would feel that his day of service in the concern was at an end. The Scotchman, filled with panic at the thought of losing his right-hand man, and alone facing the unknown proposition, cowering beneath the threat of failure and ridicule, unresistingly signed his veto to the paper Jenkins put before him. It was an appeal from the men for a larger night shift. Jenkins assured him that the shift was already large enough, larger than like shifts in other mills of the kind throughout the country. The men were a shrewd lot and were taking advantage of the unfortunate accident that was still fresh in their minds. Jenkins was willing to admit that he had underestimated the danger of the machinery — he had never taken very much to the mechanical side of the work — but he was on his own ground with the men.

The Scotchman left him complacently giving orders unconscious that he had given Jenkins a bad quarter of an hour. He got into his waiting automobile, and in a dispirited way ordered Willis to drive him home, — the word was a farce since Blair's illness; since the indifference with which she treated his existence. Perhaps it came from her weakness — Lorimer had once in an uncertain way suggested it — it was a hope to which he clung. Some day she might arouse from the lethargy that seemed to enfold her and might ask for him. Since the night in the big library when Stone had awakened him and told him Blair would live, the haunting ghosts had now and then faded away, and he had known a dim semblance of peace. After a while, when the horror had grown dimmer — when Blair came back to him — life would be as it was before. *When Blair came back!* Would Blair ever come back and take that place in his life again, he wondered. He put the thought from him and stared across the road. They were passing through the settlement of rough and decaying cottages where the workmen lived. Did they live, he wondered suddenly, was their existence — *life?* Perhaps his old defense that he had once worked for less than they — that every man had his chance — was a fallacy after all, and suddenly and quite irrelevantly he thought of Hector Stone. He had seen Stone twice since that night in the library at the Anchorage. Once Stone had called and had sat with him an hour. He remembered it was the longest hour he had ever spent — facing that long and jagged scar — the scar — and the ghosts. Once he had passed Stone on the street. He wondered how Stone would meet Jenkins' argument. Stone, too, knew the men, and perhaps from a different standpoint than did Jenkins.

Bent, and with the weight of years upon him that he had never felt until of late, the Scotchman descended to the courtyard. Brewster met him, and deferentially held open the door of the tonneau. For a moment Martin hesitated, a slow hope dawning in his eyes.

"Your mistress?"

"In her chair, sir, under the trees. I carried her there an hour ago. Doctor Lorimer left his regards, sir, and said she was gaining every day."

"That is good. She — she has asked for me?"

Old Brewster shook his head.

"Not yet, sir, perhaps to-morrow, sir —"

Andrew Martin stepped past him.

"Yes, perhaps to-morrow, Brewster."

And still more bent, he passed through the hall and into the library alone. It was always alone. . . . For a moment he stood in the middle of the room. On every hand was luxury — such luxury as few men know — and he remembered with a thrill of conquest and of pride that he had won it — wrested it from the hands of fate. How well had he built his structure after all! Should he renounce now at the summit the power he had so long craved — curtail it the fraction of an inch, or see diminished the vast hoard for which he had toiled and sweated and given the years of his life that might have been spent in enjoying other things? The blood of his youth and of his prime had gone into the struggle, and he was too old now for the things other men cared for — sport and travel, or art, perhaps, and books. He had paid the price.

The thoughts were checked as wild horses are brought to a stop. He had paid the price.

In the empty room with its high carved wainscoting and priceless pictures, and windows leading to a larger view of beauty and possessions, he stood quite still — alone.

The price! — was there something existing in those wretched homes of his workmen that was lacking here?

Was there something after all beyond price — beyond the reach of his long arm of power?

And once again he saw the mimosa tree in the far South. Once more beneath it he saw Mary Blair — a child held in her arms.

XV.

IT was the next day that Martin came unexpectedly upon Blair, and the meeting that he had hoped for, and yet dreaded for weeks, became a reality. He had thought that she was upstairs in the big sun parlor, asleep. The ghosts that for a time had been quieted had risen again, their haunting semblances at his side. It was, perhaps, to rid himself of them that he had started on a walk around the grounds. For a while he had watched Thomas at his work among the flowers, and talked a little to him in a half-hearted way, and then had slowly retraced his steps toward the house. On rounding the southern corner he came upon her before he was aware of it, and retreat seemed impossible. She had heard his step upon the graveled pathway and slowly turned her head in his direction. For a moment she looked at him in silence, and he, before whom some of the great moneyed men of America had stood dumb, began to tremble childishly, waiting for a word. Then, without comment of any kind, with a gesture of inexpressible weariness, she turned her face away. A slow, dull rage awoke in him that was stilled as he noticed the frailness of her face, the transparent look of the hand where Mary Blair's ring still shone. He came forward and stood by the arm of her chair, the paternal, all the best in him, rising to meet her weakness and her need.

"Blair," he said, "my bairn!"

For a brief moment the white half-closed eyelids fluttered, and it seemed as though she would look at him. Then the colorless lips trembled, but she neither spoke nor moved.

Desperately he felt the gulf between them widening, and more desperately still came the knowledge of his need of her just now.

"You are getting stronger? Oh, Blair, these weeks without you — you have been so ill!" he spoke disconnectedly — hurriedly, feverishly, watching her face for a change.

Her eyes opened wide and she stared across the lawn. "Yes," she said, "I have been so ill — if I only could have died!"

The voice was weak and passionless and without hope.

"Blair!"

She went on as if she had not heard him call her name.

"The best in me died long ago, yet something — " she hesitated a moment, and a faint color crept into her face that he, intently watching, did not understand, "*something* — kept me here."

"It was because I needed you," said Martin, and his face was as colorless as hers.

"You do not really need me — " he remembered afterwards the calmness of her voice — "there is nothing that I have to give you now that you have not had all these years. You have the money that has been your need ever since I could remember — it broke my mother's heart and it is breaking mine — but — you have the money still."

"Hush, you do not know what you are saying — you shall not speak so," and Martin began to walk up and down to still the rising tide of shame and anger within him.

"I have had weeks to think it over, and I know what I am saying," and she turned her eyes to his. "I never knew all my mother suffered — until now."

He said nothing, but he walked a little faster.

"I — I was so proud of you," she said brokenly, like a little child.

He stopped in his walk and began to shiver in spite of the warm day. The fever of anger had receded and it seemed to him he had been plunged into a bath of ice. Listening, he knew that her faith in him was dead.

"As soon as I am stronger I am going away," she said after a little, and she drew the shawl around her shoulders a little closer, as if the chill of the blight had come on her, too.

He started, and stopped in his walk.

"Going — where — with whom?"

"I'm not sure where," she said wearily, "just somewhere to get away from things — and myself. I shall take Hannah — good old Hannah — somewhere I shall learn to face life again. I have no one but Hannah. I have never had any close friends —

real friends — as other women. My life was my mother's before she died. Then it belonged to you."

"Blair — let it be mine still!"

For a long while she looked at him, and in the weeks and months that followed he remembered every line in her white face.

"You never were — all I thought you," she said slowly.

"I am no worse than other men," and he spoke sharply, and the flame of anger burned within him again. "I am not as bad as many. I have lived a clean life — as men's lives go. I have never consciously forgotten — your mother. As for the mills — the money — " the words were pouring out to escape from the white heat of fury that burned behind them — "what — besides this — " he motioned to the home and grounds — "besides the physical comforts — luxuries of life, if you will — have I gotten from the money? Have I withheld it from worthy charities — have I begrudged it to the servants in the house — did I ever stint your mother — has not your smallest wish been bought and gratified?"

Slowly she sat up in her chair and leaned forward without support — a thing she had not done in weeks — and she clasped her hands together tightly in front of her breast. White, emaciated, with shining eyes she looked at him again.

"Listen," she said, her voice low with emotion, "There are needs in my life — in the life of every woman — as there were in my mother's life — that cannot be bought and gratified so. Your money brought you more than the luxuries. No human man or woman ever toiled as you toiled — ever renounced the finer things as you did — without some purpose. My mother knew long ago what I, until now, only dimly guessed. It was not all for us — it was not first for us — you struggled. You wanted something more than the luxuries. You wanted the esteem of other men — you wanted glory — above all you wanted — power! And when you won them — all those great gifts of life — how did you use them? For the esteem of men whose hands I would not touch, you killed the Labor Bill before the legislature of your state. For the glory, you built and endowed a home for fallen women, while you gave starvation wages to the women in your mills. Was the home — to shelter them? And for your power — because you had power over hundreds of workmen that toiled to add to your wealth — you refused them the protection of safety devices on the machinery, demanded by bare humanity; and their blood, and the anguish of their women and little children, and the scar on the face of the man who shared his life with them — is on you, and is on my heart."

For a moment she sat as she was, then with a long breath of exhaustion, let herself back in her chair.

"For years you were my ideal of strength — of wisdom — my mother, in her love for you, kept the ideals bright. If I questioned your indifference, as children will, she hushed me with a look or word. Did you not labor for us, and, after us, did you not labor for the good that you might do?"

He listened, and he was as a man changed to stone. She knew him as he was — as he had barely known himself — and she was judging him.

After a while he spoke. He had no thought of questioning her source of information — it was pitifully correct — and in his fear he forgot all except that he had lost her and soon was to lose even sight of her form. He resorted to the commonplace.

"You — cannot travel — without means."

A smile infinitely sad crept into her eyes. Even in this moment the paramount thought was uppermost.

"I have thought of that," she said. "I shall not need overmuch — I never knew until recently how really little one can subsist on — and I shall have more than enough for Hannah and myself. Have you forgotten the very comfortable income left me five years ago by my mother's single brother?"

He had quite forgotten it and his start of sur[illegible] was her answer. [illegible] — this need of h[illegible] for him — was sever[illegible].

He looked around [illegible] hi[illegible]ng way, without seeing any[illegible] his [illegible]sion [illegible]ared, and he saw himself [illegible] these [illegible]s alone. He saw himself in the big wainsc[illegible] dining-room at his meals — a[illegible] — drivin[illegible] with Willis, perhaps, but still — alone! How the ghosts would walk and follow him! . . .

Then he turned on her fiercely, with the instinct of a wounded animal to retaliate upon him. He forgot the years when Blair had filled his life — when he had had time to give her from the building of his wealth — forgot his need of her — his tie with Mary

“As you please,” he said coldly, and his face looked [illegible] it had on the day he had killed the Labor [illegible] when you are strong enough — when [illegible] says it is safe — I have no doubt that Han- [illegible] be trusted, but you need not suppose I shall live at the Anchorage — alone.”

He looked at her quite steadily, and she had never known until then how merciless his eyes could be.

“I do not think I understand you,” she said, and she tried to keep her voice from trembling.

He heard the trembling and he was glad — fiercely glad — and because the instinct of the primeval was uppermost, with [illegible] loating desire to wound — he forgot Lorim[illegible] arnings and the whiteness of the emaciated face before him — the face of Blair and the face of Blair's mother that had haunted him of late.

“It is quite plain. You go your way — with your money. I go my way — with mine. I shall buy me — if I wish it — pleasures and diversions sometimes called dissipations. Later it shall buy me — a wife for my home.”

The hot color swept over her face — then as suddenly receded.

“First — if you wish it — you would dishonor my mother's name, and later put another woman in her place?"

"Just that — but subject to my will, my pleasure, my caprice, my power. I shall use that power as I have never used it — until my last breath — and I shall die cursing the fate that takes it from me. Do you understand?" He drew down his mouth a little. Fascinated, she watched his face.

"I hear," she said at length, "but you cannot expect me to understand."

He laughed disagreeably and turning, walked away. Dimly he was conscious that hours later in the library the ghosts would come again, but just now he did not care. The instinct to crush was on him. Had he looked back — had he once hesitated —

Five minutes later, when Brewster and the nurse came to carry her upstairs, they found her quite unconscious in the long chair, her hand pressed to her throat — the sapphire gleaming in the sun.

XVI.

MORE colorless than the face he had left upstairs was that of Martin, whom Lorimer encountered as he was leaving three hours later. The physician looked at the Scotchman searchingly and not without suspicion.

"She is better," he said briefly; "it looks as though she had had a shock. I do not understand it. She was doing well. I have left orders that the nurse watch her more closely. I do not look for any serious results — but it has been a setback — and she hasn't strength for setbacks."

"You are coming again, to-night?"

Lorimer puckered up his lips thoughtfully.

"There shouldn't be any need for that," he said, "she is sleeping now, and when she awakens the nurse will telephone me how she is. If she's as well as I believe she will be, I'm planning to hear Hector Stone speak to-night before the National Federation."

"I had not heard," said the Scotchman slowly.

"That isn't the fault of the press," said Lorimer tartly. "It's been in big type for three days. It's considered rather an honor to be called to speak before the Federation. Stone is the youngest man they have ever asked."

"Indeed!" The Scotchman's throat seemed dry.

"He's a big man — Hector," said Lorimer, "big in frame and heart and brain. He's the kind of man this country needs just now. I've known him since he first wore kilts, and John Stone and I used to talk of him and predict great things for him. When John Stone died he left his millions unreservedly to him. That uncle was something of a connoisseur in men and he knew Hector's caliber as he knew his own."

"What's his subject?" It seemed to Martin that he asked against his will.

Lorimer laughed a little.

"Brotherhood," he said briefly. "Rather a vague subject or a Utopian dream in this era of warring factors."

He picked up his hat from the settle in the hall.

"Nothing more to excite that daughter of yours," he said. "Mind — or I'll give up the case." He looked at the Scotchman again in a critical way and opened the door into the courtyard.

Martin went back to the ghost-haunted library and picked up a financial journal and tried to read. His fears for Blair's safety had been stilled by Lorimer's reassuring words, and the anger of the morning that had flamed at so high a heat had settled into a dull glow of defiance and resentment. But he was restless and he could not keep his mind on the rise and fall of stocks. The all-absorbing passion of his life — self-aggrandizement — to-day failed to hold him and his wandering attention. He pulled the morning paper toward him. It had never been unfolded. Of late the comments in the papers regarding himself were things rather to be avoided. On the first sheet in big type was a column and a half on the Federation meeting that evening and the coming speech of Stone. There was an editorial on the same subject. He pushed the paper from him with an impatient gesture. The press — the world — or was it himself? — was going mad.

At half past seven that night, he got into his car and briefly ordered Willis to drive to the Federation Hall. A few moments before eight he entered with the crowd — a soft hat pulled down over his eyes — and he slipped into a seat in the extreme rear of the hall. He chose it because of the shadow cast by a near-by gallery column. It was the first time he had gone out publicly since the mill disaster. He smiled grimly as he sat in the shadow and waited. Something had changed — was it himself or the world's judgment of him — that had made him, who once had been a prominent figure in the world, grateful for the shadow that hid him. He did not analyze the impulse that had led him here to-night. It might have been curiosity or the desire to get away from the ghosts.

From the shadow he watched the hall rapidly filling up, realizing that he had come none too soon in order to be seated. The place was crowded. Behind him, men and even women were standing three rows deep. He hardly knew what he had expected, — perhaps a gathering of working men or those of the middle class — but he had not looked for the faces and the kind of people he saw here to-night. Here and there in patches he saw men and women of the working class. Two rows ahead of him he recognized with a start, a young clerk that assisted Jenkins in his office; but for the most part the clothes — the faces — the cultivated voices that reached him were those of men and women in the upper strata of society. So Stone drew his own around him still, as well as the toilers of the underworld.

In a few minutes Stone and the President of the Federation came on the platform. If he had been surprised before, he was startled now at the burst of applause that greeted their appearance. Waiting for it to subside, he had a chance to study the faces of the men on the platform. The President was a man whose name was known throughout the country, who, for his work civic and scientific, had been decorated abroad. Stone looked unusually young beside his lined and venerable face. In a few words — as eloquent as they were simple — he introduced the younger man and then sat down.

Very slowly — very easily — Stone came forward and stood facing the waiting throng, one hand resting on a small table near by. At his approach the applause began again. It was his first appearance since the mill disaster — since his identity with Joe Blackburn had become known — since he had been at, or addressed, any public gathering. He had left them — the men and women of his own world and the men and women of the under world in which for so long he had worked unknown — strong, with the vigor of health, physical and mental — alert in movement — forcible in walk, a face naturally thoughtful, unmarked. He stood before them tonight and looked over that vast sea of faces — a man thinner for weeks of physical suffering — movements slower — the very turn of his head less alert, and bearing on his left cheek the sign of his life's devotion — the long and jagged scar. The pity of it — of the blighting mark that would never leave his face, and of the way in which that scar had been won — struck a sudden spontaneous chord in his waiting audience, and the applause ceased and gave way to a low murmur in which once Martin caught his own name.

As though realizing the ground was dangerous, and as if impatient of the pity and the sympathy, Stone took a step forward, raised his hand for silence and commenced to speak.

He talked for an hour, and for an hour they hung upon his words — the tones of his voice — his few gestures. They accorded him the greatest compliment an orator can desire or know — an attention so fixed as to leave no room for comment or applause. At first Martin heeded little that he said. He was held astounded by a charm he could not have analyzed if he had desired — the charm that had held him months ago when Stone had first called at The Anchorage to plead for the safety of the men. How had he ever resisted him — this man now holding them so? And he — Martin — through Jenkins — had doled out to him each week for months that pittance in the pay envelope. . . . He could hear the voice — well modulated, cultivated, penetrating — in every inflection, that strange nameless charm. . . . At first the words of the speaker made little impression on him; then by degrees he became conscious of something of their import, and towards the end he became keenly attentive, the slow deep color mounting to his head as he sat and listened. . . . Distinctly now Stone's words came to him.

"Long ago, when I was a boy, I heard a great speaker say that Brotherhood is not Equality. I believe these words and the thought behind them helped to shape my life. Have any of you seriously considered just what equality would mean? You who would revolutionize society by the discontent of Socialism, how would you bridge the vast chasm of the intellect of a Socrates and the beggar in the Athenian streets; how join the aspirations of a Spinoza with the sordid passions of the degenerate and the criminal? You answer, perhaps, by education for all — by substituting reformatories for the present degrading penal system — by building public baths and playgrounds — all excellent, I admit, and all admirable and necessary if we are to keep up with the march of progress, and all possessing, whether we are conscious of it or not, the germ of selfless service — the foundation on which all brotherhood is built. But brotherhood implies more than this. It is to man what physics is to the world of natural force; what chemistry is to the world of atoms — the one unfailing Law. Do you think huge walls and stately gardens and perfectly appointed homes, sufficient safeguard against the diseases your indifference allows to breed and fester in the slums? You have no surety against the bacteria of science — your life is one with the life of the lowest, and as our perfect health demands pure circulation in every part, you cannot, in your arrogance and pride and self-aloofment, say you are pure or healthy or have strength, while you allow the blood that contains impurity and disease and weakness to be poured from the great heart of humanity. Brotherhood is something more than a name and something more than the deeding of a big stretch of ground by the rich man for the public use — more than the endowing of an institution, or the building of libraries where the poor can read. Did the irony of it ever come to you — the uselessness of libraries to some of the men who work in steel twelve and fourteen hours out of every twenty-four — sometimes seven days in the week — often at a twenty-four hour stretch? Can you take that in? Can you conceive the strain and the fatigue and the hopelessness of such men? Can you blame them — who know no home life — for lack of self-improvement and education? Can you judge them because as a man drowning they grasp the nearest object at hand, not stopping in their terror and despair to question its stability? Have you the reason or the heart to censure them because they turn to the only helps they see — socialism and strikes and revolution? Have you ever read or even heard the story of the children who make paper boxes day and night, night and day — to whom all time is alike — to whom Christmas is unknown? Do you know that in this country live men who build their pile of gold on their feeble strength? Could I convince you that to-day — in this Free America — white women are bought and sold into a slavery of shame — to which, in comparison, the bonds of the black man many of you fought to abolish fifty years ago are as nothing? Would you believe me if I showed you the deeds and rent lists and mortgages on such houses that are a source of income to one of the richest and most fashionable churches in the New World today — dedicated to the name of Christ? And lest you think my sympathies are only with the labor class, and that I secretly uphold socialism, let me try to show you another side for the need of brotherhood. It will come as a new thought, perhaps, to some of you, and because it is the hardest lesson of brotherhood to learn, it is the last — tolerance towards those in high places, who allow such things to exist. Let me cite a concrete case to you. I once knew a man in the far West who had amassed a fortune — a fortune tainted with the blood and tears of weaker men and women — a fortune so vast that the yearly income counted up into the millions. With a fraction of the total he bought himself great tracts of land and built one palace in the West — another in the East. A great army of workmen and farmers and secretaries were employed — few of whom he ever saw and fewer still that he knew by name. And one night a friend asked him why he had never married. 'I have never had the time,' he said, 'to give thought to such things — I was too busy making money in the early years to think of making a home, now I do not care to.' A little later I met him and some question of art came up. 'I do not know,' he said, 'anything about it. I have been too busy all these years for art or travel. I do not care for such things. There is only one thing that I do care for — work.' And each year his millions, like a snowball rolling, gather more, and his great palaces are filled with pictures chosen by other men of taste and knowledge, and which he cannot appreciate. His stables and garages are stocked with thoroughbreds and cars of the latest model that it would take a man of leisure weeks to exercise and enjoy. . . . You give freely of your sympathy to the starving and the poor, the diseased and the blind, and you give of your alms as well. Have you no coin of pity — no thought of sympathy to share with a man like this, who is spiritually starved and poverty stricken, on whose great powerful mind grows an ulcer worse than those on men's bodies in the slums — who is blind to the beauties in nature and in art — who has had 'no time for woman's love, or to know the treasures gold cannot buy in the heart of a little child? Is there no brotherhood needed here? . . . How will you — men and women of a broader outlook — meet the issue?

"Do you look for your government to solve such problems when your legislatures are blackened and dishonored by bribery and bossism? No amount of private charities — no matter how great they are nor how big the need they fill — will ever bridge the gulf. Not until brotherhood becomes a living reality to every employer in the country, as well as to the employed — until the elder brothers, with their more developed brains, their larger reasoning faculties, their greater experience, feel their responsibility to every younger brother in the family of the state as they do to the younger members of their own hearts and homes — not until those younger brothers, with their less matured minds, less controlled and balanced natures, are willing to learn the lessons of service and obedience to the elder ones — will the religious, economic and civic problems before us to-day, be solved. You may call it coöperation if you will — the principle is the same — but if you want and expect a sane, safe policy of advancement, you will begin to work out this idea of brotherhood in your homes, your state, your land. Do you say it is a phantom that I follow — a dream I dream — a structure that I rear on sand? I tell you it is the one enduring thing of all the years — that love of brotherhood which will alone suffice; that will satisfy our intellect — that will satisfy the heart. Then will weakness be turned to strength; failures to success; misery — and even sin — transformed to good; despair and warring hate to love, as the Spirit of the Coming Race of Man guides all that man may think and do and feel until all things that work together for good, converge at the Center of the Infinite."

From the light and warmth of Federation Hall Martin went out into the darkness and chill of night and stepped into his car.

"Home," he said, and he did not recognize his own voice.

XVII.

ONE afternoon two weeks later Blair Martin was seated in her little tea-room. It was there that Stone's card was brought to her.

When he entered he found her in a chair by the window, which was open, allowing the late spring breeze to enter. She leaned forward a little with extended hand.

He took it and for a moment looked down upon it in silence and then raised his eyes to her face.

"You are growing stronger?"

"Every day a little stronger, thank you. I walk some now, and in three weeks I sail for Europe," she answered.

"So Lorimer tells me. Are you fit for such a trip so soon?"

She shrugged her shoulders with a gesture of indifference.

"I suppose so." Then, her voice a little lower, "I can't gain strength very rapidly — here. A change may help me."

He sat down on a chair near her and looked out of the open window across the wide sweep of lawn thoughtfully.

"It is almost summer now," he said after a while irrelevantly. "When — I was last by this window here the violets had not come."

For an instant a strange light flickered in her eyes.

"The violets have come and — gone," she said, "since I saw you last."

"Yes," he answered, and he did not remove his eyes from the stretch of lawn, "it is the law of nature as it is of life, — life and death and again — life."

"There are some things that will never live for me again," she said. "It is because of them I am going away."

His eyes came back to her and gravely met her own.

"Changes are good for us," he said. "We all need them sometimes — especially when the body is weak and the brain refuses to readjust things for us — but there are some things we can never get away from — some things that are as close to us in the sands of distant Africa, as they are here at home."

She did not answer, and he found the task that Lorimer had imposed upon him becoming more and more difficult.

"Your father — what will he do without you?"

"I do not know," she said, the indifferent note stealing into her voice again. "I do not believe I very much — care."

"He will miss you."

"I hardly think so," she said, her face flushing a little. "He — he will find other — things to interest him."

"He is well?"

"I suppose so." She spoke slowly, and for a moment she looked out of the window. "I have not seen him for over a week. He left last night to look at the stock farm in the western part of the state."

She began to trace an intricate pattern on the broad arm of her wicker chair. Suddenly she raised her eyes to his.

"I suppose I might pretend not to understand you — but I won't," she said. "You have come to plead for him — either that I will not leave him just now, or if I go, part — differently. I cannot do either and be true to myself. I know what you would say — what Doctor Lorimer has said — and I read the speech in full that you made the other night. I simply have not reached that height. I do not think it is so much that I am judging him or — or all the wrong that he has done — the lives he has wrecked — the tears he has made flow — that scar you bear — but I cannot breath the atmosphere and — *live.*"

He sat regarding her with his grave eyes full of understanding, and a great pity and a great love for her rose in his heart as he looked.

"Some day you will live to serve," he said, "as once you lived to love. It is only in service that the broken ideals and the lost faiths can be forgiven and — forgotten. Sometime when you grow stronger and the other places pall upon you, go to the Island of the Angels. Pierre Lamoré will help you."

" I will," she said, and she did not know all that was in her eyes as she looked at him.

" That is good. I will write to him, and no matter whether it is soon or late you will find him, waiting."

He rose suddenly. He could not trust himself longer. He had seen the look in her eyes. . . .

For a barely perceptible instant he leaned over her hand in parting.

" There have been — many," he said in a low voice, " who have been anxious over you."

She stared past him and the hand he held trembled a little. A slow flush mounted to her white face.

" The physicians and the nurses still wonder why I lived. I scarcely know myself. Something — " She broke off. He dropped her hand quickly and he did not question her.

From a window, and screened by the curtain, she watched him enter his car in the courtyard. She wondered suddenly why she had not noticed how thin and haggard was his face — how glaringly cruel was the scar. He hesitated a moment, his hand upon the steering wheel, as though he would return. Then she saw his lips close tightly — almost defiantly — and an instant later the great machine began to move. Not once had he looked back.

Three weeks later she stood on the deck of the great *Lutania,* quite alone, watching the other passengers come aboard. Below, Hannah was unpacking the things necessary for the five days' voyage. She scarcely heeded the hurrying life around her. Once she thought of her father. He had not been at The Anchorage when she left. There had been only old Brewster and Thomas and the other servants to see them off and close the door of The Anchorage behind Hannah and herself. Half hopefully, half fearingly, she had waited in those last weeks for some word from Hector Stone, but the days had come and gone, bringing the sailing date nearer. The railroad trip to New York had been made, and it was as if they were strangers to each other. It was not until she had reached the steamer and had entered the big saloon with its countless small dining-tables, that she found at the place reserved for her a box of fresh and most exquisite violets. They bore neither name of florist or of sender — but with a quick heart-throb of surprise she bent her face above them, upon her lips, the first in months, a whispered prayer. How he had gotten them — long out of season — she neither knew nor cared, but that they came from him — his one gift to her — she did not question, and they were with her now.

Suddenly, as though her very thought of him had called him across the miles, he stood before her — that grave smile of welcome on his face. She stared at him in silence — the faint flush of returning strength leaving her face — and then she spoke — questioningly.

"You?"

"Quite real," he answered. "I fancied it might be hard leaving the country with no one to see you off." He paused, and added, "I could not let you go without some word."

"It was good of you," she said, "I — I shall not forget your kindness."

He hardly seemed to hear her. He spoke hurriedly and without his usual calm.

"I was delayed in a bad block. It seemed at one time as though there would be no familiar face to watch you from the pier. It is almost sailing time."

Something of his agitation came to her.

"I know," she said, "already some are going ashore." She caught her breath quickly and laid her gloved hand over the flowers she wore.

"How long will you be gone?" he questioned, and his eyes were as the eyes of one without hope.

"I don't know," she said, "I — don't — know! There is nothing to keep me in America — much to take me away." She looked past him. "And you?"

"I go to — Montreal to-night," he said, and his face was colorless. "They have sent for me. She — seems almost — almost — well — again." The words came to her as from a long distance.

"What will you do?" she asked him after what seemed an interminable silence, and neither of them wondered at or questioned her right to speak so.

"My duty — as I see it," he said. "What right have I to hold up ideals and standards of life to others if — in my extremity — I am not willing to strive for them myself?"

She looked at him and it was as if a bridge had suddenly been thrown across the impassable gulf that parted them. "I always knew," she said as his eyes held her own, "I always knew," she repeated. "I — never doubted."

Across that phantom bridge that for a moment Love had built for them, they walked to meet each other. For them the outer world had ceased. His eyes held her still. Nearer they came, and Love, merciful, held the phantom bridge together over the abyss. For the first time he called her to her face — and always thereafter — by her name.

"Blair — some word — some token — for the barren years!"

In spirit, across that frail phantom bridge, she moved to him still closer. In reality she stood quite still. With eyes that suddenly cleared she looked upon the scar.

"God bless you, Joe," she said, conscious that the warning whistle was sounding — that the phantom bridge was crumbling to its fall, "Joe — *Joe Blackie.*"

He watched her until her face became a blur across the widening space between them, and he waited until the great ship was a distant speck upon the waters. Then he turned away — a great sorrow — a great joy — living in his heart.

END OF BOOK ONE.

BOOK TWO

THE INNER COURT

I.

FOR months, followed by the patient Hannah, Blair Martin wandered over Europe, in her eyes the look of one searching for the unattainable. With the fatigue born more of the weariness of the spirit than of the body, she stopped at many places searching out the unusual to excite her waning interest, for a while half hopefully lingering and then ordering Hannah to pack again, when they would move on. The places that she saw and the memories that they left were never very clearly impressed upon her brain. Now and then she ran across acquaintances whom she joined for a little while — more to get away from herself than because she cared for them — but more often she sought out her paths alone. She grew to lean on the old serving woman as she had never leaned on any one since her mother had died, and Hannah, close-mouthed and watchful-eyed, followed her in anxious wonder and never seemed to know fatigue. If Blair Martin grew restless — and the hours were many — Hannah's nature dwelt in deeper calm; if her mistress was annoyed, Hannah's patience only grew; if her body was touched by some passing ill, Hannah watched day and night with maternal care. But Hannah, as shrewd as she was tender, guessed something of the secret of Blair Martin, and for the heart sickness and the soul yearning, her homely knowledge knew no cure.

Thanks to a constitution inherited from Andrew Martin, who had never known a moment's illness in his life, Blair's strength returned rapidly. Much was probably due to the open life she lived — the fogs of London or the storms of Austrian mountains being much the same to her as the sunshine of the Latin countries that she visited. London with its noise and hurry jarred her as did gay Paris with its sunshine, and Nice and Brussels. She only stayed in Brussels a day, and then she went out alone and looked on the high stone wall and the gray buildings where she had been at school. It was all quite unchanged. "Would that I were there again!" she thought as she made her way back to the hotel and feverishly looked up time-tables for Switzerland. In the Alps she lingered some six months. It was the longest stop that she had made, Hannah remembered gratefully, and daily she waited for that strange look to lift from Blair Martin's face. Sometimes she would steal into Blair Martin's room when she was sleeping the sleep of perfect and renewed health, and would stand looking down on her in the dim light, hoping that on that mysterious plane of sleep the look might be left behind. But indelibly it seemed stamped there, and Hannah was not wise enough to know it had been left by the die of life that gives each human face the value that it should bear. Neither were Hannah's thoughts acute enough to follow those of the mistress whom she loved and served. Strange thoughts, long thoughts, they were that followed her to the realm of sleep. Sometimes they seemed the material of which happier, better things are built — sometimes by their aid she walked again across that mysterious bridge of Love. . . . Then it was that the miles became as nothing, and again Time, merciful, paused. Dimly she was conscious of the abyss below, but above them hung the stars. Again they were together. . . . There came a time when the bridge was seen and felt not only in the world of sleep but in the outer world as well. Sometimes she saw it — as one sees a vision of the inner sense — and as something quite separate and distinct from her own consciousness. Again she trod the span and was a part of it, and then the vision was a vision no longer, but a reality she knew and felt but could not name. It never came at her bidding, but she grew to look for it in her hours of greatest need — when the intricate fabric of her life seemed a raveling thing — and she clung to the remembrance of it desperately in the long days that followed in its wake. Such days were many, for the human in us cannot long withstand the rarefied air of spiritual heights, and the descent into the things of earth became by comparison more sordid and more hard. The woman in her stood groping blindly at the door of happiness, and sometimes it seemed to her the desire for that happiness became a tangible thing of strength, and she used to wonder dimly why the bands of fate that bound the door did not give way before it. There were hours when she would think of nothing except Stone, to be followed by others when she fought the memory of his face from her, and others still when another woman — shadowy and wraith-like — would appear as though to demand a reckoning from her hands. She dwelt on this shadowy form of the other woman more often than she herself was aware, and she pictured her in a hundred different guises. She was short — were not all women of French blood small? — she had vivacious ways. Were they the ways that first attracted him, she wondered. Perhaps she might be tall — her blood might not be all French, and had not Stone once said he admired tall women? Perhaps she had beauty — he cared so much for beauty in all forms — and grace, and charm she must have had to have held and won him years ago in his early manhood. She wondered if she held him now — if the old charm was hers still. When a woman had lived seven years in a place like the Hotel des Invalides, what could life hold for her again? Who could emerge from such a place, such a night of mental darkness, with grace and charm? Seven years! She used to say it over to herself sometimes and to shut her eyes as though to picture to her soul the darkness that had once descended on this other woman whom she did not know — had never seen — but with whom the web of her life was woven as the warp is woven in the woof. An instinct that she never had defined, but which rarely failed her, told her in such hours that one day they would meet, and Blair Martin in her strength found herself trembling at the thought. It seemed to her she could not look on her — this other woman — and live. . . . In the long months following her sailing she had not even indirectly heard of Stone. To her father she did not write, and grimly Andrew Martin had held to the silence and refused to be the first to extend the palm of peace. Her father might have told her something — perhaps. Stone himself never wrote and it was as if a great gulf had swallowed him forever from her sight and hearing. Then came days when she doubted her own instinct — the remembrance of Stone's parting at the pier — and if it had not been for the phantom bridge still spanned for her by Love, the doubt would have become an overwhelming thing and crushed her life. Sometimes she walked the bridge alone and stood leaning against its frail sides without fear, peering for him into the abyss below. She never peered in vain. It was as if by the strength of her own faith she drew him to her and once more they faced each other on that frail support. . . . So the days succeeded days and ran into weeks, and, unknown to her, invisible forces were at work upon her, as the master, unknown to the marble, with chisel and mallet works at the unformed block until it is a perfect thing.

In December she went to St. Moritz and there lingered some six weeks. Gradually the warm blood and the young life in her had awakened as she joined

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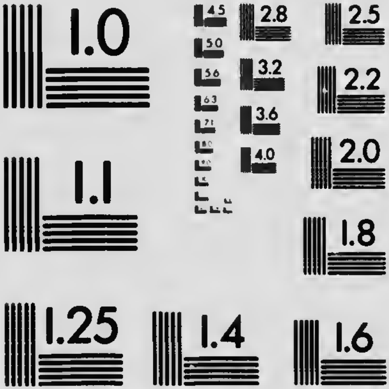
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in the round of winter sports with an enthusiasm that six months before she would have regarded as impossible. But by and by the bob-sleighing on the Cresta, and the great skiing contests palled upon her, and in February she joined friends who were going southward towards the French border.

The little irregular oval-shaped Republic lying in its mountain fastness as an emerald lies in a casket of whitest hue, had taught her much and she was grateful. Health, sealed by St. Moritz winter sports, had first come back to her, she sometimes thought, when in the summer time she had looked out over the Alpine meadows with their wealth of pansies and anemones, the bluest of forget-me-nots, and the pride and love of the Swiss, the Alpine rose. Later, in those months of returning strength and increased mentality, she had grown to know something of the stern perils of the snow-capped peaks where the edelweiss grew; and that in the nature of the Swiss, as in the nature of all man, loomed the inaccessible mountains of the unattainable and yawned the black abyss of doubt, untouched by flower or light — that in realms above the physical souls were sometimes crushed as the homes and cattle and bodies of these people were buried beneath the vast bulk of a Grundlawine. It was after she had left the table-land of Switzerland for the upland regions, dwelling near and yet immeasurably far away from the vast peaks of the never ceasing snow, that there was brought to her a letter in an unknown hand, forwarded by her bankers in Paris.

Letters of any sort were a rarity. This bore the postmark of Marseilles.

She turned it curiously in her hands before opening it. The writing was evidently that of a foreigner but bore marks of culture and of strength. She opened it and glanced at the signature. The color receded suddenly from her face and then flamed it again. She put the letter down and went and stood by the window, looking out and up to those mountains of eternal calm. By and by, across the patch of winter sky, a cloud mist gathered and reached from the summit of the high peak in front to the summit of the adjacent one. Motionless she stood, her hand up to her throat. The Bridge — the Bridge was forming. She watched it as Therese might have watched the visions in her cell — in rapt and entranced wonder. Then she became a part of it — she walked that cloudlike span, alone and unafraid, knowing he would come. He came and now she heard his voice. It was the same months back that had said its partings at the pier — then as it was that day in her tea-room at home when she had first seen him after her long fever. " Sometime when you grow stronger and the other places pall upon you, go to the Island of the Angels. Pierre Lamoré will help you." . . . She did not answer him, she remembered afterwards, but she listened and she looked. . . . The look, unknown to her, was in her eyes still when the Dream Bridge slowly faded, leaving her by the window staring at the patch of winter sky between the two great summits, while the silence of the high hills closed in around her.

The Island of the Angels! Pierre Lamoré! How was it she had forgotten? How was it she had not gone before? The Island of the Angels! She said it over and it brought strange solace to her heart. It called her as did Pierre Lamoré's letter lying on the table. It called her with the voice of Stone speaking from that immeasurable height, from the Bridge of Dreams.

Unconsciously she held out her arms to those vast mountains looming up before her, in their cold white splendor.

"You have given me much that I wanted — taught me much that I needed, but not all — not all! I am going to leave you for the Island. There I shall find peace."

II.

THE short February day was drawing to its close as Blair Martin's train steamed into the great Gare St. Charles, and Hannah and herself stepped into a waiting cab. She gave the hotel address to the driver in French as marked for its accuracy as for purity of pronunciation, and Hannah respectfully stood by, bags in hand, and listened, wondering where her mistress' whim would lead her next. She was too well trained in service and in Blair Martin's moods to question by a look or word. Blair Martin herself said nothing as she stared out of the cab window. She had not been to Marseilles in years — not since she had been a girl abroad at school. Once on an Easter holiday her mother, who was wintering in Italy, had gone to Brussels and brought her here. The broad Boulevard, planted with great elms and plane-trees, through which they were passing, reminded her of that holiday of gladness with a swift pang of mental longing and regret that was almost physical in its pain. She knew as by instinct, even after all the long years, when she was passing the Church of St. Vincent-de-Paul, and she turned her face away, still recalling its façade and its two Gothic towers. Together, her mother and herself had heard the Easter mass there. . . .

She dined alone in her room — her invariable custom when in France and unattended by friends. Long after old Hannah was sleeping the sleep of utter weariness, and dreaming lifelike dreams of peaceful living at The Anchorage, Blair Martin sat, a book in hand, trying to read to mind and eyes the sleep that fatigue should have brought. Marseilles — indeed much of the south of France — was memory-haunted for her. The year after she had left the school in Brussels had been spent in France with her mother vainly searching for the health that never came. They had traveled — her mother and herself and a German maid — in almost regal state. She remembered that her father had withheld nothing but — himself; and she realized, with a knowledge won from the depths of her own experience, that in withholding himself he had withheld the only thing her mother needed or wanted. When the urgent cable reached him at the mills, he had taken the first steamer across to them, but the first steamer had gotten him there too late. It had been Blair, in the first flush of her girlhood and untried by love or suffering, who had suddenly become a woman and dimly sensed the meaning of that yearning that until the very last had dwelt in her mother's saddened eyes. . . . She laid down her book and turned out the lights and sat by the window watching Marseilles by night. . . . Better to live as she was living and sometimes walk that mysterious Bridge of Dreams than to have lived to have had the ideals shattered by the hand of Time.

Early the next morning Blair Martin left Marseilles by boat for Grenette, a small fishing village half a day's ride up the coast. The skies looked threatening and the hotel clerk urged her to wait over forty-eight hours for the next boat. Blair Martin shook her head and ordered the baggage transferred. She would not admit to herself her anxiety to reach the Island now that she had once started, after having waited for so long. From the Bridge of Dreams, Stone seemed calling her.

The trip on the boat was a tiresome and trying one. The craft offered few comforts for passengers, and two hours out a storm arose and whipped the waters on the coast into a white fury, and Hannah and herself were driven by its force below. Hannah soon reached the stage where a rough bench became more to be desired than the straight-backed wicker chair, and dry land the only thing, outside of Blair Martin's happiness, that she wanted from the hands of gods or men. Blair Martin, herself, usually a good sailor, began to wonder if the crazy little craft would ever cease its rolling, and the white-crested, choppy sea she saw through the port, resume a more peaceful and comfortable mood. The boat was delayed some three hours and it was nightfall when they reached the little fishing village of Grenette. A fine penetrating rain was descending like a veil over the hamlet. The kindly mate and a peasant shifted the baggage from the Marseilles boat to a rough craft of about half the length, and got Miss Martin and Hannah — more dead than alive — transferred, in addition to the numerous trunks and bags. The trip from Grenette to the Island took another hour on account of the bad weather. The seas had been considerably stilled by the rain that was falling, but the little launch was wet and even the leaky close cabin was damp. The pilot, François Fauchet, with the face of a boy and the sea knowledge of a man, offered them the shelter and the meager comfort of his small pilot house. Never in the knowledge of Fauchet had such a grand person stepped into his pilot house en route for the Island, unless it might be the Island priest, whom Fauchet regarded as the type of all that was desirable in man. Once or twice from his wheel he peered at Miss Martin shyly. Surely not since the days when the Comtesse de Grandcœur, the Chatelaine of the Island, had come and gone on this little craft years ago when his father was its pilot, had such a grand lady been aboard. The few words she had addressed to him he recognized as pure French, almost as pure as the Comtesse herself might have used, but Fauchet, born and bred in the fishing village of Grenette, and who had only made two city trips in his life, one to Marseilles and the other last summer to Avignon, was quite convinced that the lady did not come from France. She was English? Fauchet shook his head and watched the wheel spin as he eased his helm. Impossible. She seemed quite too nice for that. She could not be Russian. Her eyes were not dark enough and she bore around her no atmosphere of revolutionary plots and intrigues. Undoubtedly she was American. America must be a great country. Had it not been an American, whose name no one in Grenette remembered and whom only a few had seen, who had come once to the Island years ago and won the Comtesse from them? He remembered hearing his mother say that the marriage had broken Father Lamoré's heart. He was a grand American, so the stories had gone — some one had said he was an officer in the Navy and hence recommended to Fauchet's consideration — but if in any way he had hurt Father Lamoré.

. Fauchet suddenly blew his whistle with unexpected force.

The rain was still falling heavily as the boat made a landing at the Island wharf. Fauchet himself helped Miss Martin and Hannah over the rough gangway and held an umbrella over the former's head.

"You have friends awaiting you?" he asked in patois French and wondered if so, who of the Island peasants her friends might be.

Blair Martin stared ahead of her into impenetrable darkness. This then was the Island of the Angels! She knew no one here. She wondered dully what had brought her. She looked up into Fauchet's face, suddenly grateful for the interest he had shown.

"I know no one," she said simply in French. "Father Lamoré wrote me I might get rooms at Toinette Dorset's. I wrote to her a week ago from Switzerland. I asked her to let me know at Marseilles. I have heard nothing. Is there anywhere I can go with my maid for to-night?"

Fauchet stroked his smooth young chin thoughtfully.

"Toinette Dorset is my cousin's widow. Most of us are kin at the Island. I have been at Grenette for the last three days and have not seen Toinette, but if you know Father Lamoré —" he broke off suddenly.

From the darkness emerged the figure of a boy in a blue peasant's blouse, holding a lantern in his hand. Fauchet became suddenly conscious that the rain had stopped, and lowered the umbrella.

"Ah, it is the little Anthony Carréré. He is probably bringing you a message from the good Father."

The boy came nearer, the lantern raised the better to help him in his search. Its light illuminated his face, and the strange beauty of it startled Blair Martin into a momentary exclamation of surprise. In looking she forgot that she was desolate and tired. By the lantern's aid it shone forth from the darkness, and it seemed apart from earth. By and by the boy came quite close to her, looking up. In silence she waited for his message. He spoke in French that had little of the patois of the peasant.

"I come from the good Father. He could not come — he is with some one who is dying." Here the boy stopped a moment and slowly crossed himself. Blair Martin watched him, fascinated. "He sends you his blessing and his greeting and will call to-morrow. I have here the chaise he sent for you. If it pleases you, Mademoiselle, I will drive you to Toinette Dorset's. She got the good Father to write to you at Marseilles. She is waiting for you and your maid."

As in a dream Blair Martin listened. She remembered thanking Fauchet, who helped her and Hannah into the chaise and who promised to attend to the luggage for them. Then the boy, who had been waiting respectfully by, lantern in hand, hung the latter to the carriage's top to light them on their way, and getting into the front seat, picked up the reins. Hannah, who had about come to the conclusion that she had reached the world's end, sank back in a corner of the old but comfortable chaise with a sigh of satisfaction, and closed her eyes and dozed. Blair Martin stared in front of her. The night was still dark and she could see little ahead, and she found herself studying the boy in front of her. The lantern dimly illuminated his head, which was bare. Once he half turned in his seat and said quite thoughtfully:

"I hope Mademoiselle will like the Island."

"I am sure I shall," said Blair Martin.

"Mademoiselle cannot see the Island now, it is so dark, but when the light comes —" the boy Anthony broke off, a smile upon his face.

"Yes," said Blair Martin softly, remembering that Stone had been to the Island and looked on the beauty hidden from her, "when — the — light — comes."

III.

AT seven the next morning Blair Martin was standing at the doorway of the Dorset cottage looking out across the Island. The clouds had been dispelled and the morning light revealed a scene of undreamed-of beauty. Never in all her wanderings of this year or of other years had she come across a spot that so soothed her with its peace and held her with its charm. From the busy world and haunts of men she had awakened overnight to this; and she had not known that outside of romantic books or mystic's dreams such places could exist, to the outward world comparatively unknown. She was seeing it this morning glorified, as she had seen it that winter's day last year when, before the fire in her tea-room at the Anchorage, Stone had described it to her. The perfect verdure of the gentle slopes waiting in the sunshine of the early spring for the ripening of the vineyard harvest; the picturesque homes of the peasants; their quaint dress; the blue of the Mediterranean that lay around the Island as a mother's arms encircling a loved child; and further off, up on the cliff, the chateau with its turrets — the church on the cliff's summit with its spire standing out against a bluer sky — all this she saw and sensed with a vision that could see beyond the physical, and a spirit that knew instinctively when it was at home.

The wonder of it, the spell of it was still upon her when she was aroused by the clicking of the gate. She raised her eyes to the man who was closing it behind him. He wore the dress of a priest.

She made no motion, but continued to watch him coming towards her up the garden path. He was tall, perhaps six feet, slender and with the bearing of a soldier. In his hands, held in front of him, he was holding his hat, and she noticed that his dark hair was slightly streaked with gray. His face, on which experience had written a long story, bore no deeper marks than those that come from study and from pity and from sorrow. There was on him that indescribable mark that spoke of the eternal youth of the spirit which Time could only soften, not change. All this came to her just then rather as an impression than as the result of closer observation. A few feet from her he paused smiling, looking in her eyes.

"I am Lamoré," he said simply, "Pierre Lamoré — the priest and — the Father of the people of the Island."

"I knew you at once," she answered, and she wondered at the frankness of her speech. "And — I — "

He advanced and took her extended hand and bowed over it. For an instant the parish priest had fled and in his place stood a courtier and a nobleman.

"It is Mademoiselle Martin, the friend of my good friend, Hector Stone. He wrote me months ago that he hoped you would come to the Island. For months, Mademoiselle, the Island has been waiting."

She smiled a little wistfully.

"So strange — so strange," she said, "that I did not think to come before. If I had only known what your Island was. . . ."

He dropped her hand and stood regarding her. For the first time since she had left Stone, she knew the compelling power and wonder that sometimes dwells in human eyes.

"One has to come to the Island, Mademoiselle, to dwell on it, to know all that its beauty means. There are times when I think of the Island as a great sealed book of ancient wisdom that only the initiated, the pure in heart, can read."

She watched his face, his bearing. From the priest he had changed swiftly to the courtier, from the courtier he had changed to the student and the scholar. Now he was speaking as a friend — a host.

"I am glad that you have found us. I fear the trip from Marseilles was bad. Our beautiful Mediterranean can be very rough, and sometimes it makes some of us very ill. You brought your maid — and did my boy, Anthony, meet you safely with the chaise?"

"Hannah is upstairs unpacking. The young captain saw that we got our things early. And the boy you call Anthony — did he not bring back to you my thanks?"

Pierre Lamoré's face became suddenly grave.

"I was not at home when Anthony came back last night. All through the darkness, Mademoiselle, I was watching a soul depart." The eyes that she had been watching intently changed. It was as though the compelling power of them withdrew to make room for an all-embracing compassion. "When the dawn came, Mademoiselle, the soul slipped out. Presently you will hear the bell of the village church tolling. . . ."

Blair Martin looked away suddenly, wondering why she was so moved at the news of a stranger's —a peasant's death.

"I am sorry," she said, more gently than she knew. "And you — you must be very tired."

"I am used to such things, Mademoiselle."

"And the chaise — you sent the chaise for me when you needed it yourself."

"I rarely use the chaise, Mademoiselle, on a visit of that sort."

"You have had your breakfast?"

"Not yet. I celebrate mass in a little while. Then my good Marie will get me something to eat and I shall rest until noon. I was passing here on my way to the church. I stopped in to inquire about you of Toinette. I did not expect to see you up so early."

Blair Martin smiled.

"I rather surprise myself," she said. "I could not sleep after six, when I went to the window and looked out. The earth seemed calling me. I fear

Hannah is dozing over the trunks. Poor Hannah, she bears so patiently with all my varying moods."

"Is it your maid, Mademoiselle? Ah, yes. I am glad you have so faithful a friend. You travel alone with her?"

"Quite alone, unless I join parties, which is seldom. I fear you hardly approve." She laughed a little at his grave face.

"It is not exactly the way our ladies in France do — yet who shall say which custom excels? All are probably right, Mademoiselle, according to the bringing up. I do not personally agree with all the customs of your great land — yet what of it?"

"You know America?"

"A little, Mademoiselle. A few years ago I had the honor of representing France at a convention in your West. I saw much in a short while; I learned much as well."

"You are modest, Father; they tell me you are one of the great scholars of the Church."

A slight flush crept over the priest's face.

"I have prejudiced friends. I rather think of myself as the student — always learning."

"So few take that attitude," said Blair Martin.

"Perhaps, Mademoiselle. I know of one man who retains the child's attitude of receiving and imparting impressions to a greater extent than any one I have ever met. It is Hector Stone."

She started slightly at the unexpected mention of Stone's name, and was not aware that Lamoré had heeded it.

"Mr. Stone is a big man, Father Lamoré. America needs more like him." She spoke as impersonally as she could.

"All countries need such men, Mademoiselle. For years I have known him; for years I have followed his work and his movements from afar; for years I have built my trust on him. I have never known him in great things — or in little things — to fail."

She did not answer, conscious that her lips were trembling.

Lamoré stepped a little nearer and held out his hand.

"I must go now, Mademoiselle. I am glad of this informal meeting. Soon I will make my formal call upon you. Toinette — she makes you comfortable?"

"Yes, Father." She put her hand in his, her face controlled now, and smiling as she remembered the simplicity of the rooms upstairs, their sloping walls, the well-scrubbed sanded floors.

He saw the smile and laughed genially.

"In time you will forget, Mademoiselle, you ever lived in a world of luxury and fashion."

"I am willing to forget, Father," she said, and she would not meet his eyes.

From around the corner of the house Toinette Dorset came. On seeing the priest she hurried forward and when near him courtesied, and then knelt for blessing.

Blair Martin watched the scene curiously. As naturally as he had talked to her and as simply as he drew breath, she saw Lamoré raise his hand. The words of the Latin blessing fell slowly, sonorously, on the morning breeze, and for the first time in her life, Blair Martin knew and felt something of the mystic meaning that lies behind the sign of the cross. Instinctively she bowed her head.

Then Toinette Dorset rose and stood at a respectful distance from them. Indeed she would have gone and left them had not Lamoré drawn her into the conversation.

"The little sick duck, Toinette — it is better?"

"Nay, Father. It is dead."

"So! And the flowers, Toinette — will your garden be among the first this year?"

Toinette Dorset courtesied again.

"The flowers promise well, Father, thanks to the seeds you sent, but none of us can hope for flowers like you have. The boy Anthony has the magic hand."

"Quite true, Toinette! I know not what I should do without him or his mother Marie. They take good care of the house and the chickens and old Nanette and — me." His laugh, well pitched and wholesome, was a thing one cared to hear.

Blair Martin and her peasant hostess watched him down the garden path. At the gate he looked back and smiled at them. In the light of his learning he seemed so remote from them; in the simplicity of his compassion in all their interests and their needs, so close.

Toinette shaded her eyes from the morning sun, the better to watch him down the road.

"There goes a saint, Mademoiselle."

Blair Martin did not answer as she turned back to the house, but she thought "There goes a — man."

IV.

THOSE first days at the Island were a revelation to Blair Martin. She had never known how full days of such simple living could be, and she fell instinctively into the life lived by the others there. After Toinette had brought her her supper on a wooden tray — and the food was plainer and more wholesome than she had ever eaten before — and she had watched Toinette wash the dishes and tidy up for the night, and sweep clean the sanded floor, there had been little to do by way of diversion and she had followed the example of the people of the Island and gone to bed. Sometimes she would sit by her window after she had blown out the candle and watch the moon rise over the sea and fall upon the Island, and smile to herself at the primitive life she was leading. For the first time she enjoyed rising early, and daily she marveled at the splendor of the varying sunrise. She grew to listen for the singing of the birds, the bark of Toinette's St. Bernard that reminded her of Ajax at home. Home! Sometimes she wondered if she had ever had a home since her mother had died more worthy of the name than this that she had found so strangely in this peasant woman's cottage. Sometimes she helped Toinette in the garden with the flowers and even among the early vegetables. It was while she was working so one day, in a skirt and waist she once would have hesitated to give to an under-housemaid at the Anchorage, with sleeves rolled up and bareheaded in the sun, that Pierre Lamoré found her when he came to call.

"I am quite one of you, Father," she had said with a laugh after the greetings were over. "Sometimes I wonder if I ever knew any other life."

"Forget that you ever have," he answered. "When you go back to it you will be the better for the forgetting."

She brushed some dirt off of the big apron of Toinette's that she wore, a serious look in her eyes.

"Perhaps you are right," she said. "Sometimes it seems to me I do not want to know any other life. It is as if I had stepped from tumult into peace." She raised her eyes and looked towards the great chateau towering above them on the cliff. "It is beautiful," she said, speaking musingly and irrelevantly, "but it looks so lonely. I think I like the valley and the vineyards best."

"Mademoiselle, the heights are always lonely."

She did not answer, but continued to look up at the chateau. By and by she half turned with a sigh.

"How rude I am! Will you not come in and sit down and rest?"

"Thank you, Mademoiselle, with your permission. This is my formal call," and with a smile he opened the gate at which he had been standing, and came around to where she stood leaning on the fence.

"This, then, is my receiving dress," said Blair Martin with a laugh, smoothing out the folds of Toinette's apron. "Will you come inside or shall we sit here on this bench?"

"Let it be here, Mademoiselle. I never stay indoors in southern France at this season unless my duties call me."

Together they sat down — the great scholar and nobleman in his simple priest's dress; the rich woman of the world in a peasant's gingham apron. Neither seemed conscious of any incongruity in their being so disguised, nor in the setting of the peasant's low-roofed cottage and small garden. He was studying her as all his life he had studied men and women as well as books. She folded her hands — white hands, unused to toil and now becoming sunburned and discolored — over the gingham apron. Again her gaze rested on the chateau.

"There is so much time to dream here, Father, and I have been dreaming often. Tell me something of the chateau. Is it occupied?"

His look did not leave her face, which he was still regarding closely, but a troubled shadow crept into his eyes. He thought swiftly of Hector Stone — of the letter Stone had written him — of the trust Stone had placed in him. How much should he tell and yet remain true?

"The chateau, Mademoiselle, is unoccupied. In France one can still see if the owner is away by one unfailing sign. Mademoiselle sees the tower to the left?"

She nodded.

"In France such towers are generally guide posts. As you will see, there is no flag flying from the staff. It means the owner is away. Always the flag flies when the owner is at home — always the flag hangs at half-mast when the heir is dead, and later is taken down, and what we call the Great Banner flung to the breeze. Some eleven or twelve years ago, the Great Banner with its gold fringe was last flown there. It was for a child — a boy — and the private chapel of St. Michael's that you see higher up on the cliff, is his memorial."

Blair Martin looked at the priest and drew a long breath. An interest such as she had not known in months stirred at her heart.

"It is like a story, Father, like a story that one reads —" she broke off, looking at the bare flagstaff again.

"Life is so much stranger, Mademoiselle, than fiction."

"So it has been said, yet —" she hesitated, looking again at the priest, whose face gave no sign of the anxiety her words were causing. "Tell me some more, Father. There is no other heir?"

"There is only one of the line left, Mademoiselle; a woman — the mother of the boy — she is away."

"You knew her, of course?"

"Since she was a child," and for the first time the expression of the priest's face changed swiftly to one of unutterable pain that startled her. "Always I have known the family. It is one of the oldest in France. As a boy, Mademoiselle, I played with the mother's mother in the chateau garden. The chateau garden is the jewel of the Island; for centuries it has been its pride and boast."

"I am curious. Some day I may go there?"

Lamoré smiled a little.

"Perhaps some time, if you care to. The head gardener, Giovanni, is an Italian and the grandfather of my little Anthony. He rules supreme there and he is jealous and suspicious of strangers. Some day you might persuade him."

"I shall enlist your help, Father; it is the Open Sesame to all things of the Island. And the church — that wonderful church up there — I may see that, too?"

"Nay, Mademoiselle, the chapel is a private one"

"But, Father —"

"There are but two keys to it. The Comtesse, who is away, holds one."

"And the other, Father — is yours." Blair Martin leaned eagerly forward on the bench. "It is yours — I know it is — you will not refuse me? Sometimes on my walks I have stopped at the foot of the cliff and I have heard the music of an organ — a wonderful organ — and the sound of children singing."

"Indeed, Mademoiselle?" He questioned her kindly.

"Surely, Father, you must know." In her eagerness and interest she had risen from the bench and stood before him in a pretty unconscious attitude of entreaty.

"Yes, Mademoiselle. You heard the Children's Mass."

"It is only for the children then?" she asked, and she could not keep the note of disappointment from her voice.

Lamoré rose and looked down on her from his height. She remembered afterwards that his voice had been the kindest that she had ever heard — that the tone had robbed the words of all their sting.

"St. Michael's, Mademoiselle, is built above the crypt that holds the earthly body of the little Count. Always does the great saint guard well his charge and the little children who go with me to sing there. In that Sanctuary dwells a Presence and a Peace on which the outward world has never jarred. When one has come to know that Presence and that Peace, one may enter St. Michael's with the heart of a little child. Until then, Mademoiselle, the village church is open to you as it is to every man and woman of the Island. Come to it and let it help you. Accept from it what you can."

A sudden tightening came to Blair Martin's throat. She put her hand up to it as though the pressure of her fingers there would help her. In silence she looked again toward St. Michael's on the cliff. One slender Gothic spire tipped with a gold cross stood out against the blue of the southern sky.

"If I come to the village church sometimes," she said, still not looking at Lamoré, "will — will I learn how to reach St. Michael's?"

Lamoré smiled kindly.

"Perhaps, Mademoiselle, yet I cannot promise. The little village church would help you were you of our faith, yet few even of that faith have attained to St. Michael's. The peasants here will tell you strange stories of that great chapel on the cliff — most of my people are very simple and some are very superstitious, and most of them would not pass the portal of St. Michael's if they might. Sometimes they question the children, and because the children do not tell them what their own disordered brains have planned, they do not believe them. Yet, Mademoiselle, it is to the little ones that the mysteries of heaven lie nearest."

Blair Martin drew odd figures with the tip of her finger across Toinette's gingham apron. A sudden strange resentment filled her heart.

"Yet the memorial chapel is built to your God, and are we not all His children?"

"Surely, Mademoiselle," and a quality in Lamoré's voice quenched the resentment and made her suddenly ashamed of it as an unworthy thing. "What pile of stone, what man-made rule, what depth or height, or miles of space or eons of time can part us from that all-embracing Consciousness in which we breathe and move? We may call it

Force or God or the Logos or the Father — names mean so little when we are dealing with Reality. St. Michael's doors can never bar you from it, and if you seek you will surely find. Some day, Mademoiselle, you may reach a plateau on your long climb upward, and from that table-land of the spirit you will look back and see how you have in your struggles unconsciously brought stones one by one for the building of a temple fairer than our St. Michael's on the rock; and one by one, Mademoiselle, as each suffering and each temptation and each struggle is overcome you will lay a stone in place until that temple of your soul is done. Then before that Sanctuary in which dwells the Divine in you, your soul will light its lamp and make profound obeisance. Then — then — Mademoiselle, you shall come to St. Michael's and you will be at home. In the world of physical things we do not give the children calculus before they know addition — nor put a burning torch in hands that have not learned the danger of the illuminating thing they carry. Wait, Mademoiselle, and you will know that St. Michael's stands as a symbol of true living, no matter what faith you hold — and as something more than an old priest's fancy or a mystic's dream."

She listened with a rapt attention that was so complete that time and place were forgotten. Years afterward she remembered Lamoré's face — recalled his voice that held and thrilled her.

When he had gone — and strangely enough she did not question that he had divined her need and tried to help her — she still sat on the wooden bench near Toinette's door, her hands folded in her lap, her face raised to St. Michael's. She spoke aloud.

" So far," she said. ***" So far."***

V.

DURING the weeks following, Blair Martin watched the flowers grow in Toinette's garden, and daily felt the increasing warmth of the sun as it lay in a bright sheet of glory over the vineyards waiting for the harvest. She was much alone. After her first fortnight in the Island, when things had grown less strange, she had insisted that Hannah should go and visit a niece who had married and settled in Devonshire. Hannah, while loath to separate herself from her mistress, had nevertheless drawn a deep sigh of relief as her boat had started for Marseilles. More than her dread of the long journey to England alone was her anxiety to get away from a place whose climate she did not like, whose beauty did not especially appeal to her, whose people she did not understand. She felt it would be good to breathe the dampness of the English air once more — to see Devonshire just bursting into its spring bloom. She was dimly conscious that Blair Martin needed her just now less than ever before on their trip, and the knowledge reassured her as did her mistress' parting words that when she was needed she would be sent for at once. So Blair Martin came back from Grenette alone, and once more Fauchet had a chance to study her.

Sometimes when Toinette could spare a moment from her cleaning and her gardening and her chickens and her cow, she would wipe her hands and put on a fresh dress and quaint head-piece that the women of the Island wore, and talk to the American of the simple homely things of life. The things were so few, so childlike that made up Toinette's life. Now it was a birth or death or christening, a wedding perhaps; whether the Great Cardinal would make his usual visit the following year and give the Island the special blessing from the Holy Father; whether the vineyards would yield a fruitful crop that there might be extra wine sent to the city's poor; or perhaps it was Father Lamoré's last sermon, or the coming First Communion of the Island children they would make after the great Easter festival. Mademoiselle must not fail to see the First Communion. Toinette doubted if Mademoiselle, even in America — where they said the streets were paved with gold, as were the streets of heaven — if even in that great America, Mademoiselle had seen dresses more beautiful. Each girl would have a veil — would be all in white, and the boys — did Mademoiselle know that the boy Anthony, whom the good Father loved so, would this year be among the Communion children?

It was, strangely enough, the boy Anthony who filled more than any one else the hours that sometimes dragged and promised to be lonely. Lamoré she saw often, but often not more than a few minutes at a time. Now and then she met him on his walks and he joined her for a little while on his way to or from some parish visit. Sometimes she merely passed him in his chaise when he was bound for a more distant point of the Island. She noticed that the boy Anthony was often with him, and each time she saw him the strange beauty of his face appealed to her afresh. Sometimes the child came to Toinette's cottage with a loaf of black bread fresh from Marie's oven; sometimes he came with the word that the good Father had sent him and bidden him show Mademoiselle some distant point of beauty on the Island. He was a trusty and sure-footed little guide with double the strength his slender limbs and delicate clear-cut features would imply. He knew as though by instinct where the rarest flowers grew, the best of the wild strawberries; and the language of the birds and the little creeping things that lived in the woods; the burden of the song that the wind sang among the tree tops; the chant of the breakers at the foot of the high cliff. Sometimes, in the still fastnesses of those wooded slopes, he spoke to her in a hushed, awed voice of a life beyond the life of the insect or the bird — of the fairies and the elves that helped to fashion every little leaf, that painted every little flower. Sometimes as he walked beside her in his little blue peasant blouse, head bared to the sun filtering through the branches, he would lift up his face to the tree tops and begin to sing, as unconsciously as the birds he loved and never harmed. Once at midday it was a Latin canticle of his Church; another time at sunset it was a German lullaby taught him by Lamoré, and which she had heard the children sing in the Swiss uplands.

> "Schlaf, Kindlein, schlaf! Dein Vater hüten Schaf — "

But no child of the Swiss uplands had sung it like the boy Anthony.

He was many-sided and he held a never ceasing charm for her. Sometimes on a Sunday when she went to mass she would watch him at the altar assisting Pierre Lamoré, see him kneel in the acolyte's dress on the altar steps with folded hands reciting the responses. It was then she would recall Stone's description of him as one of Botticelli's choristers. His voice, clear and flute-like, with its perfect Latin, would echo in her brain long after the service had closed. And likely as not, on the next day she would meet him on the road, one of a group of chattering, quarreling peasant children, he in their midst in his peasant's blouse like theirs, shortly, imperiously settling the dispute. The other children, even the older ones, never questioned his decisions or the authority that seemed his by a right they blindly accepted but could not understand. Sometimes it seemed to Blair Martin, watching, that the little Count, disguised, had risen from his sleep in the great memorial chapel towering on the cliff, and had come among them with the right the lord of the Island bore. An odd dignity — a gravity beyond his years — rested on him, and a reserve that none seemed able to break through except Lamoré, whom he adored. Blair Martin used to satisfy the curious questionings of her brain in regard to him and tell herself that the life he lived under the roof and the influence of Lamoré had made him different from other boys. To his mother he was deferential but curiously reserved, and the latter regarded him much as the mother duck in the old German story looked on the swan that she had warmed to life, and with a philosophy of which she was not conscious she would acknowledge to herself that while she had given birth to his body, not in looks or bearing or characteristics of the mind or spirit did she understand or share in the child of her begetting. He served her with a willingness that never flagged, but the mother heart that beat in the peasant-woman's breast would sometimes turn away sick from the service that duty and not love had brought. In her simple way Marie would take her trouble sometimes to the Virgin's altar in the little village chapel, and with tears and humble trust plead that the Great Mother would heal her widowed heart and teach her to understand her son. Always in the eyes of the boy Anthony as they looked at her there was a yearning and a patience as though they sought and waited for the true mother who never came.

In some unaccountable way the boy Anthony came, in the mind of Blair Martin, to be associated with the great chapel on the cliff and the chateau further down, although exactly what connection one could have found between the stately piles of stone and a little boy in a blue peasant's blouse, she could not for her life have told. But the vague mystery of it and a sense of the unreal, as though she had stepped from a world of fact into a world of fiction, possessed her and brought her a new interest that kept her mind from much she would forget.

Once she and Anthony on one of their long tramps had climbed the steep side of the cliff overhanging the sea, and on crossing a winding driveway she had come unexpectedly on a little wicket gate. Breathless from the steep ascent, she leaned against it, and was surprised to find it yielded to her touch.

"It leads to the chateau garden, Mademoiselle," said the boy, smiling a little and replying to the question in her eyes. "I often come here to see my grandfather at work among the flowers. Would Mademoiselle care to see the garden?"

"So much," said Blair Martin. "I —" then she suddenly stopped. . . . Why she could not have told, but before her inner vision swept a sense of Hector Stone's face and following him, with bowed and averted head, the faint shadow of a woman. Almost immediately her vision cleared and she saw nothing but the sheer cliff, the sea breaking at its base, blue sky, and nearer, the wicket gate that led to green still woods further on, and the face of the boy Anthony regarding her curiously.

"Come," she said, with a short laugh of disdain at her vague fancies, and led by Anthony, she passed through the wicket gate to the chateau garden.

VI.

EMERGING from the wood with beating heart, she paused in silent wonder. She had approached the garden from the west through a small side-entrance and a turn in the wooded path had hidden it from her until she came on it stretching at her feet in all its loveliness. In a silence that the boy did not break she looked on the long row of hedges, the perfectly kept walks, the marble terraced steps leading up and up to a broad lawn spreading in front of the chateau — a royal carpet spread at the feet of a royal guest — and circling the whole and enclosing it as a lover might hold and guard the lady of his choice, were tall trees that surrounded flowers such as even in Sorrento she had never seen. There were roses everywhere, and tall rows of lilies whose heads swung gently in the breeze as though they bowed a welcome to her. There were flowers she barely knew by name and some that she had never seen before, all in a profusion that would have taxed the eye and brain, had not the perfect setting and the carefully selected kinds and colors mingling, showed the hand of a master workman in his art. She had been to Pasadena and had walked the country roads near Naples in the spring; she had gone where tourists go and had walked through the stately gardens that are the pride of England. She had seen the Alpine meadows in their bloom, but nowhere had she ever looked on anything like this. Quite suddenly and irrelevantly she thought of the Anchorage and the garden there. Once she had prided herself on it — on the interest and the time and Thomas's skill that had been lavished to make it a thing of beauty and renown, and now, here in a far off almost unknown island in the Mediterranean, she was looking on a sight she had not dreamed existed. When she compared the Anchorage garden to this, a flush almost of shame dyed her cheeks. She did not know until afterwards all the wonder of that garden, of its expanse of over seven acres, the winding paths that led from beauty to beauty, of the rarity of the flowers it produced — the immensity of its yield. She only saw just then the thing as a vague whole, too wonderful for analysis in detail, the shining whiteness of the terraced steps, the warm spring sun of southern Europe lying over all, and near-by, in the grateful shadow of a tree two centuries old, an old man asleep.

By and by her clasped hands came up to her breast in a quick impulsive gesture.

"Ah," she breathed.

The boy Anthony moved a little nearer to her side. Like hers, his gaze rested on the scene ahead. It was always new to him — the wonder and the loveliness of it — but the keen surprise in his eyes was lacking. He looked out over the wide flowering acres, the winding walks, the tall hedges, as though he looked upon a familiar thing. Presently his eyes came back to the old man asleep in the shadow of the tree.

"It is my grandfather Giovanni, Mademoiselle. He has been the head gardener here for nearly fifty years. Shall I waken him and ask him to show you the part you cannot see from here?"

"No, no, Anthony, do not waken him. He looks tired and — and he might be angry that you brought a stranger here."

The boy threw back his head and gave a low laugh.

"I shall tell him, Mademoiselle, that you are a friend of the good Father's, that you are a friend of mine."

The words were said without boast, as though he were stating an unalterable fact, as though the glories of the garden were his by right.

She hardly seemed to hear him. Slowly she began to walk down one of the winding paths.

"Wonderful," she breathed.

The boy kept step beside her.

"But, yes, Mademoiselle, the most wonderful thing in all the world but one —" he broke off. The laughing mood had passed and the strange earnestness had crept across the young face once more and rested in his eyes.

Blair Martin looked around her slowly.

"What can be more wonderful than this?" she spoke rather to herself than to the boy.

" St. Michael's, Mademoiselle."

It was the voice of the child at her side.

She started and instinctively followed his gaze. Further up the slope, behind the great chateau, rose the white stones of St. Michael's. The tall spire topped by the gold cross was gleaming in the sun.

" I can bring you to the chateau garden, Mademoiselle, but I cannot take you to St. Michael's. No one goes there, none of the children, Mademoiselle, unless the good Father is along. He only has the key."

She stopped suddenly in her walk. To the right of her lay a bed of violets. Suddenly she was on her knees beside them, her mouth working strangely. She had come so far to see the violets bloom again. . . . She did not attempt to pick any but she remained stooping there for a little while and she caressed them softly. By and by she became aware that the boy was regarding her wonderingly. She rose and resumed her walk and tried to speak in her natural tone of voice.

" The good Father told me there were two keys to St. Michael's," she said.

" Yes, Mademoiselle, but our Comtesse, our Great Lady and Chatelaine of the Island never comes with the other key, although I have waited — "

Something in the boy's voice made Blair Martin turn and look at him quickly, and she forgot the violets and the burning memories. . . .

" You know the Comtesse, Anthony? "

The boy shook his head.

"No, Mademoiselle, I was born after she left the Island — yet — "

He broke off and in silence she waited. Her heart had begun to beat violently. Why, she could not have told.

They came to an unexpected ending of the winding path and stood on a ledge of rock whose sheer sides ran down to meet the sea. An odd feeling of faintness crept over her, and ashamed almost to acknowledge it to herself, she sat down on the grass and leaned her back against a big tree. Her eyes rested on the wide blue sea below, and mechanically she counted the fishing boats within the radius of her vision. Her mind, though, was keenly alert to what the boy was saying.

"Yet what, Anthony?"

He sat down at a respectful distance from her and began to braid some strips of grass.

"It is foolish, Mademoiselle, is it not, yet sometimes it seems to me I have known and seen the Comtesse. Sometimes I dream of her at night. Sometimes I pray for her at mass."

"Why, Anthony?"

"I do not know, Mademoiselle, except that she must be very lonely so long away from her people and her home." He spoke in a shy constrained manner foreign to him.

"Why does she not come back, Anthony?"

The boy Anthony shook his head.

"I do not know," he said. "There is so much I do not understand. Sometimes I ask the good

Father about it, but he only pats my head and looks down on me with his kind eyes. 'She is away, Anthony,' he tells me, 'far away. Some day she may come back to us and the flag will fly again from the chateau turret. Until then we can only pray.' So I pray, Mademoiselle."

"And Giovanni — your grandfather — does he not know?"

The boy turned two grave eyes on her.

"Very likely, Mademoiselle. My grandfather has worked for the Counts de Grandcœur for fifty years. Yet he says nothing, and I would not ask, since the good Father knows and does not tell. But I dream of her at night," he added again.

"What do you dream of her?"

The boy laid down the bit of braided grass and leaned forward, his elbow on his knee, his chin in his hand, and looked out to sea. He spoke slowly, yet a strange fire and longing was in his voice.

"I dream, Mademoiselle, of a great lady dressed in pale, pale blue and gold — they are the colors of the flag, the good Father says — and she comes to me and smooths my hair and smiles, and I — I kiss her hand."

He stopped as though all had been said and stared out across the waters. Far in the distance around the curve in the coast, the dim outlines of Marseilles lay. She did not smile at his fancies, but she wondered at the sense of mystery surrounding him. He sat looking toward the dim outline of the great city, and it did not draw him with its charm of the unknown as it might have drawn another little peasant boy of his age. Instead he dreamed of a dream lady in palest blue and gold — a great lady of a great estate whose hand he kissed. . . .

She half turned and looked back over the still garden. On an old sun dial near at hand two birds perched — a linnet and its mate — and as she looked the male bird uttered one sweet long note. It seemed to call to her across miles of space, and she rose suddenly to her feet, her hand pressed to her heart as if in pain.

She leaned over the boy Anthony, whose dreaming eyes still rested on the dim outlines of Marseilles, as though from the Marseilles the great lady of his dreams might come. She touched him on the arm.

"Let us go," she said quickly.

VII.

THE days slipped into weeks, and except for the increasing warmth of the sun and the growth of the vineyards in the valleys, which Blair Martin learned to watch with as much interest as every man, woman and child on the Island, time might have stood still. She wrote to Hannah every week, and every week hesitated to recall her. Hannah in far away Devonshire used to read and re-read the letters wonderingly. It was a mystery to the old woman how her mistress had gotten along alone during the last month, and how the millionaire's daughter she had known since a slip of a girl, reared in the lap of luxury, could endure the limitations and privations of Toinette's peasant cottage, the quiet monotonous life lived at the Island. That her mistress was happier than she had been since the mill disaster — since the few visits at the Anchorage of Mr. Stone — Hannah could tell by the tone of Blair Martin's letters. She herself was more contented than she ever would have thought possible separated from the lady that she served. That her lady would sooner or later feel the need for her and send for her, Hannah never doubted. Meanwhile, she enjoyed the first faint marks of spring in Devonshire, the customs and the dialect she had not seen or heard since a child.

With a hospitality as simple as it was sincere, the people of the Island shared their best with the rich American, and she drank deep of it as a thirsty traveler drinks some cool refreshing draught after the travel and the desert's heat. Her moods were many, and the three she knew best — Lamoré, Toinette, and the boy Anthony — bore with her with a patience the full extent of which she never realized until years later. It was perhaps to Lamoré that she most often turned when the seeming cruelties of life oppressed her, but even with Lamoré she never ventured confidences, and he never attempted to break through the wall of her reserve. She was dimly conscious that when she was weary in body and in mind, his calm brought her rest. When the brain of her and the heart of her dwelt on the injustices and questioned the mercy of the All-Pervading Force, his sane judgment and wise philosophy, for the time at least, stilled her questionings and brought her peace. When the woman in her yearned for more than she had, his sympathy, deep and tender, soothed her, and instinctively she grew to feel that once in his life he had suffered with the human in him as she was suffering now. He grew to be a type to her of high spiritual endeavor, as long ago Stone had grown to be a type of all she had ever dreamed of in the present humanity of man. He was at once an interest and an inspiration in her life and she hardly acknowledged to herself the full force of what his personality meant to her. As if conscious of her need of him, Lamoré joined her more often in her walks and so apparently unexpected were the meetings, that Blair Martin never guessed how carefully they had been planned.

Once, alone, she climbed the winding road again and lingered at the gate that led to the chateau garden. She did not attempt to enter — just why she could not have told. By and by she rose from the big boulder on which she had been sitting and listlessly continued up the side of the cliff. She had no objective point in view. She only knew that she was tired — more tired in heart and brain than in the body — and that any extra physical exertion helped her. The fruitlessness of being, oppressed her, and with a yearning intense and not to be denied, she longed for some word from Stone. Not since she had been at the Island had she walked the Dream Bridge with him — seen even that dim semblance of his face, and yet there had been times when Stone had seemed nearer to her here than anywhere she had ever been. Sometimes she wondered if it was the hope of such few recurring moments that kept her lingering at the Island. The road grew steeper and she found walking difficult. Few marks of carriage or wagon wheels broke the surface, but to one side through the shaded woods she came upon a little well worn path. Not stopping to question whither it led, and only conscious that it offered less resistance to her tired feet, she turned into it and followed it to its end. Its way led through deep woods that lay still and cool around her, and the darkness of the narrow path was broken every little while with shafts filtering through from the warm sunshine overhead. To the left some birds were singing, and their song and the light footfall of her feet were the only sounds that broke the silence. After a little a strange peace began to creep into her heart, as turbulent waters suddenly become stilled as they grow deeper and approach the sea. And then it was that there came to her — full, strong and mellow — the most wonderful music that she had ever heard. For a moment she stood still and held her breath, as a child who hears some sound of a fairyland long dreamed and read of, and something of the child-wonder crept into her deep eyes as she listened.

"It is some one playing the organ at St. Michael's," she said at last, and she did not know she spoke aloud. By and by she moved toward the sound, more slowly and with lighter footfall, as though afraid she might miss one cadence, or awaken from a dream. After a little the woods thinned on either side as she walked. To the left she caught a glimpse of blue sea far below, and on the right a gleaming mass of stone which she knew to be St. Michael's. On the edge of the clearing she saw it fully — that great memorial chapel so full of mystery and of beauty, and almost as a thing afraid she crept across the space that divided the outskirts of the woods from St. Michael's, and stood in the shadow of a side doorway listening. . . . At first she was acutely conscious of her own presence there, and the sense of her own insignificance — one small and finite thing — in the shadow of that great pile of marble, overwhelmed her. Then she forgot all except the music and she listened until her whole body was one vibration of sound. Her brain throbbed to it, her heart beat to it, her spirit steeped itself in it until it seemed to her she could bear it no longer, and she turned and leaned against the carved marble of the entrance, her face hidden in her hands. By and by the strange peace she had felt in the woods stole over her and she raised her white face from her hands and stared out across the clearing to the open sea. The music rose and fell and it seemed to her its vibrations throbbed in the air in front of her, a tangible thing. Little by little they seemed to gather into a cloud and as she looked the Dream Bridge formed before her. She was stepping on it now and from the other end Stone was coming to meet her as he had met her before, but to-day his face was different than she had ever seen it. All weariness and anxiety and sorrow and passion had passed from it and it shone out grave, triumphant, and serene, and when he got to her he held out his arms and folded her to him with a love that claimed her as separate and distinct from sex and time and space. Around them and above them and made of the Bridge on which they stood, was the music of St. Michael's. . . . Slowly the cloud was dissipated. She could feel it going and she clung on to it passionately knowing the emptiness of the awakening. Then once more she stood in the shadow of St. Michael's looking out across the clearing to the sea.

One great sonorous chord greeted her awakening, then silence, and Gounod's Mass was ended.

. . . .

She crouched down on the stone floor, the coldness of it bringing back to her the realities of life, and she lay there, her spirit crushed and broken. By and by she was conscious of a key being turned in a lock, the opening of a door, and she rose suddenly to her feet. In the doorway stood Pierre Lamoré. He did not show any surprise at her being there, and he answered her disjointed questions in a calm and natural voice that at once controlled and soothed her.

"It was I — Mademoiselle — I come when I can and practise on the organ."

"I — I did not know that you were a musician," she said in a low voice as she watched him relock the inner door and walked by him as he began the descent.

"I studied long ago while a boy in Germany. Through all the grave perplexities and vicissitudes of the years, it has sustained me, Mademoiselle."

It was the only allusion she remembered that he had made to his own life, and a strange new liking for him went out from her as for a comrade who had known distress.

She glanced back over her shoulder at the gleaming stones of St. Michael's.

"It is a wonderful organ, Father," she said at length.

"It is one of the finest in all France," said Lamoré, and he spoke as a connoisseur. "It is a great privilege to play there, Mademoiselle."

She looked up at him with a faint smile.

"It was not altogether the organ, Father. Where in Germany did you learn that touch? And the Mass — I have heard the Gounod Mass in America — in most of the big cathedrals of Europe — and never like that — " she broke off. Henceforth could she ever separate the Dream Bridge and the Mass of Gounod, she wondered.

He helped her in silence over the big boulder on which earlier in the day she had rested in her ascent. Neither of them looked toward the wicket gate as they passed.

"The mysteries of music, Mademoiselle! Who shall fathom them? Some soul perhaps born from other worlds than ours, with the experiences, the pains, the joys, the loves, of other existences than those of which we are conscious."

She did not answer and together they walked on in silence, he in a grave revery, she vainly trying to soar again to those heights that for a moment she had touched on the threshold of St. Michael's.

"But your mysteries — your mysteries of faith — what is there in them that one can take for common life and needs?" She spoke slowly, finally.

Lamoré stopped in his walk and smiled. He looked out across the sea. The blue was turning to a somber gray; the sun was hidden by great clouds.

"Who is there of us," he questioned, "that knows what a sunset is — what it is that makes that clear splendor, or the glory of a child's face in sleep, or — the look of love? But, Mademoiselle, do we question either the splendor or the glory? And can we, of whatever race or creed, spare the beauty and the power? Shall finite fathom Infinity?"

She did not answer but he saw that the hand she held above her eyes to shade them trembled.

The moments passed and grew into long minutes and the silence of nature and of human speech was there. Her eyes, still shaded, looked out across the stretch of waters gray and cold, and on the lowering sky. On the summit, at St. Michael's, wrapped in the music, wrapped in the mystery of the Dream Bridge, there had been light and peace and warmth; but here, down near the base, on the edge of the homeward road, were shadows gray and cold. She turned with the instinct of a wounded thing that wants to be alone.

"I am going now," she said.

He took her offered hand with an understanding of her need, and he looked down on it critically for the moment that it rested in his own. It was a beautiful hand, but oddly shaped, with the broad palm of practical benevolence and the slender fingers of the lover of all that is beautiful in life as well as art. It lay in his own quite listless as though uncertain of the task expected of it. Then with the simple dignity of the birth and breeding of his race that was his before he was either a soldier or a priest, his head inclined above it.

"Au revoir, Mademoiselle."

He stood where she had left him on the rock, watching her pick her way among them until she reached the main road, that, winding by the sea, led back to Toinette's cottage.

"Only a few grains for the field as yet," he thought, "since it is not ready for the sowing — "

Suddenly he raised his head expectantly, and as he waited in the solitude and silence, a light crept across his face and lingered there before it slowly faded. He spoke then as one answering a familiar unseen voice.

"'Feed thou my lambs!' Aye, Master — Gracious Lord — yet at first we give but crumbs to the starving lest they perish with the surfeit. Hast Thou not said our *daily* bread?"

Slowly he stepped from the crags that lay at the base of St. Michael's, and silently and unseen, followed the road winding by the sea where, in the distance, Blair Martin walked alone.

. . . .

All through the long hours of the afternoon the sky became more threatening and the sea more somber, and with the darkness there broke over the Island such a storm as it had not known in years. In the scattered cottages among the vineyards the peasant women lighted their blessed candles and prayed, or stilled the children's frightened cries, while the men crossed themselves as they made their way to where their flocks were sheltered to see that they were secure, and thought with dread of the vineyards waiting for the harvest and of the dawning of the morning. In all the darkness and the pelting rain and heavy winds, the flickering of the blessed candles and the steady beacon light from the spire of St. Michael's streamed out upon the blackness of the night. All through the night the storm lasted, and Blair Martin, kneeling by her window, watched it unafraid. The sound of the pelting rain against the glass that shook and rattled with its force, the slow tolling of St. Michael's bell, rung by Giovanni to warn the men at sea, were to her physical senses what Lamoré's music earlier in the day had been to heart and spirit, and she gloried in the passion and the force of the elements that subdued all things to their will.

At dawn she was still kneeling there, watching the storm subside and waiting for the light, half fearful of what it might reveal. By and by the light came, and with it the sun that looked down upon the soaking earth. The vineyards, sheltered in the valleys, had been but little harmed, but some of the great trees on the cliff side had been laid low, their strength of slow long centuries of growth worsted in the struggle of the night. With the coming of the dawn and the sun, the light upon St. Michael's steeple had gone out. She could see it — the steeple — the slender white beauty of it pointing heavenward, a type of the Eternal that endures when things transitory are destroyed and forgotten with the ceasing of time. Then slowly her eyes traveled to the chateau standing in its shadow, and with a quick cry she rose suddenly from her knees. From the staff on the turret a flag spread itself to the morning breeze; she could see it where she stood — a gold cross upon an azure field.

END OF BOOK TWO.

BOOK THREE

THE TEMPLE'S STEPS

I.

STONE took the midnight train to Montreal. All night he lay awake and the dull rumble of the iron wheels kept time to the grinding tumult in his brain. One by one the events of his life shaped themselves from out of the confusion and one by one they passed in review before him. At first he regarded them almost impersonally. . . . Later there came to him Blair Martin's face as it had looked at him one summer night under a mimosa tree. . . . After that his brain was a burning sheet of memory and he let it burn. . . . Towards morning the fire wore itself partially out and he fell into a fitful sleep from which he was aroused by the dining-room porter calling through the car the time for breakfast. He stepped down from the train into the big station of Montreal without haste and colorless, the great scar showing out more distinctly by contrast. He ordered a cab and was driven to a hotel, where he engaged a suite and bathed and changed his clothes. Then he flung himself down on a lounge near the window and turned listless troubled eyes toward the great river flowing below. He was known at the hotel; he had often occupied this suite before, he remembered with what was almost a shudder, and there had been times when he had lain here and let the beauty of the river view soothe restless heart and nerves. To-day it brought little help to him. By and by he started up and sat on the edge of the lounge, his hands on his knees, staring straight ahead of him. Time was passing. They would be looking for him at the Hotel des Invalides — wondering at his lack of haste in coming. Ah! those good sisters with their temptation sheltered lives who were rejoicing for him. How little did they know or understand! And the Other — the Other waiting for him! What would that meeting be? For years he had come to Montreal to see her — or was it that he came to see that she lacked for nothing? But to-day — it would be different. How was he to bridge those seven years? He could not. That night in summer under the mimosa tree, he knew that the bridge he had so carefully built and guarded, had shattered to its fall. How would she look and act now that an inscrutable Fate had seen fit to lift the veil? Once she had charmed him — she had never, he remembered, even in those long years, been repulsive to him or awakened aught save pity in her helplessness — but he knew as by an unalterable decree that that charm for him was passed. He had borne much; he had forgiven much, but as yet he could not forget. — And he — what was this thing he was about to do — he whose life had stood for effort in the highest and for truth — was he, could he, live this lie? God! Even for a promise made in the name of that God years ago, even because she once had borne a child for him, even to shield her life from further bitterness, ought he to live the lie? . . . He searched the empty room with eyes that questioningly looked on its inanimate things, with eyes that turned to the river and the sky, but neither the inanimate things nor the sky gave back an answer.

By and by he rose and walked out to the street and began to slowly climb the heights where the Hotel des Invalides stood. Half an hour later the Mother Superior, on whose face rested a joy unselfishly remote, led him into a small private apartment.

"I will send her, Monsieur. For hours she has been waiting — praying that you might not delay."

After what seemed hours he heard a step along the corridor — a light step, one almost of youth. A hand touched the door-knob, hesitated. . . . He drew a deep breath, watching the door, and he noticed irrelevantly the stream of sun motes crossing it. How bright they were. . . .

Slowly the door opened. In the sun motes stood a woman. She was above the average height and slender. One hand with delicate tapering fingers played a little nervously with the knob of the closed door. It was her only sign of confusion. A control such as he could never remember seeing in her face, or in the face of any of her countrywomen, lay upon her; looked from the grave brown eyes beneath a white low forehead. Her dark hair, very fine and very long, was twisted in two great braids and wound and wound around her head, a simple crown. He remembered it was the way she had worn it years ago. Her attitude expressed yearning and doubt, without fear, and there was withal about her a dignity that had come to her by right and which she could not lose.

The hand that had been playing with the knob dropped suddenly and was outstretched. . . . He crossed the room and took it and pressed it to his lips.

"Cecile," he said, and so low did he speak that the woman waiting expectant at the doorway bowed her head to hear the whisper of her name.

II.

FROM Montreal he took her to St. Anne de Beaupré, a quaint Canadian town where yearly pilgrims come to worship at the shrine. The serenity and the influence of the place brought a strange peace to his troubled heart, although it was for her that he had come, fearful at first of the noise and confusion of a large city and the effect it might have upon her. She was inexpressibly charmed with the place — the quaint streets, the shrine itself, the tongue of France that she heard on every side. For her a new heaven and a new earth had opened and the dawning wonder of it was reflected in her eyes. Day by day he watched her furtively, scarce believing that the dream was true, or that the life he was living was real. If she was ever aware of his veiled scrutiny she gave no outward sign, but she in her turn studied him when he least expected it, as though from behind the mask that hid the real man from her, she might know him as he was, face to face. A strange reticence enveloped her, which he might have heeded more had he not been absorbed in thoughts of other things, not the least being the remembrance of her happiness. In honesty to himself, however, he gave no more than he could and hide his secret still. His thought for her comfort, for her diversion, was unfailing, as was his consideration in all things. Demonstration seemed to him the one coin that he could not pay, and unlike what he had feared, she never asked more than he freely gave. If during those hours of waiting after her awakening she had looked for more, if now her heart hungered for more, at least she gave no sign and he was satisfied.

Only once, as by a mutual consent, had either alluded to those seven years in Montreal — rarely to the life lived together before the shadow fell. Once, on leaving the church after Benediction, they walked together on the outskirts of the town, and for the first time in all the long weeks she questioned him as to something outside of the life they were living here together in the small Canadian village.

" The organ at the Memorial Chapel — it has been installed? "

The question without preface of any kind startled him, but he answered quietly.

" It was placed in the Chapel soon after its completion, and as you directed in the plans you left. It is one of the finest in all France."

" Ah, you have seen the Chapel? You have heard the organ? " she asked, a quick catch in her voice — yearning in her eyes.

" Once, on my last visit there, I saw the Chapel completed. It is a thing of wonderful beauty, Cecile. But I did not go inside nor hear the organ. I had no key," he added with a grave smile.

" The good Father — he is still living and he did not take you to St. Michael's — you did not see the great altar window to — the child?" To herself her voice seemed remote.

"No, Cecile."

After a while she asked:

"The good Father — he has grown much older?"

"I saw him last year. He seemed as when I first met him years ago," said Stone.

"Eternal youth is on him," she said softly. "Are — are there any changes at the Island?"

"So few as not to count. Time stands still there, I think, Cecile. Marie — the daughter of your old serving-woman — is widowed and lives with her child at the rectory. Together they take care of Father Lamoré. Giovanni still works in the garden — that wonderful chateau garden — and each night he runs the light up on the steeple of St. Michael's to guide men on the sea — each stormy night he tolls the Chapel bell for them."

She stopped suddenly in her walk and she clasped and unclasped her hands.

"All — all just as I wanted it to be," she said, a strange smile lingering on her lips, "just as I wanted it to be. I thank you — oh, I thank you."

Stone drew intricate patterns in the dust of the road with the tip of his walking stick.

"Don't," he said hastily; "don't thank me. I was glad to do what I could. Lamoré helped me a great deal. He has a wonderful eye for the truly great in art."

"All the same," she repeated to herself softly, resuming her walk, "all as I left it, except the great Chapel I never saw except in drawing — as I never saw except in — dreams."

Something in her voice made his heart beat more rapidly. He said nothing, and after a while her voice — low and quiet — broke the stillness that lay around them.

"The seven years were not all darkness, Hector," she said. "There were minutes when I awoke — when I knew, and I would feel for the gold key to St. Michael's you once placed around my neck. I clung to it as a drowning man clings to a spar, before the waters closed above me again and the night came back. I knew, Hector, for a moment the day you came with it and clasped it round my neck — I saw your face as I see it now and I knew all the promises had been kept. Some day — will you take my key and go to St. Michael's?"

"Some day," he said, and it seemed to him his heart and brain were ice.

On the way back they were overtaken and detained by a man Stone had once met in Quebec, who had come over to St. Anne de Beaupré for the day. Stone himself was not aware how eagerly he inquired for news of the outer world. On reaching the strange little place they had for so many weeks called home she went directly to her room, Stone lingering below to smoke a cigar and talk in the cool of the late August evening.

Once upstairs she sat down on the edge of her bed in thought. She thought of many things, and once Stone's face with its new glad look of interest flashed before her mind.

"His work — all this time he has put it to one side — for me. He must go back to it. He loves the world — he is a part of it — his work is for it, while I — I only want the Island — *my* Island of the Angels — the child again and — *him!*"

The long dusk fell and found her still sitting there. Once she put her hand to her throat and touched the key that for so long had hung on the chain about her neck.

"Ah, that I might unlock his heart to-night as some day I shall unlock the Chapel to the child!"

The dusk had turned to darkness when Stone ascended and lighted the candle near the door.

"Cecile, where are you?"

She rose from her seat on the bed and came toward him. The light from the candle that he held high, searching for her, fell upon his face, and the long red disfiguring scar stood out boldly. Suddenly she drew his head down and laid her lips against it.

"Would that I might so heal all your wounds, mon cher," she said.

III.

THREE days later they left St. Anne de Beaupré for the outside world again. At first Stone had remonstrated, fearing the new excitement for Cecile, but on seeing her heart apparently set on it, he had at last consented. He had not, so intent had he been in his thought of her, seriously considered all that that exodus from the quiet life would mean. There would be the world to face again, he remembered suddenly as their train neared the great city, and the world to be faced under new conditions. Little gossip, or indeed news of any sort, had penetrated to St. Anne de Beaupré, but he had lived and worked in the world too long — was too prominent a figure in that world — not to guess the discussion he had undergone since he had left it that night months ago for Montreal. A sudden understanding of the criticism he would meet with, the forces against which he would have to pit his will, came over him, and mentally, as the great train steamed along, he began to arrange his batteries of defense and the weapons he would use. The desire to do battle with the world again, lying dormant for a while, stirred in him, and instinctively his hand went up and touched the scar on his cheek. Did he not bear on him the seal of the world's work? He thought of the laboring men he had not seen for so long. . . .

Unnoticed by him, Cecile from her parlor chair watched his face and read something of his thoughts. She sighed a little, remembering the quiet of St. Anne de Beaupré. She had overruled his every objection, declaring that she needed nothing but her needlwork and her music, and whatever diversions he could find time from his work to spare for her. The train steamed through the outskirts of the city — through the tenement approach where hundreds of working men and women and squalid, pale-faced children leaned from open windows to catch the faint breeze of the hot August night. She sat forward in her chair — a throb of pity in her heart as the train whirled past. How different — how different from her people in the Island of the Angels! Then she remembered suddenly that they were his people — the people that Stone had adopted for his own and for whom he lived and labored, and the feeling of impersonal pity passed and was replaced by a vague desire to share something of her inner self, she had never known before.

With infinite care Stone helped her from the car — all his attentions to her were infinitely gentle as they were infinitely remote — and together they got into the big touring car waiting for them at the curb.

"My wife, Wilson," he said briefly, and Wilson stood cap in hand, before climbing back into the driver's seat. He had looked at the lady as curiously as he dared. In the months since his master had been away, Wilson had listened to strange stories in regard to him. They had never been uttered in his presence without invoking his vigorous protest. Had he not watched Mr. Stone grow up from a boy in the home of his millionaire uncle, John Stone? Had he not served Mr. Stone ever since his return from abroad, long ago? Would he not have known if there had been a woman in his life? Just the same it was with another furtive glance that he held open the door of the tonneau for Stone and his wife to alight at the pretty cottage Stone had rented in a quiet suburb near the city limits.

"As thoughtful as ever," she had murmured on the threshold of the new home, looking out over the pretty garden and some distant hills. "I shall be happy here," she added, smiling softly as though to herself. "While you work I shall have the music and the flowers; while you work — I shall wait for you."

And still with the smile upon her face she entered and Stone closed the door.

IV.

THE weeks slipped into months and little came to disturb the quiet in that suburban home. The [illegible] one and Cecile rejoiced in the flowers [illegible] to her from day to day. They went out but little and they entertained [illegible] but the few times she was seen in public with him did much to quiet suspicion and [illegible] criticism. Something in her bearing and her pretty broken English spoke of a birth and a gentle breeding that none that met her could deny, and there was withal a dignity about her that repelled curious questionings of any kind. [illegible] her wall of defense, and a better protection [illegible] even Stone's name. If she ever suspected [illegible] the reports that had been circulated about her and which were slowly dying a natural death she gave no hint of it to Stone; [illegible] knowledge that his secret marriage to her [illegible] — barely known outside of France — and of the vague criticism that that lack of knowledge [illegible] brought down upon her, made Stone redouble his attentions to her and see that every wish he guessed at was satisfied. If he declared his marriage to the world, the curious world would wonder, conjecture and demand to know where those seven years of separation had been spent. Could he bring himself to let the world know the inner secret — the curse of Cecile's life? The knowledge was locked safe in the Hotel des Invalides, was safe with Lamoré, and safe with the only other person who knew it — Blair Martin. The world — that upper world of fashionable people of whom he was one and for whom he cared so little — might conjecture as they would. They would soon forget him and his affairs. Their wonderings could not hurt Cecile in her white purity. As for the others — the people whose lives and cause he had made his own — they accepted the news of his wife as they accepted everything in regard to him — as a thing above criticism and beyond question. Two or three of the labor leaders had seen her in the suburban home. It was there she had met them as a queen might meet courtiers from a foreign power to which she was friendly, but whose customs and language she did not understand. There had been no condescension in her attitude, only a superb graciousness, as from one who rules by right, that they vaguely felt but could not explain to themselves. But the remembrance of her strengthened Stone's influence in their midst.

Stone himself went back to the work with an enthusiasm and a passion that helped him in the new strange life he lived — which helped him to forget. For the first time in his labors he came out fully as he was, as to position and to principle. Joe Blackie, so long a prominent figure in labor meetings, came no more since the mill explosion had revealed who Joe Blackie was. But the foreman with the blackened hands that had worked among them, had blazed a trail for Hector Stone and his work. They never would have heard him — never followed him with the same intense loyalty had it not been for the years he had labored with them and shared their lives.

It was about this time that he drew more fully to him the upper class — his own — that for years he had endeavored to enlist in his cause. For years he had wanted the brains, the coöperation, the money, that his class might give. It came to him now, and the knowledge of the ultimate attainment of a goal in sight, strengthened him as strong wine strengthens a man who has been through some long and bitter ordeal.

The widening influence — the public need for him — for his presence and his speeches, brought new obligations. There were hours spent away from the pretty suburban cottage now — sometimes trips, even, and a journey out west of a fortnight. Twice Cecile had gone with him, but the long hours in the trains, the excitement of the time, had tired her, and she was content thereafter to remain behind, and her decision had been received by Stone with a relief that was an astonishment to himself. His work gave little time for thought, but when the thoughts came, fight them as he would, they were not of Cecile in the suburban home but of another woman — earnest, gray-eyed, wandering restlessly from place to place in foreign lands.

Once he met Andrew Martin. The older man had in a shamefaced way approached him after one of his famous speeches in a neighboring city. Without preliminary comment of any kind he had said briefly:

"My taxi is waiting at the curb. Come with me. I will drop you at your hotel. I want to talk to you."

It seemed impossible to refuse the invitation, and Stone was not altogether sure that he wanted to refuse it. Might not the Scotchman tell him news for which he hungered?

To the driver the Scotchman said:

"The Kingsford," adding in a lower voice, "the longest way around."

Then he clambered into the taxi by Stone.

At first neither of them spoke and Stone looked out of the window on the brightly lighted thoroughfare. He was tired. His speech had been a long one — had needed hours of thought and tact, but he was conscious that his audience had been good, and that what he had set forth in clear, concise sentences, in timely references and accurate statistics, had been well received. Such knowledge brought him the deepest sense of rest that his life knew just now.

The Scotchman made no allusion to his being at the meeting — what had brought him to the neighboring city just at this time — but he broke the silence first.

"I hear you are married, Mr. Stone."

He tried to make his voice impersonally polite.

Stone did not turn to him but continued to stare out upon the city lights.

"Yes, Mr. Martin."

The Scotchman regarded him curiously. He wondered if he could ever find this man off his guard.

"I suppose you are open to congratulations," he said at length.

"Certainly, Mr. Martin. Thank you."

The silence fell again. Something in Stone's attitude forbade further questions, but it was not of Stone's wife that the Scotchman was thinking, but of Blair's face as he had sometimes seen it.

It was not of Cecile that Stone began to think as he stared out of the window, but of Blair Martin. If he might hear some word of her . . . that she was well. . . .

By and by, with an effort of his will, he forced the memory of her from him and began to speak on indifferent topics. So steadily and so well did he talk that the taxi drew up at the Kingsford long before the Scotchman wished. He could find no excuse however for detaining him longer, and in chagrin he heard Stone thank him, saw him open the door, heard it close again.

They had met and parted, and it seemed to both of them that they had discussed every subject under heaven except the one of which both longed to hear.

. . . .

Stone returned late the next night, and for the first time since the days of St. Anne de Beaupré Cecile was not awaiting him. Her maid said she had gone to bed.

In his dressing-room, on his shaving-stand, he found a note from her — a few words of welcome By it, in the dim light, was something he did not at first recognize. He switched on the main lights and for a moment was blinded by the sudden glare Then he returned to the shaving-stand and picked the thing up with a sharp exclamation of surprise It was a frail thing — an object for a woman's dainty room — the little work-bag that long ago Blair Martin had sold him at their first meeting On it was resting a long white glove with the faint elusive odor of violets about it.

For a moment he held it in fingers that grasped it in a tense hold, looking at the closed door into Cecile's room, and in that moment he realized why she had not been waiting to welcome him when he came home — what the morrow must surely bring.

V.

IT was late when he awoke the next morning after a night of haunting, troubled dreams. He dressed deliberately — he slowly drank the coffee that Wilson brought to his room — he walked its length back and forth — anything to gain time. The crossroads of his life had been reached. Which road to take — which? The road up to now had been an undividing, if rocky one. There had never been the question, which way to turn. He had followed the road of his duty as he had seen it, and in spite of the fatigue and sweat from the toil and sorrows of others he had carried, he had clung in his manhood to the ideals of his youth. Sometimes, by a turn in the road, that ideal had become lost or blurred, but he had found it again as a beacon burning brightly still, and it had led him on and on, across the morasses of despair, the deserts of barren living, the few green oases with their springs of living waters that he remembered gratefully, but — it had always led him. To-day it hung above the crossroads and its guiding power seemed gone. His brain, that had so often and for so long evolved schemes for the helping of others' woes, had no power or faculty now to help his own.

He went downstairs to the library and began to sort over his mail — always a heavy one — a task he allowed no one to attend to but himself. Later his secretary would come and they would go over the correspondence together, but the first reading was always his. To-day he began to open the huge pile in a listless manner. Mechanically and with skill born of long practice he sorted the letters out — invitations to speak — social requests — personal business affairs in connection with his vast fortune — appeals for help in mental difficulties and labor questions, and financial distress. The last were by far the most numerous and were scrupulously read and thought over by Stone — the evidently needy ones laid to one side for further investigation on the part of well trained agents. Few were cast aside, and all were read — a fact that had become pretty generally known in the under-world of the unfortunates, and which had made Stone, of all the rich men in America, the most easy of approach.

To-day, however, even the letters failed to arouse him or the pressing need of work to be gone over and prepared before the arrival of his secretary. He pushed back the papers from him and looked out of the long casement windows opening on the garden. The garden lay white and still wrapped in its sheet of snow. The morning was a gray and cold one. It seemed to him the house was unusually still. The footstep that he knew, the voice so familiar, that he half dreaded, half longed to hear, was silenced. He wondered where Cecile was — how she looked — her thoughts! If he might read her thoughts, he might better deal with this thing, know which of the crossroads to choose. . . .

At eleven his secretary knocked. Stone's eyes came back suddenly from the garden and fell on him as he entered. The papers were barely touched in front of him — the mail unsorted and unopened for the first time in years.

The secretary entered with a quick, decisive tread and started for his desk in a far corner of the room.

"The work will have to wait, Farnum, I am not up to it to-day," said Stone as he slowly rose and went to one of the casement windows and stood staring out.

"I don't understand, sir," said Farnum, wondering if the foundations of all things were giving way beneath him. "You're not ill, I hope?"

"I don't know," said Stone, "I only know I can't work this morning. I don't suppose you mind a holiday?"

Farnum laughed slightly.

"I wouldn't as a rule," he said briefly, "but with work like yours — if one loses an hour and gets behind, it's like sweeping back the sea."

"Yes — yes. I know you've been grinding pretty hard of late, Farnum. Perhaps you'd better see young Turner this afternoon. He's been well recommended and I like the boy's face. I fancy he'd make you a pretty able assistant and like the place better than the one he has now with its long hours."

Farnum nervously rubbed his chin.

" It's just as you say, of course, Mr. Stone. S the work is off for to-day? " Then as Stone gav a gesture of assent he added, " Better go and rest sir, you're all tired out and won't be fit for th northwestern trip next month. I'll stay on her and do what I can."

" No, no, Farnum, we're going to close up sho for to-day," said Stone. He had no desire for an outsider in the house just then, not even Farnum — who had served him long and well. " Go hom and surprise your wife and take the kiddies coasting. You'll work all the better to-morrow for i — and mind you stop and see young Turner."

After Farnum had closed the library door behind him, Stone resumed his seat by his desk an began to collect his correspondence and lay it i neat piles in his desk. The habit of order wa habitual with him.

The clock above the big brick fireplace told hi it was nearing lunch time — a meal that Cecil and himself invariably had together when he wa at home. He rose suddenly and without knowing exactly what he did, went in search of her.

He found her in the small conservatory at th back of the house, watering and pruning the flowers. Her back was to him as he entered and h noticed that she did not turn or look up.

" Luncheon is almost ready, Cecile."

He spoke in French and never had his voice been kinder. She answered him in the familiar tongue of her people, but she made no effort to look up. Her manner was without embarrassment, and she asked him many questions as to his speech — his reception in the near-by city — about the comfort of his trip. Had it not been for the two red spots that burned in her usually white face, and the remembrance of the silken bag and long white glove upstairs still resting on his shaving stand, he would have thought no change had come to her. Her very attitude was making the thing harder, although she was evidently exerting all her powers to please — to put him at his ease. He stood studying her face as it was bent over the palms, wondering — wondering —

Later they had lunch together and she poured his tea for him from a little teapot of old Satsuma of exquisite design. She was gay — he did not know how feverish the gaiety was, nor how forced. She played the rôle she had given to herself with an art that was partly inborn — partly a characteristic of her nation.

She met his eyes now, and with a start of surprise he noticed a new fire in their brown and melting depths. He did not know of the inner fire that seemed slowly consuming her, but he heard her voice, more tender than ever in the past.

Luncheon over, she went to her room to lie down. She was just recovering from a cold due to the unusual dampness of the winter. In January, when

Stone had suggested taking her south, she had shaken her head, remembering his work. She would not go without him. She simply evaded his entreaties, saying she preferred to remain at home with her music and her flowers.

He did not see her again until the seven o'clock dinner, when again he sat opposite to her at table. How he had gotten through the afternoon he could not remember. How he endured that meal he did not know. With his coffee he began his smoke, and she left him for the piano with a backward smile. Of late the smoke had made her cough worse, and he, remembering it, had indulged in the luxury even less than formerly, but to-night he needed the cigar. He needed the wine he had taken.

By and by her music reached him from the opposite side of the hall. None of the old skill had been lost, he noticed, with those seven years of waiting. The music, low, tender, elusive as a dream, stole in to him where he sat smoking.

"Schubert," he said softly to himself.

By and by he heard her close the great piano, and cross the hall and begin to mount the stairs. He listened intently until he heard the door of her room open and close. Then suddenly he rose to his feet. The dull stupor, the irresolution of the day, gone. The crossroads stretched out in front of him, whichever way they led — whichever he chose — he would play the man. He might choose wrong — might miss forever the beacon light of that ideal he had followed, but choose he would, and he was conscious that beneath the coldness that gripped him, brain, body and heart, there burned the flame of truth before which he had never failed to bow.

Not knowing what he was to say or how he was to say it, or the consequences of what he was about to do, he laid aside the half-finished cigar and followed her upstairs.

At her door he knocked, and when her voice bade him enter he did so without hesitation. Something in his face made the red spots that had burned all day in her own, suddenly recede — leaving her cheeks like wax. She steadied herself against the back of a chair, for a moment forgetting the rôle she had given to herself to play. When he spoke she forgot the rôle and was herself — herself as Stone had never seen her.

"Cecile, there is something I want to talk over with you," he said, and for a moment something in her face frightened him. If this should cause that shadow — the darkness of the seven years . . . to descend on her again . . . if . . .

Then he went on resolutely.

"Come with me for a little while into my dressing-room. I shall not detain you long."

He held open the door for her to enter. As she passed him her head was a little lowered, her eyes cast down.

"Not long," she whispered to herself, and her lips were colorless.

VI.

HE pulled forward a chair for her to sit in and she took it mechanically; her eyes were fixed on him. For a moment he stood before her without moving, looking down on her. His look was a question, but her face, beyond its unusual paleness, told him nothing.

He turned and without further hesitation walked over to his shaving-stand, where the work-bag and the white glove still lay.

"I found these, here, in my room last night," he said so quietly that he wondered at his own voice. "I suppose you found them in my camphor chest and wondered at their being there. I owe you an explanation."

He paused a moment and across the space of the room she looked at him.

"Hortense found them when I sent her to the chest to get your automobile coat to take to the northwest with you. You asked me to see about it, you remember. The girl was called away before the things were put back, and I came in and found those on the floor. You do not owe me an explanation. After the wrong I did you years ago, you owe me nothing. If you care to tell me — that is different. I simply could not ask you about them as another woman might have done, and I could not put them back without your knowing that I had found them. Do you think you understand?"

She had spoken dully — almost without emotion, and now she half turned in her chair and looked out of the window at the darkness, as though all had been said.

It was not what he had expected, remembering the old days when she had demanded every breath be hers. It was foreign to her bringing up, to the station in life in which she had been born, to the characteristics of her countrywomen.

He took the work-bag and the white glove from the shaving-stand and carried them over to a table near her, where he laid them down. The glove clung to his hand in an almost [illegible] way.

"Whatever the past held of sorrow — or wrong, Cecile," he said slowly and in a low voice, "it has nothing to do with the matter in hand, has nothing to do with what I owe you as my wife."

She looked at him for a moment, and because her back was to the light he could not see her face distinctly, only the oval outline of it, the shining eyes, the crown of dark and heavy hair.

"As you please," she said. "I only wanted you to know I had found the things. I could not deceive you — again."

"It is best for both of us that I tell you, and tell you — quickly."

After it was over and his voice had ceased, she remained sitting where she was — immovable. After all, there had been so little to tell that was tangible, and little to confess of wrong.

By and by she rose and crept over to the table in a timid way and picked up the long white glove. She stood looking down at it in silence. The rare elusive perfume stole up to her. She recognized it as a product of her own land, an extract of almost priceless worth. In a dim way and for a moment of time it became associated with a wonderful garden she had walked in as a child, had dreamed in as a girl, and a carpet of violets that bloomed there. Then gently she laid the long glove down.

She turned and crossed the room and stood by the door, the knob in her hand. Once she looked at him, and as though unconscious that he had followed her every movement in agony and anxiety of mind, she spoke.

" Tell me again, Hector. Perhaps — perhaps I did not understand — you *love* her? "

" Yes," he said, and he could not look at her.

For a moment she stood staring straight ahead of her.

" So! " she said, then she opened the door and, wraith-like, slipped through.

He made no attempt to follow her. There was nothing he could say or do. He had told the truth, he had spared neither her nor himself, and all the rest of life stretched out a blank.

VII.

IT was as though a heavy weight lay on the days that followed, and the heaviness increased until the secretaries and the servants felt it. To Stone, his only safeguard lay in work, and he worked so feverishly and so long that Farnum used sometimes to remonstrate. Stone would only shake his head and remind his secretary that the long northwestern tour was rapidly approaching and there was much to get in readiness, much to prepare for young Turner, who was to be left behind.

The relief of work did not come for Cecile — work of the strenuous sort that had to be done, work that took one out of oneself and that brought a certain relief and balm in the knowledge that others were being helped — work that brought relief with fatigue. Almost feverishly she worked among the flowers, but little concentration of energy was necessary in the task, and thoughts and memories haunted the conservatory. Then she tried her needle. For hours she sat in the sunshine of her window before her embroidery frame and toiled at the great frontal in gold thread and azure she had started. Some day, when the gold threads were woven in, in the finest art that she had learned at the convent as a girl, when the azure strands formed a background that one could scarcely tell from the product of the brush, she would send the frontal to Pierre Lamoré for the Memorial Chapel to the child. Once she paused at the work, her needle suspended. Perhaps she would not send it after all — perhaps there were other ways for the frontal to reach St. Michael's. After that the work at the embroidery frame took on new impetus, and something like the fire of a settled purpose burned in her eyes. It became hard for her to leave the gold threads and the delicately colored skeins of silk even for the daily outing in the still frozen garden that the doctor had said she must have, and for once in her life the art of her needle at the embroidery frame overshadowed the art of her music at the piano.

The long-talked-of and unexpected tour through the northwest was fast approaching, and it seemed to Stone it was the one topic on which Cecile talked long and well and without reserve. He was conscious that the separation would bring relief to her from a strain almost unbearable, and he was too honest with himself to doubt that the trip would bring relief to himself as well. It was about this time that he tried to persuade her to take Hortense and go south for a trip. Lorimer's last verdict on the cough had been anything but encouraging. For the first time she listened without remonstrance.

"Perhaps I will think of it," she said, twirling around slowly on the piano stool one evening after dinner, "but you and your nice old doctor are geese, mon cher." She laughed almost blithely, the two bright spots burning in her cheeks again.

"Lorimer is a very able physician," and Stone came and leaned over the piano, a smile upon his face. How like her old self Cecile was to-night! She was almost as she was years ago when a girl at home in France. He looked at her intently, her head slightly bent, her dark eyes on the ivory keys, and as he looked she began to play the slow elusive dream piece of Schubert's he had heard so often. He listened in silence until it was ended, a sudden swift admiration for her skill throbbing in his heart — for the art that had existed sleeping in all its perfection through the dark night of the Montreal years. The Montreal years had wrought a curious change, he had often thought. They had come and gone and left the delicate oval of her face almost untouched by any line of time, but wherever the divine ego of her had been while her body and her brain had been in the tender keeping of the Sisters, it had grown to look with calmness on the vicissitudes of life, and to weigh events with an exact proportion as to their relative value with a skill that sometimes put him to shame. To-night the long years rolled back and she seemed to him to be once more the girl he had first seen when, as a midshipman in the flush of youth and the independence of a week's leave, he had climbed the steep ascent to a chateau in an island in the Mediterranean. With the spirit of exploration strong upon him, he had pushed through the wicke gate and come on her standing alone in the sunshine of the chateau garden. . . . She wore to-night a dress of azure and of gold, and he remembered suddenly they were the colors she had worn then — the colors on the flag that stretched itself exultingly to the breeze from the turret of the chateau beyond. Something of the beauty, although remotely removed from the thrill of exquisite pleasure the scene had given him then, came back to him to-night. . . . It had been this piece of Schubert's, too, that he had first heard her play. Then something in the texture of the flushed cheek, something in the delicate tracery of the hands lying inert upon the ivory keys, dissipated the dreams, and Lorimer's warning came back.

"Cecile," he said, and something in his voice aroused her from the revery into which she had fallen, "I am serious when I say I want you to consider the Savannah trip. Lorimer says the dampness of a New England winter is not desirable and will only increase the bronchial cough. I don't want to alarm you, for there is really no cause for alarm, but —" he broke off suddenly, conscious that Cecile was sitting very straight upon the stool, and that all the listlessness had vanished.

"But what — mon cher?"

"Just this, Cecile," said Stone, more gently than he knew, "Lorimer says there is no serious trouble yet — there may never be. He says there never will be, in all likelihood, if you care for yourself —

avoid dampness and exposure and live much in the sunshine. This is one reason that I want you to take the Savannah trip."

For a moment she did not answer. A strange shadow crept around her mouth and lay upon her face.

"You are very careful of me, Hector," she said at last. It was the nearest to a reproach she had uttered since her return from Montreal.

He said nothing.

"Must it be Savannah?" she asked after a little. "Would no other place suit you or Doctor Lorimer?"

"Ah, now you are going to yield and care for yourself. Is there any other place you would rather go to — Palm Beach, perhaps, or Asheville, in the Carolina mountains?"

"I do not know very much about your health resorts in America."

"Well, think it over and decide as soon as you can. I am sorry you have not decided before, so that I could make the arrangements for you — perhaps take you there and see you in good hands. Lorimer will advise you and Turner will see to your tickets and all such arrangements. He is a capable young fellow. I will speak to him about it in the morning before I leave."

She opened her lips to say something, then closed them again. After a while she commenced to play a bit of Brahms. Again he listened to her in silence, and again he wondered at the art in her frail body. Something in the austere splendor c the piece grated against his mood to-night. Ther was little in the music now to recall Schubert an the girl he had first seen at the chateau in sur kissed France. He longed for the sound and me ody, the tender droop of her head, the yielding c her hand — he wanted to see her as she had bee half an hour before. He had grown used to he swift changing and varying moods, but to-nigh he felt he could not bear the change. Almos harshly he laid his hand on her shoulder.

"Play me Schubert again, Cecile."

Obediently and without question she stopped i the middle of a splendid bar and began the selection he wanted. As she played he became quiete and something like peace came over him again.

"Next year," he said, "the work will be les pressing. Would you like to take a trip to — France?"

She played softly now; as low as her voice wa he heard it distinctly above the tender music.

"Some day I shall go back to France."

She had left him out in her thoughts and he reckonings, whether intentionally or not he coul not say. The charm of the music lingered wit him, for she was playing Schubert as she had neve played before.

Once she played the piece. Then she began i over again. Sweet, appealing, tender, acceptin much, renouncing much; the music called him an held him in its spell. Once more she played it —

this time it was but an echo so low, so soft, the notes fell upon the air. . . . By and by she rose and closed the piano lid, a strange smile upon her face.

"Thank you," he said gently, "I shall remember Schubert when I am on my trip. No one quite interprets him as you do, I think. When I come home you will play for me again?"

"Perhaps," she said evasively, "unless I have gone south."

After she had gone to her room she stood by the window looking out upon the frozen garden. A winter wind, fierce and strong, blew past the window and rattled the sash and swayed the bare branches of the trees. She could see their restless movements by the light of a pale waxing moon. By and by she looked down curiously at her thin tapering fingers — those skilful fingers that wrought such beauty from the embroidery frame, such magic from the instrument below.

"Poor hands," she said softly to herself, "poor hands, that charm but cannot hold."

VIII.

STONE had been gone almost a month. The northwestern trip had expanded in its length and breadth and scope. There was much ground ready for the harvest among the wide rolling prairies of that upper land, and Stone was too earnest and capable a worker to leave unsowed any district that might bear fruit. In Detroit he was detained a week, and it was while there that delayed mail reached him. There was a short note from Turner enclosing matters for his personal consideration, another from his lawyer in regard to some fruit farms in the far west, a letter from Cecile, and a foreign one from France which he recognized as from Pierre Lamoré. It was stained and travel worn and bore many marks of forwarding by post. He attended to the business correspondence first and then, for some reason he never could explain, he rang for Farnum, turned the necessary work over to him and left orders that he should not be disturbed. When he had assured himself that he was, for a time at least, quite safe from intrusion, he drew up a chair to the open fire and sat down, the last two letters in his hand. For a while he stared into the high leaping flames in silence. There were few moods in his life into which the beauty and the solace of an open fire could not creep. It had always stood to him as a symbol of pure living, a test of the Eternal that tries all things in its consuming heat, separating the gold from the dross.

For a while he dreamed and saw strange pictures in the flames. Once he thought of Blair Martin and wondered where she was. How strange were the circumstances of life that took her so far from him — that sometimes gave her back to him so near. In his life, since that parting at the pier, there had come strange moments of calmness and of something akin to consolation. Just what it was he did not know — an intangible sense of her presence, real yet elusive. The moments came unbidden because of self-control.

After a while he left off looking at the flames and turned to the two letters in his hand. How odd it was the same mail had brought them to him together, and he vaguely felt that in some way they were connected with each other and that at last after all the months he was to hear some word of Blair Martin. His heart beat faster at the thought.

He opened Pierre Lamoré's letter first and read it through, his hands trembling as they turned the finely written pages.

The letter told of Blair Martin's arrival at the Island — where she was staying, how she seemed and acted; of her friendship with the boy Anthony — all the details that Stone had hungered long to hear. There was no allusion made to Cecile except that he remembered her in his prayers and commended her to God and the care of the pitying Sisters. It was evident that the joint letters that he and Cecile had written him from Canada and later from the suburban home had never reached him, although he mentioned and sent thanks for the liberal cheque that Stone had forwarded in both their names at Christmas. He added it would go a long way toward helping in the repairs so necessary to the village church.

After he had finished it, Stone sat with it a long while in his hand. It was like Lamoré to write so fully — Lamoré who so instinctively always said the right thing in the right place. He had almost forgotten the other letter, when, on glancing down to the floor, he saw it lying at his feet. He stooped and picked it up hastily and opened it.

He read it through without a tremor to reveal the consternation that suddenly took possession of him. Once he read it — twice — thrice — and it was as though the words written in Cecile's small delicate handwriting fascinated him and he could not stop.

"Mon Cher: — " it ran, "When you get this I shall have started on the southern trip you and that old goose, Lorimer, seemed to think necessary. After all, it is a good excuse for what I am about to do — without it I could not have gone, for as intolerable as the last few weeks have been I could have done nothing that would have reflected on you. Lorimer's insistence on the trip has made the matter right before your world. Mon cher, I have taken you at your word, I have chosen where I will go to hunt out sunshine and health for myself. Did it ever occur to you how little America held for me — now; or how long, since the days at St. Anne de Beaupré, I have hungered for my Island and my people? If you have ever guessed at it, if it ever occurred to you the last night you were at home and you spoke of taking me back to France next year, you will know why I have decided as I have. Hector, mon ami, I cannot wait for next year nor for your work to be less heavy, as you think it will. I know you and your work (perhaps your heart) better than you have ever dreamed, although once long ago I wronged you so. Your work will never grow less heavy, for it is world-wide in its scope, and in years to come it will take you from your own land, but now your land is calling for your work as my land is calling for my heart. Your work is here — next year your work will be here — and there will be no time for pleasuring in France. Once long ago the good Father on the Island told me men were made for their places in this world — that still some men were born with the mark of a divine calling on them. I have thought as I watched you speaking to the public such a mark rested on your life; that in truth, in the name of the Great Master, you belonged to that brotherhood who by and

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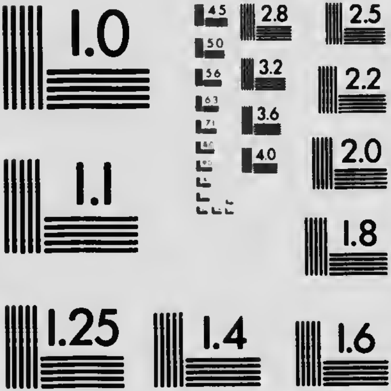
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by would become the saviors of the world. Wh place have I in that world? How truly I kno that I have none! And all your denials could n shake me from that conviction. Just why o lives touched, I do not know and I do not attem to explain, unless it was that both needed the e perience.

"I am going south, Hector, south, across t sea to France — back to Father Lamoré and n people — back to the Island and the chateau whe for so long the Grandcœurs have reigned in lonel lovely state — back to the Memorial Chapel c the heights. I ask you not to come for me. L me from the ruin of my life at least go unhampere on my search for peace. There is no comfort th you can give me — now — that the Island cann give me more. I desire only your consideration not your pity.

"*Adieu,* the good Father will write you fro time to time. To the world — my health keep me abroad — in the south of France. To you who once were my world, whose presence was i horizon and for whom I left my land, my title my people and my Church, the knowledge tha our paths have crossed only to separate again, wi be enough. I will think of you unhampered. Yo will think of me — perhaps — sometimes as on who could no longer live beneath your roof an starve on empty husks of love.

"Nay, I do not blame you. There is no blam for which you are responsible. Had I, in the ol days, followed truth as heroically as you have, I had not wronged you so.

"Adieu — adieu,

"CECILE."

At first only the fact that she had gone — had left him — struck upon his consciousness and he wondered vaguely how she had ever made the trip alone — she who in the old days was so dependent on others' help. There was no mention of Hortense. Hortense had not gone, he knew, remembering that in the spring Hortense was to be married. She might have gotten another maid, but it was doubtful; his reason and his instinct told him just how doubtful, remembering Cecile's dislike of new faces and new scenes.

Then as another thought struck him and beat insistent on his brain, he rose from his chair, his hands working in a strange restless fashion, foreign to him. She was going to the Island of the Angels — she was at the Island now — perhaps just landed, but at the Island where Blair Martin was. The Island was too small to avoid the possibility of a meeting. What was there that human skill could do — how save Cecile, how save Blair Martin, from what must be only added pain? He walked the length of the room with rapid steps and a half dozen plans came to him, all of which he dismissed as impracticable. One thought he clung to, one hope he held, one thing he remembered for his relief. Neither had heard the name of the other from him — both had been too large in nature to descend to idle curiosity that would have in the old days conveyed nothing to them. He clung to the remembrance desperately. Perhaps some Fate, who had played with them all so strange a game, might make another move — perhaps Blair Martin, tiring of the Island, would go away. If there was but some one — ah, he stopped suddenly in his walk and went over to his desk. There was some one after all into whose strong hands the tangled threads might be laid with some hope of their unraveling. He would write to Pierre Lamoré.

He wrote long and feverishly and the letter was unlike any he had ever penned. Up to now he had been sufficient to himself, had fought his battles alone and never asked for quarter. He never stopped to think how strange it was that he, Hector Stone, should be unburdening his heart, his brain, to a Catholic priest in France. He hid nothing that might throw some light on the affair — he did not spare or excuse himself. Even now the truth as he saw it led him and guided the pen that moved so rapidly over sheet after sheet. That the knowledge of the letter would be sacred he never questioned. That the letter itself would be burned on reading he never doubted.

He signed, directed and sealed it, then sent for Wilson and bade him post it at once. After that he relocked the door, and shaking as though with ague, he sat down again in the big chair by the fire and stretched his hands to the still cheerful blaze.

By and by the warmth brought him a sense of physical comfort and his nerves relaxed. He stared into the flames and strange pictures were figured there. As he watched a sense of peace crept over him — a strange sense of Blair's presence he had not known in days. Too unstrung to resist further, he gave himself up to it, not questioning the phenomena. By and by all sense of the present vanished, all weaknesses and yearnings and desires fell from him like a cloak, and it seemed to him that for an instant he saw himself stripped of all vehicles of flesh, the perfect and perfected Ego of the Eternal plan. It was then he felt her nearest, it was then to hold the vision longer that he closed his eyes, to unclose them with a start, deep music pulsing in his brain. But it was not Schubert, but Gounod that he heard.

The impression faded but the remembrance of it lingered in his brain and filled him with a peace unspeakable. Again he closed his eyes and slept.

END OF BOOK THREE.

BOOK FOUR

THE SANCTUARY

I.

ALL through the walk that led him home; all through the afternoon, Lamoré watched the gathering clouds with anxious eyes. He recalled an afternoon years ago when the sky had looked so, and he remembered the night of wild storm that followed. It was the night when the tortured spirit of Clarisse had been liberated from the bonds of flesh, and the child Cecile, scarcely more than an infant in years, had been left an orphan.

He could not settle himself to work over parish matter that needed his attention, nor could he concentrate [illegible] thoughts on the sermon for the coming Sunday. He moved restlessly about the small bare room of the humble rectory, unadorned except by books and a fine old picture of the Nazarene — the room dignified by the name of study — finally pausing at the window. Here he lingered, looking out with troubled eyes, across the stretch of waters that lay between the Island and Marseilles. As he looked far off toward Marseilles the blackness of the clouds increased and he knew that a storm had descended on the sea.

Once his lips moved in prayer. How often in the past he had stood on the Island and looked seaward in a storm. How often his prayer ha descended in the depths with drowning men wrecked on that treacherous bit before the landin at Grenette!

Suddenly he was conscious that the boy Anthony was standing in the doorway and regardin him with grave eyes. It was the boy Anthon alone of all the people in the Island that had fre access to Lamoré's study.

Lamoré turned with a smile, not wishing t frighten the boy.

"What is it, Anthony, my child?"

The boy came over to him and took his han and looked up at him appealingly.

"I saw you come in. I knew that you were troubled. Is it for the ships at sea?"

"Are you a little wizard, Anthony?"

The boy smiled faintly as he shook his head.

"No, no, mon père, yet —"

"Yet what, Anthony?"

"Never have I seen the sky look as it does now — never has the Island, before night, been so dark."

Lamoré sighed as he stroked the boy's hair.

"Try not to watch the sky and earth, Anthony. Run and see if the chickens are all housed and the cow in from pasture, and good Nanette quite safe."

After he had gone swiftly and obediently Lamoré glanced again toward the sea. The great storm cloud was approaching and its fury would soon be on them. A little later, premature darkness swept over the Island and hid from him familiar things. Then it was he went over to a cupboard and took from it strong rubber boots which he sometimes used when the spring rains made the walking to the distant parts of the Island difficult, and in haste he put them on. He took also a big lantern, and from its wooden peg, an old cloak that in bad weather had sheltered him for years. This he threw around his shoulders and opened the door to the sanded kitchen, the lantern in his hand. There he met Marie. On catching sight of him she gave a sharp exclamation of dismay.

"And who is dying now?" she asked sharply, "and wants you on such a night when the flood is going to descend on us again?"

He reproved her with a look that was all kindness — kindness and thanks for her thought of him — but his voice rang out in the silence of the little kitchen with a note the peasants in extremities sometimes heard.

"No one has sent for me, Marie. Yet there may be some who need me in the storm — some child perhaps caught on the inlet and too frightened to get home — some stray animal too weak to fight against the wind alone."

She made no further movement to stay him, but she followed him to the door that even Lamoré's strength found difficult to open against the increasing force of the wind. She watched him until the blackness enveloped him and he was lost to view, unmindful of the wind that blew upon her and wrapped her peasant's dress around her like a winding sheet. From the dark, the boy Anthony emerged, lantern in hand, returning from the care of the dumb things that served them, and in silence he hung the lantern on a big nail by the cottage door.

Together they went inside, Anthony to sit by a great fire of logs and watch that it did not go out, and to see that some gruel was kept warm upon the crane; Marie, her usually talkative tongue silenced, to creep up the narrow winding stairs to her small room, there to light her blessed candle and before a bisque image of the Virgin, pray for Lamoré's safe return.

II.

ONCE out beyond the gate of the Rectory, Lamoré paused, the big lantern in his hand. He had no definite point — he knew not where he was needed, if indeed he were needed at all — and for a moment he wondered why he had come. The next, the sea seemed calling him with an insistency not to be denied. He followed the instinct now as he had followed it all his life.

"Can it be Fauchet's boat — that Fauchet needs me and has been caught at sea?" he thought, as he slowly made his way down a rough cut across an unfarmed pasture, to the landing. One less sure-footed than himself, one less physically strong, would have found the short cut an impassable way It lay exposed to all the winds of heaven and offered neither tree nor shepherd's hut by way of shelter. Here all the force of the storm, now breaking, met and beat upon him. Sometimes it seemed he made scarcely any headway at all; sometimes he stood still for breath, his ear keenly alert for any sound. Once the deep tolling of the Chapel bell reached him and he knew that Giovanni — faithful — was at his task.

"Only God knows," he thought, "how many souls at sea St. Michael's bell has saved."

And he thought suddenly of the wreck that had occurred on the inlet reefs years ago; how the next morning had revealed the beach-strewn bodies, the arms of an older Fauchet still clasping the body of the Count; how it had been he, Lamoré — who bore the burden of his people's woes — who an hour later had climbed to the chateau and told the wife — the mother of Cecile. For centuries the curse of violent death or madness had taken the toll from the chateau of the Grandcœurs, and even Clarisse — a distant cousin of the drowned Count — had felt its weight, when three years later she had died insane. Just why he was thinking of these things and of Cecile to-night, he could not have told, unless it was the remembrance of two long delayed letters that had reached him a week ago — letters from Cecile and Stone — that had borne the almost unbelievable intelligence that they were together — that she had left Montreal. He had offered a Mass of thanksgiving at St. Michael's before writing them — together. Perhaps the curse was to lift at last and Cecile was to be the instrument. Then the remembrance of Clarisse came back, more vivid than it had in years. . . . He recalled again the old legend of the house — the story of the sin once committed against innocence and human rights, followed by the sin of usurping power, and long years of an enemy incarcerated in a dungeon; later the sin of murder when fear and remorse had become preying demons of the brain. And then the dying curse had been laid on the Count de Grandcœur and his sons and upon his line, until some soul among them should find the way of the Great Renunciation and through a child redeem the house, when the last of the line should die in peace. The Count had gone to the Crusades in expiation, but one by one his sons had died of lingering madness or by violent death, until he himself was slain under the banner of the great Louis, leaving his titles and his lands to one surviving child — a girl of ten. Then it was that the Island and the great estates in France had become a female fief. Few males were born after that to the line — direct or otherwise — of the Grandcœurs. Always one of the eldest males had become a priest and later perhaps a Cardinal; always one of the women in a generation had entered a convent and taken the veil, hoping to lift the shadow from the line. But the shadow hung there, and years of penance and of prayer had availed the heirs of the house nothing. Even the little Count, whose body lay in the crypt of the Memorial Chapel, had fallen from the cliff and died. The curse of madness had not spared the last remaining one — Cecile — until now. . . .

He shook the memory of the story from him — that long, long tale of bloodshed and of human woe — and wrapped his great cloak more closely around him, the better to fight the strength and violence of the rain and wind. He skirted the inlet, with its remembrances of horror, and came at last upon the landing. Here he swung his lantern out to sea. The inky, white-capped, tossing waters gave no sign of any living thing, and he drew a deep breath of relief. For a moment he stood hesitating. He had met nothing on his way, no living soul, no dumb thing, that had needed him or his help. He thought with sudden weariness of the long struggle back before he could reach the light and warmth of the Rectory and give himself up to the ministrations of Marie and the boy. . . . Suddenly he raised his head and listened, every nerve alert. Above the noise of the breaking surf near the inlet not far away, above the tolling of St. Michael's bell, there reached him the slow, steady pulse of an engine — the shrill whistle of a tug.

"Fauchet's boat!" he said aloud.

He waited through what seemed interminable hours, every little while swinging his big lantern seaward. Slowly the pulsing sound came nearer; once it receded for a moment, as though the pilot had lost his bearings. Then it was, unheeding the danger that lay from the force of the wind that beat against the swaying pier, Lamoré went to its edge and swung his lantern toward the sound.

"Courage," he shouted, "you are almost home!" The wind took his voice, deep, strong, and sonorous, and carried it out to sea, but something in the will of the man on the wharf shot with the words toward the laboring craft. The words themselves went wild and were lost in the noises of the night, but the steady will, like the unswerving pressure on a lever, never lessened until Fauchet's boat came into sight and the landing had been made.

A gangway was out of the question. The boat surged heavily against the side of the pier as though realizing it was in its death-throes. For a moment, by the light of the great lantern, Lamoré saw Fauchet poised on the side of the tug, a burden in his arms. Once, twice, the tug beat against the sides, the space slowly widening between Fauchet and the pier, while Fauchet watched in the darkness for his chance to leap. The burden stirred in his arms. Again the lantern fell on them, and this time the light streamed out and made a pathway of safety for Fauchet.

"Leap!" It was the voice of Pierre Lamoré ringing out above the storm, above the beating of the boat's prow against the pier. "Leap! And may the Master hear!"

As though at the call of the bugle ringing out for battle, Fauchet heard and instinctively obeyed. Across the widening space, unmindful of the dark death beneath, his eyes fixed upon the light shining on the pier, Fauchet cleaved the distance and half fell at Lamoré's feet, his unconscious burden in his arms. The little tug slowly settled in the sea.

Lamoré helped him to rise.

"A woman, Fauchet?" he asked wonderingly.

Fauchet stood before him. His burden stirred again. By the light of the lantern Lamoré could see his face, white and bloodless, his wet and matted hair.

"It is our lady, Father," he said. "Our lady has come home."

III.

FOR a fortnight, in an upper chamber in the chateau that looked toward St. Michael's and the sea, Cecile lay, too prostrated from exposure, danger and fatigue, to think or care of much that went on around. She never clearly remembered the events of that night of the storm — the wreck of Fauchet's boat — the drive up to the chateau — and Lamoré and Fauchet and the people who loved her with an affection that had descended through generations of the peasants of her Island, never told. It was Lamoré's old chaise drawn by old Nanette, led by the Father himself and Gabrille, the younger brother of François Fauchet, that had climbed that long, wind-swept, winding road. Inside the chaise Marie had held her in her arms, close against her rough peasant's dress and wildly beating heart. It had been midnight when Angelo, the keeper of the chateau, had been aroused from his sleep by the knocking of the Father at the door and had lent his aid to the almost exhausted priest and peasant, and later fetched the chateau physician from his cottage near the cliff. The chateau, that had for so long remained in nightly darkness except for the corner windows, where for centuries had burned lights for the guidance of stray wayfarers in need, became illuminated in the wing facing the Chapel and the sea. The rest of the great pile of stone, facing the village and the valleys, remained as it had been for so long, in darkness.

There through the long night her people had worked over her unconscious form, pouring into the labor the love and the devotion and the fire of loyalty that through long years of absence Lamoré had kept bright. Marie remained at the chateau until a housekeeper known and trusted by Lamoré could be summoned from Marseilles. In lieu of her mother, now dead, who had served the ladies of the castle for so long, Marie took her place as nurse, by right. Now and then, when her lady was resting or asleep, Marie would return to the Rectory to see how things fared with the good Father and the boy Anthony and the peasant girl the former had gotten in to help during Marie's absence. To Marie's eyes all was going as well at the Rectory as could be expected in her absence, and she never noticed the strange new look in the boy Anthony's eyes, nor guessed of his daily prayer before her bisque figure of Mary, that soon he might be summoned or sent to climb the chateau hill and see the lady that had come back to them through danger in that night when he had fallen asleep before the fire and the crane, while waiting for the Father.

The days followed days, and still he waited for the summons, and for the first time in his life he did not confide in Lamoré. He used to listen eagerly to the few words dropped by the priest on his return from his daily visit to the chateau, but for the most part Lamoré seemed anxious and preoccupied. He avoided meetings with Blair Martin or parochial visits of any kind, and answered all inquiries as to the condition of the Island's lady in a kind, if brief and reserved way.

Like the boy Anthony, Blair Martin would day by day stand by her window in the morning and watch the first sunlight fall upon the flag; would, from the gate of Toinette's cottage or from the rocks and fields, see the last glimmer of the spring sunshine touch it before it faded in the west behind St. Michael's and the sea. That great waving thing of silk with its gold cross on its azure field became to her almost a living thing. She watched it in the morning breeze stretching its full length, as though in willing submission to a force stronger than itself: she knew how, in the midday heat, when St. Michael's great bell tolled the Angelus, and all the work of the Island ceased for prayer, the silk folds of it hung limp and quiet as though from its height it paused in its restlessness to hear the Ave Maria said. The mystery of its long years of rest, its sudden raising in the night of storm, the quiet persistency of its presence there now, through rain and sunshine, became a vital interest in her life. Of Lamoré she saw little. Indeed every one in the Island seemed suddenly aroused from their quiet life among the flocks and vine yards, and gathered into low-voiced groups, discussing the matter of the return of the lady of the Island, stopping suddenly when she drew near, with their first show of apparent inhospitality, as though in this one thing she was separate and apart from them, and in this could not share their lives. In these two weeks it was the boy Anthony that filled her most lonely hours, — his eyes lighting with a strange fire as they looked toward the chateau on the heights topped by the long silk flag — that kept the new and living interest at a fever heat. Anthony spoke little in these days, but there grew up between them a freer understanding that gave her new interest in the child. For some reason, with a restraint foreign to the ways of boyhood, he sought in no way other than in listening to the Father's or the peasants' talk, to draw himself into a nearer relationship with the lady of the chateau. He did not even push through the wicket gate and attempt to see her, on a pretended visit to his old grandfather. In his slender height of childhood, with a face of one of Botticelli's choristers, in his simple peasant blouse, it seemed as though he awaited the pleasure of his lady, as in the old days one of the Counts de Grandcœur had awaited a summons to court.

So they waited — waited both alike, unconscious that the thing they waited for was so soon to come.

IV.

AT the end of the two weeks, with the aid of Marie, Cecile got up from the couch by the window where she had been moved from her bed and went out to the chateau garden. For a while, seated on an upper step of the terrace in the warm sunshine, she talked to Giovanni of his boyhood's home in Florence, of the life and changes on the Island, of the wonder of his work here among the flowers. Then, when the old man had left her for his midday meal, she got up and began slowly to wander through the familiar paths. Except for greater tree growth, more luxurious vegetation and flowers, the place was quite unchanged from what she remembered it as a child and later as a girl. The chateau garden! It was here that she had come and wept, comforted by Giovanni, on her eve of departure for the convent in Lyons — she had been so little then and so lonely — it was here she had come that spring morning as a young girl in her Communion veil and looked upon the flowers, gathering the fairest for the Virgin's altar, before she fed upon the Mystery Bread; it was here, down by the wicket gate, she had stood and looked at the young stranger emerging from the woods — first met his eyes and taken of the Sacrament of Love; and it was here that later, stained with the wrong of deceit, she had come back to await the coming of the child; it was here she had first brought him to look upon his future lands; it was here she had stood five years later with Lamoré, beside an open grave, and wept her woman's tears. . . . There was no little mound in the garden now to greet her eyes, only warmth and brightness of the sunshine and the sweet odor of the flowers. Instinctively she looked toward St. Michael's, where in the crypt under the high altar they had, in her absence, placed the body of the little Count. . . . Some day soon, she would go there and kneel beside it — see the memorial window — say a prayer at the high altar — some day when she was stronger and the weather had grown warmer and her cough better. She did not doubt that her cough *would* get better — was she not home again — had not the great Marseilles physician declared that the Island days and nights were not to be excelled in all the south of France? The journey home, the long, lonely, seasick days across the Atlantic, the weary trip from Marseilles, later the terrible one in Fauchet's boat, when the storm had overshadowed them and she had urged, nay, commanded, Fauchet to push on, declaring that they would out-race the storm, until retreat was impossible, all — all had not been good for her nor helped her cough, but now she was at home. It would be well.

For a while she stood dreaming near the wicket gate. After all it was through the wicket gate that Love had first come to her, and to her, as to all women, no time, no distance, no sin or heartache, could wipe out the vividness of that remembrance for her — blot it from her life.

The sense of some one's near presence aroused her from her dream. She looked up suddenly and saw a woman standing by the wicket gate. For a moment, across the sun-kissed lawn, they looked in silence at one another and, in spite of the warmth of the day that was still young, Cecile shivered as though cold and drew her light wrap closer. It was a strange working of inheritance and a contradiction to the world's preconceived idea of the fitness of it, that made the woman of ancient lineage and of title, trained in the formalities of an older civilization, for a moment forget the usages of society and look in open wonder on this other stranger whom Fate had led up to the wicket gate. It was the younger woman, born in a land where social differences mean less, titles vastly more, the daughter of Andrew Martin, who on her father's side at least could claim little of what Europe knew as gentle blood, who bore herself with a composure only equaled by the charm with which she apologized for her intrusion.

"I fear I startled you," she said, "I did not dream that I should find you here. Down in the valley we think of you still as ill — quite ill in bed. I climbed the cliff this morning to sit upon St. Michael's steps and listen while Father Lamoré practised on the great organ — as I often do. I returned by way of the road, and the temptation to step aside and look once more on the chateau garden was too strong. I saw Madame long before she knew that I was at the gate, and was trying to slip away unseen. I hope Madame the Comtesse is quite well again?"

She had spoken in a French marked for its purity, yet which could not quite conceal her foreign birth. Her speech had been a long one, evidently to give the older woman time to recover from the suddenness of the meeting, and now when Cecile answered, it was with the manner and graciousness that was one of her chief characteristics, and, as though to make her guest feel at home, she talked pretty broken English.

"Quite well again, thank you, except for a little cough which is nothing. Mademoiselle —" she had hesitated for an almost imperceptible instant, and with a smile looked at the other woman's left hand, where only one ring — a sapphire — shone, "Mademoiselle is welcome to our Island and our garden. Will not Mademoiselle enter?"

Blair Martin pushed open the little wicket gate for the second time. The spell of the place was on her again — the spell of this other woman's superb yet gentle graciousness. She crossed the bit of lawn that lay between them, her slow movements giving no hint of the excitement the incident had wrought. Cecile watched her, her grace and refinement and lack of visible embarrassment appealed to her delicate sense of the fitness of things.

"My name is Miss Martin — Blair Martin," this stranger was saying with a smile, "and I have been living for weeks on your beautiful Island. I board at the cottage of Toinette Dorset."

The Comtesse of the Island inclined her head. She wondered where the stranger, who was evidently an American, had heard of the Island and its beauty. Perhaps — like that other stranger of years back — she might be a traveler who had been stopping at Marseilles and by chance had come to them. Something of the feudal obligations held for centuries by the Grandcœurs stirred in her. Politeness forbade seeming curiosity. The fact that chance or fate had sent her here made her welcome to the Island and what it had to give.

"You are welcome," she said again as she looked into Blair Martin's eyes.

Something in the simple dignity of the speech and the obligations that rank and possessions had imposed on this slender dark-eyed chatelaine of the Island, struck Blair Martin as a new experience in life, strange as well as new. She hastened to offer something more of an introduction of herself.

"A friend of your good priest, Father Lamoré, recommended me to his care. I was traveling through Europe with my maid when Father Lamoré's letter of invitation came, offering me the Island's hospitality in your name."

"So! Mademoiselle is doubly welcome. Father Lamoré's word carries as much weight on the Island as my own — probably more — " here Cecile broke off and smiled a little — "since I also depend on what the Father says. Our priest is as widely known throughout Europe, Mademoiselle, as he is widely loved."

"I do not doubt it," said Blair Martin, holding out her hand.

The French woman took it and let her eyes rest on it a moment, and in that moment the two women came in closer contact. With a movement that was as sudden as it was unexpected the French woman dropped the hand and stooped down and began to gather some flowers. She was not conscious at first just what the flowers were, but she continued to pick them — mechanically. By the time she had a handful, she had quite recovered herself and rose, holding them out to Blair Martin, who stood near looking down curiously on the slender stooping figure.

"Will you take them — from the Island?" asked the French woman. She smiled as she spoke, but she looked intently into the eyes of the American.

Blair Martin held out her hands.

"Oh, thank you. They are lovely. They are my favorite flowers."

"I fancied so," said the elder woman slowly.

Blair Martin looked down at the violets a moment in silence.

"They are more beautiful than any I ever saw in my own garden," she said at last.

"So! You have a garden — you love flowers — at home?"

Blair Martin laughed a little.

"I was very proud of our garden," she said, "until I saw the chateau garden, Comtesse."

"Ah!"

"But at home," went on the American, "there is something we have, I have not found even in the chateau garden — it is a wonderful mimosa tree. Has the Comtesse ever seen a mimosa tree in bloom?"

The French woman shook her head as they kept slow step together down a winding path.

"Tell me of it, Mademoiselle."

"They grow in our south — there are few where I live in the north — but we brought this, my father and I, a shoot from a tree at my mother's home, long before she died. At first we raised it under glass. In the summer it blooms all pink against the tender green —" Blair Martin stopped speaking suddenly and stared out across the hedges and the flowers that she did not seem to see. "It should be coming into leaf about now," she added after a while. "Some day I hope Madame the Comtesse may see it."

"Perhaps — some day," said Cecile slowly with a faint smile.

For a while they talked on indifferent subjects — the prospects for the coming vineyard harvest — Lamoré and his life — the peasants and the wonderful climate of the Island. Then with an exclamation of surprise at the passing of time Blair Martin turned toward the wicket gate once more.

"The next time Mademoiselle climbs the heights she must let me welcome her to the chateau," and Blair Martin wondered suddenly what made her hostess' voice so strange, even while she thanked her. On the outskirts of the garden Cecile stopped her with a gesture.

"Do not leave us, Mademoiselle, with only the few violets." She clapped her hands sharply and old Giovanni, working near, stopped at his task and came toward them.

"Some flowers — some roses and some lilies — for the American lady, Giovanni."

The old man bowed, not overpleased at having his garden robbed for a stranger, but returned soon with the flowers in his hands and gave them to the Comtesse.

She took them from him with a nod of thanks that was all the reward he needed, and laid them in Blair Martin's arms.

"The roses are the flowers of love," she said in a low voice, looking deep into her eyes as though she would wrest from their gray depths an answer to an unvoiced question of her own, "and the lilies, Mademoiselle, — they are the flowers of France."

V.

FOR a week Cecile walked in the chateau garden every day. For the most part she was alone, and often had her embroidery frame carried out and placed upon a rug near the sunshine of the terrace. Here she sat and worked upon the gold and azure frontal that was almost done. Here the housekeeper came to her for any orders that she might care to give; here Marie took leave of her when she was well enough to need a nurse no longer; here Giovanni would pause on his way to and from work in the lower garden: it was here Lamoré found her one day when he came to call.

He sat down a little wearily in the easy chair a footman had brought and leaned forward to look at the work in the embroidery frame. He wiped his forehead with his handkerchief.

"How well you work, my child, and how cool it is up here even in the sun."

She regarded him with anxious and affectionate eyes.

"You surely did not climb the heights on this warm day?"

"Am I so antiquated, then, that the little Cecile thinks I cannot walk any more?" he asked evasively.

She shook her head, troubled.

"But why did you not use the chaise — that wonderful chaise that you still cling to and refuse to allow me to buy from you, Father?"

"You could not pay the price I want for my old chaise, my child," he said, and laughed so heartily at his little joke that some birds near, startled at the sound, flew suddenly away.

"Then, if your pride is not as great as I thought, let me give you — at least let me make it a perpetual loan — one of the small carriages in the chateau stables. There is no one here to use all the carriages — the grooms would be grateful if you relieved them of just one. And Nanette — that wretched, lazy, overfed beast — why, Father, I have a mare twice as useful as Nanette, that you could use."

"You must not scold me so, nor say such hard things of my Nanette. She has served me long and well — "

"There! There! I love the old thing as well as you almost. Did she not bring me home the other ight when I was half dead from danger and atigue? But, Father, where is your merciful heart? Nanette should be turned to pasture and pensioned off after a long life of service."

"Nanette and I are old friends. I cannot pension old friends, Comtesse; only dependents!"

"Such pride, Father! As the chatelaine of the chateau I must speak of it to our kinsman the Cardinal when he comes."

Lamoré's eyes twinkled.

"His Eminence will not be here for almost another year. By that time you may decide to visit the Pyramids or look upon the fjords of Norway."

"Ah! You make me shiver when you talk of Norway, and you make me very hot when you talk of Egypt. Talk of pleasant things to me, Father — about the Cardinal or — or perhaps the American at Toinette Dorset's cottage in the valley."

Lamoré studied the frontal in the embroidery frame.

"The American?"

"Nay, Father, do not pretend to know nothing of the American. She came on your invitation. She told me so."

Lamoré turned on her slowly, but even Cecile, who had known him since her birth and his every change of mood, could detect no surprise or added color in his face.

"You have met and talked with her?"

"A little while, Father, near the wicket gate. She thought me still ill in bed and peeped in at the garden on her return from hearing you practise at St. Michael's. She says her name is Blair Martin; that — some mutual friend recommended her to your care here. I — " the Comtesse broke off.

"What did you think of her, my child?" he asked suddenly as Cecile paused.

She met his eyes steadily.

"I thought her charming, Father."

Lamoré rose and began to walk up and down. He wondered what was coming next.

By and by Cecile left her low chair by the embroidery frame and began to walk up and down with him. After a little she slipped her arm in his and peered around at him in the pretty appealing way he remembered as a child when she had begged for the peppermints he always brought her from a trip to Marseilles.

"Father?" very low.

"My child?" very tenderly.

"I have a favor to ask, Father. I want your influence, Father, in a matter for — my happiness."

He looked down at her. All the pretty playfulness of look and gesture had disappeared. Her white face with the dark eyes, and crowned by the dark hair, looked back at him wistfully. How like her eyes to eyes he had seen here in the chateau garden long — so long ago! His hold against her arm tightened. It spoke of encouragement and strength.

"Is it my influence with the Cardinal? He has never refused his help in trouble. Or — "

"It is nothing that the Great Cardinal can do for me in Rome. It is not the Great Cardinal's help I want this time — but yours."

Lamoré smiled.

"What can I give that his Eminence cannot?" he asked.

"Much. Could the Great Cardinal take your place with me — with my people here?" she answered quickly.

"Your people here and you are prejudiced," said

Lamoré with a faint smile, but a slow flush of pleasure crept across his face.

"Then, Father, it is quite settled. You will help me?"

Lamoré laughed.

"How the little Cecile takes things for granted — yet — have I ever been less indulgent than the Cardinal?"

"Never! And I have never asked of his Eminence all I have asked from you," the Comtesse answered.

"He would grant as much, my child."

Cecile shrugged her shoulders with a pretty questioning gesture that had in it just a spice of disrespect.

"The Great Cardinal is still — the Great Cardinal! You are just Pierre Lamoré, the priest of our Island of the Angels, and all I or my people want of power and good just now. The favor, Father," she broke off and looked up at him again in the beseeching childlike way.

"There! There! Cecile, I can refuse you nothing. Is it — more peppermints from Marseilles?"

She shook her head slowly.

"The peppermints were good in their day and much desired. I wonder sometimes if, at the end of life, when we look back, all that we have yearned for, much that we have wept for, will seem as unimportant as the sweets seem now."

She did not seem to expect an answer. Once more the childish look had faded and something rested in her face — a look remote — which Lamoré was conscious that he had not seen before.

"Perhaps, my child," said the priest slowly. Then he waited for her to go on.

"The chateau is unchanged, and it is beautiful, Father, but it is lonely and full of memories; the chateau garden is as I remember it as a child when I walked here with my staid governess, but it, too, is lonely, Father, and memory-haunted —" She broke off.

"Then why, my child, did you come back — alone? Could you not have waited for your husband?"

She looked away, and she would not meet his eyes.

"I had no right to take Hector from his work. Neither could I stay with him. Do not ask me why. Some day — some day I will tell you all things; until then trust me and help me to be as happy as I can."

"I will, Cecile. What is it that I can do for you?"

"Persuade the American to come and stay with me a little while at the chateau."

Lamoré stopped suddenly in his walk and regarded her curiously.

"That would be impossible, Cecile."

"Impossible! Why, Father?"

It seemed to him he could not in his turn meet her eyes; that he was nearer to deceit to-day than ever in his life. Yet had not Hector Stone put his trust in him? If it might be that he could hear from Hector Stone again and learn just how much he knew — just why Cecile had come back to the Island, alone.

"Impossible! Why, Father?"

The insistent question of the woman at his side beat upon his ears. With keen but kindly eyes that rarely were misled he searched her own and found them inscrutable.

"She is quite a stranger, Cecile."

"Was she not invited to the Island by you and vouched for by a mutual friend?"

"Quite true — only — "

"Only what, Father?"

"She is very proud, Cecile. I doubt if she would come."

Try her, Father. She, too, looks lonely. It t be that Toinette Dorset gives her all the companionship she needs."

"She seems quite contented at Toinette's."

"She might be — more contented here."

Lamoré began his slow walk again, his eyes looking down at the path. How dark and rich the earth was — how free of weeds, thanks to Giovanni.

"Cecile — tell me the truth. Why is it you want this stranger — this American here?"

Hidden by the folds of her soft morning gown, Cecile's fingers twitched a little nervously. She was acutely glad that Lamoré was not looking at her face.

"Father — I am lonely! Never in my life have

I known a woman friend. The chateau and the garden are memory-haunted for me. Let me — let me, before I leave you and the Island again, have happier dreams to carry with me."

"This is your only reason?" He was looking at her now.

She answered without hesitation, "What other reason could I have, Father?"

"I do not know. Yet you do not speak nor act like yourself, Cecile."

"It might be, Father, that your own heart is — for some reason — troubled?"

Inwardly he was aware of being amused at her sharp wit that had turned the tables on him. At least she must not suspect he had other reasons for refusal.

"You are quite sure, if I can persuade her to come; if I tell her that you are not strong and need her as a friend, you are quite sure she will be made welcome?"

Cecile drew herself up and lifted back her head with a curious gesture of pride, almost of disdain.

"I do not forget the obligations of the chateau," she said.

He lowered his head, remembering an old old legend of the Count who, centuries ago, had beguiled an enemy to the chateau under guise of friendship. The enemy years later had died in an underground dungeon of the chateau, leaving a curse upon the Grandcœur line. . . . Then he looked upon Cecile's face again, and his glance fell from the pale whiteness of it to the slender hands below, as though of his unbidden thoughts, he was ashamed.

"I will see the American to-night," he said. "My child — *adieu.*"

VI.

IT was Lamoré that came with Blair Martin in the carriage, and mounted with her the broad chateau steps where at the top Cecile stood awaiting them. She gave a glance of surprise as she recognized Lamoré helping the American to alight from the victoria. She had not supposed he knew the time the chateau carriage was to meet her guest.

"He does not trust me," she said to herself, the hot color mounting to her usually pale cheeks, but by the time Lamoré and the American had reached her, she showed no trace of any emotion except that of welcome.

"Mademoiselle does me honor," she said in her pretty English, "I am Mademoiselle's debtor that she should consent to come and lift my loneliness. I see the Father brought you."

Lamoré stood watching them — the slender dark-eyed woman of title, the tall American with the deep gray eyes, and a sudden wonder came to him. They were both so different, and yet in manner and bearing, not unlike.

"Father Lamoré insisted on coming. Were you afraid I should seem strange and shy?" Blair Martin turned on him with a laugh.

Lamoré looked past her to Cecile.

"I came with your friend that I might see her in safe hands," he said. Then his glance came back to the American. "When one is in a foreign land," he said, "protection is due as well as hospitality." He was conscious that Cecile moved restlessly.

"Shall the maid show you to your room?" she asked in French. "Doubtless the boys have brought your luggage by now. If you will give her the keys she will make you comfortable. I have found her trustworthy — as all the others that are recommended by the good Father here."

"Thank you, I shall be glad to be unpacked again. My trunks were the wonder of Toinette. Do you ever work yourself in that wonderful garden?" she turned and faced the long terraces. "I used to help Toinette with the flowers and peas." She smiled a little, as at a pleasant remembrance, and softly smoothed the folds of her sheer embroidered gown. The priest and the dark-eyed Comtesse watched her. To both of them came the thought that she made a pretty picture standing there in the great doorway, her face, her form, half turned from them, in unconscious grace. She seemed so sure of herself and the sincerity of the welcome here.

"I love the flowers, Mademoiselle, and I often rob Giovanni of his choicest treasures, but as for vegetables — " the Comtesse shrugged her shoulders a little and laughed — "they are good to eat, I think, but not to tend."

Blair Martin raised her eyes, the amused and happy light still lingering in them.

"So I once thought," she said and turned to go.

After she had gone through the shadows of the great doorway in company with Cecile's maid, Lamoré turned to the French woman.

"I trust, my child, you will be to each other all you should be."

Cecile's eyes came back from the great doorway.

"And how much, Father, is that?"

"Do I need to tell you? I can trust you not to forget that you have asked for a friend."

She looked at him from lowered eyelids, but he knew of the sudden fire burning in the depths beneath.

"You need not remind me. You can trust me to remember, Father, that I am chatelaine of the chateau."

He bowed as though accepting an unvoiced dismissal.

"I shall trust you," he said.

. . . .

On his return to the humble rectory, the boy Anthony met him at the gate. Something in the settled sadness of the child's face struck Lamoré. He put his hand upon the small shoulder, with reassuring pressure.

"In trouble, Anthony?"

The boy did not answer, but in spite of his effort at control, his lips trembled.

"My child — what is it? Has Jean tried to force you to fight again? Did not the birds sing for you in the woods to-day?"

The boy controlled himself with an effort.

"The birds sang their sweetest, Father, and Jean — he does not care to fight me," the quiet eyes took on quick fire. "It is not that, Father — "

"Then?"

"The American lady, Father. You have taken her — up to the great chateau."

"She has gone to cheer the Comtesse and help her to get well, my child," said Lamoré, his kind hold increasing on the other's shoulder. "Are you not glad?"

"*Glad,* Father?" The boy turned on him, his voice ringing out sharp and defiant on the air. "What right has the American to go to the chateau?"

"Anthony!" Never had the boy heard the Father's voice like that, and he felt Lamoré's kind grasp relax. "My child — have *you* a better right?"

The boy stood off from him, his rough peasant blouse shining out against the background of the yard's dark trees, his head raised proudly. He threw out his hands with a gesture of passionate grief.

"I have no right — yet — we have waited — the Mademoiselle and I and — it was for her the Comtesse sent — " He broke off suddenly, and without another word turned and fled into the fastness of the near-by wood.

For a moment Lamoré seemed as though he

would go after him, then he stopped, grave thoughtfulness in his face.

"So! My little one has been worshiping at the shrine of an unknown divinity and — jealous of usurpation. Some day when the Comtesse sees you, she will not let you go again for all the Americans in the world — some day, little Anthony."

He walked slowly toward the house, crossed the deserted kitchen and went into his study and locked the door. He was conscious that he wanted and needed to be alone.

He drew to the white curtains at the windows, pausing for a moment to look out across the waters in the direction of Marseilles. The evening was a quiet one. An old moon crept over the edge of the horizon, at first silver, then turning to gold as the purple clouds melted into gray and black. By and by he came back to the table. On his blotter lay a letter. He picked it up with an exclamation of surprise, recognizing Hector Stone's handwriting on the envelope.

He sat down in his arm-chair, lighted the lamp and drew it nearer. Then he slowly opened the letter. It was the confession Stone had written him from Detroit. It enclosed the letter Stone had received that day from Cecile.

Outside the last faint traces of the daylight faded — inside the glow of Lamoré's study lamp burned steadily on. Once, twice, he read the letters, then replaced them in the envelope and rose and went back to the window. There was nothing to be seen except the stretch of water lighted by the rays of the old moon. They had all of them, Hector Stone consciously, Blair Martin and Cecile unconsciously, brought the twisted, tangled threads to him for the unweaving. It seemed to him he was like one of the workers he had watched at the great tapestries in Flanders as a boy. Like them, he was weaving on the reverse side of the great pattern of these lives. Yet the pattern that he sought to copy was before him, clear and perfect. If it might be that from among the tangled skeins and knotted ends his hands might sort the somber shades and bring forth the strong bright threads of gold!

Far into the night he sat writing at his desk. The letter to Stone finished, he enclosed in it the one Stone had sent him from Cecile. Afterwards he took Stone's letter and twisted it into a torch which he lighted at the lamp, and burning, threw it in the empty fireplace. In silence, he watched it crumble until it was a withered and charred mass. Then he picked up the lamp from the study table and slowly walked away to bed.

VII.

AT first Blair Martin settled as naturally to the life lived at the chateau on the heights as she had settled at Toinette's cottage in the valley. She had a nature, inherited from her mother, of keen sensitiveness to changes, and an equal faculty from her father that made her adapt herself to places, people and the environment in which she found herself. She returned to the luxuries of life, the spacious rooms, the perfectl cooked food, the well-trained servants that were always near to do her bidding, as though she had never known weeks in Toinette's sanded cottage with its primitive furniture and only Toinette t serve her needs. But there came an hour whe the luxuries to which she had been used and t which she had so unexpectedly returned, palled o her, and she was ashamed to acknowledge to herself how she missed the loaf of black bread Mari never sent her now, the simple work in Toinette' garden, and more than all else the sight of an the walks with the boy Anthony.

Then it was that a dim disquietude took possession of her, which she felt but could not explai if indeed there had been any one in whom sh cared to confide. There had never come into he life any one to whom she cared to carry the perplexities of her life, since her mother's death, and now she tried to shake the impression from her as one would shake the impression of an evil dream. She had never realized until now just what a strong hold the boy Anthony had exerted on her life, and she was loth to admit to herself that she wished for Toinette Dorset's cottage with its sanded floors. She had left the cottage and the lesson of simple happiness she was learning there, because Lamoré had come to her and pleaded, with an eloquence not to be resisted, for another woman — a stranger — and her need. In those first days at the chateau it came almost as a shock to her that she saw so little of her hostess. There was never any tangible thing, any one act to which she could cling that would warrant the odd resentment that sometimes came to her. When she saw the Comtesse — which was never before the noon meal — she could not question the ease and the charm with which she was always greeted. Her every physical need was satisfied almost before she could voice them; the horses and the new motor car from Paris were at her disposal; in Hannah's absence (which Blair Martin insisted on, fearing friction with the chateau retinue) there had been assigned to her use a maid who did her duties admirably; the freedom of the great halls, the long picture gallery with its square projecting window of wonderful stained glass at the furthest end, the music room so perfectly appointed, were hers with a lavish sharing that she could not doubt. The earlier peace, however, the peace that had come to her at Toinette's, that she had been gratefully conscious of when in the companionship of the boy Anthony; the peace that she had felt when she had first come to the chateau in Lamoré's care seemed to have vanished, and she wondered how and why and where it had gone. She spent hours, when the Comtesse was resting or otherwise occupied, in the music room, whose every appointment appealed to her keen artistic sense. Here she would take from the long unused case her bow and her violin and practise long and difficult scales, finding in the very difficulty an obstacle that taxed her mental powers to their uttermost and prevented the intrusion of dangerous or unprofitable thoughts. She never knew the unnumbered times that the Comtesse gave strict orders for silence in the music wing, where she listened herself, unseen, from a curtained recess of which Blair Martin knew nothing. Cecile, herself, in these hours would watch the face of the musician and study its every change. Her own well-trained and talented ear delighted in the difficult gymnastics that Blair Martin attempted and with a dogged patience persisted in until overcome. At other times, weary of the effort such exercises were to her, she would rest a little, and then with eyes turned from the music rack to the view stretching in front of her from the chateau window, she would draw the bow across the strings and give herself up to the delicious rapture of some rendering of Beethoven, or perhaps even some impromptu bit of her own. It was in these times that the Comtesse saw the American as she was — the soul of her laid bare — and half ashamed, half awed, would creep from her hiding place upstairs, and fling herself upon her couch, exhausted. If the trained musician in her admired the persevering efforts of a musician, in technique, perhaps, less gifted than herself, the woman in her responded to the inimitable tone of feeling which Blair Martin called forth from the taut strings. Later, facing her at dinner, she searched in vain for that look upon her face that had rested there earlier in the day, as she had played.

"Music or — love?" she said to herself slowly on one such occasion. "Music and love," she added to her heart later.

The American began to have a newer and a more personal charm for her, and more and more she arranged to see her oftener. They always had coffee together on the terrace in the garden in the afternoon, and here Lamoré, when his time and duties would permit, joined them. Cecile alone was conscious of his close scrutiny.

His talk was rarely of any personal matters, and his wit, his quaint sayings, his shrewd yet kindly observations, his unfailing sympathy, became things to be remembered, and his visits were looked for eagerly. It was on one such occasion that he came on Blair Martin seated on the terrace with her sewing. A strange droop to her mouth made him ask quickly as he took her hand:

"Mademoiselle, are you lonely on the heights?"

She nodded a little wistfully that Cecile, who was approaching, might hear no voiced answer. Lamoré's eyes grew suddenly grave as he turned to greet the Comtesse and helped her to arrange her chair before the embroidery frame the servant had brought out, but it was almost wholly to Blair Martin that he addressed himself during the rest of that long warm afternoon, as they sipped the coffee Cecile served to them, and watched the gold and amethyst lights rest upon the waters. In silence Cecile bent over the embroidery frame, putting in the last stitches on the frontal, so intent upon her task that she heeded little of the conversation going on near her, and for once in her life grateful that some one else had undertaken the entertainment of Lamoré. She fastened the last thread off with a sigh, and for a little while sat forward in her chair, her chin in her long slender hand, regarding the finished work. The frontal was done and she had brought it herself back to France, back to St. Michael's. Presently she rose and stood by Lamoré's chair, her hand resting on the wicker. She waited until there was a lull in the talk; then she spoke gently.

"Father, the frontal is done. Do you care to see it?"

Lamoré and Blair Martin rose hurriedly and walked over to the embroidery frame, where from its roll of linen the already completed part was taken, the frame undone and the thing revealed as a whole. At first, Lamoré and Cecile held it end by end, and Blair Martin looked at it in a silence more eloquent than speech. Still silent, she took the end that Lamoré held, and the priest stepped off a little way, the better to see.

"Beautiful!" he said slowly, and to himself he added, "Worthy of St. Michael's."

Together, under Cecile's direction, Lamoré and the American rolled it in its linen, when a maid was called and directed to take it to the house and later carry in the now empty frame. Cecile watched the latter as it was being taken away, remembering the day the big piece had been started in the suburban home with Hector Stone, and she scarcely heard the words of praise now spoken of her work until a remark of Blair Martin's brought her back to the present.

"Ah, Father, I would like to see his face when he first looks on the frontal."

"Marie told him something of it. I heard her one evening, after supper, from my study, but the boy is strangely reticent these days and he said nothing," replied Lamoré.

"Does he miss me — a little — do you suppose?" asked Blair Martin, half shyly, half hopefully. Lamoré was relieved of the necessity of a reply by Cecile coming quite close to them.

"Of whom are you speaking so earnestly? Is it of Marie's little son?"

"Yes, yes," said Blair Martin eagerly. "Is it possible you have never seen the boy Anthony —

the child the Father here loves so — with the face, the voice, of an angel? Send for him, Comtesse, let him sing you a Canticle or the slumber song of the Swiss children," she went on impetuously, and so intent was she, so absorbed Cecile in watching this awakening of enthusiasm in her guest, that neither heeded the Father's anxious face.

"Yes, yes, surely! How is it, Father, I have not seen the child before?"

"There was nothing that might bring him to the chateau except his grandfather, old Giovanni, and the lad is shy."

"Ah! And Giovanni's grandson — I must surely see him."

Blair Martin caught her breath in a quick sigh of pleasure.

"I wish that you might learn to know him as I did down there in the valley. He has so many varying moods, I never tire of studying him. Once he brought me here to the chateau garden, when Giovanni was asleep, and he walked the paths with me as a little prince might walk. Another day h brought me one of Marie's black loaves with th simple bearing of a little peasant."

"Delightful! He must come up here again an walk the garden with me — as a little prince Father, you will tell Marie I sent for him, and le him bring me a loaf of her black bread that I ma see these varying moods — that I may see him like the simple little peasant that he is."

Lamoré bowed. The Comtesse's speech had been at once a request and a command.

. . . .

It was the next day that the boy Anthony, the black loaf still hot, wrapped in coarse yet spotless linen, ascended on foot the heights to the chateau. Marie had watched him depart, pride and fear struggling for the mastery in her breast. She would have changed the simple blouse of blue for his Sunday best, had not Lamoré by chance come in just then with the brief suggestion that the Comtesse desired the boy as he appeared every day, and Marie with much inward reluctance was obliged to see him go in his peasant's dress and head bared as usual to the sun. It was a matter of small importance to the boy himself whether he wore the every-day blouse or the Sunday suit; his mind was much too occupied on his mission to care about such a trivial thing as dress. Had he not been sent for from the chateau at last — was not the lady of his dreams awaiting him? . . . It was only Lamoré, looking on the boy's face as Marie closed the rectory door on him, who fully understood. . . .

The afternoon was early and the sun beat down warm, shining bright on Anthony's head as he climbed the heights, the black loaf held carefully in his hands. He did not take the short cut to-day by the wicket gate and across the chateau garden. Had not the chatelaine sent for him as she might have perhaps for the Great Cardinal — and should he not come to her through the great wide gates — the great tall gates — that marked the entrance to the chateau?

The gates once reached, he paused to wipe his hot flushed face with the coarse handkerchief from the pocket of his blouse. He handled it reverently, refolded it carefully. It was one the good Father had lent him for the great occasion. He wondered suddenly what made his mother's black loaf so heavy and the way seem so long. Through the wonderful chateau park he walked, still following the wide carriage drive and scorning the more familiar and shorter cuts through the woodlands. These he skirted, patiently bearing the discomfort of the heat and the weariness, for the hope of what lay waiting for him at his journey's end. When at last he came upon the big chateau, something in its aged and somber grandeur, the heights of its turrets, the shining brilliancy of its many windows, the wondrous beauty of its long terraces leading to the still more wonderful gardens, oppressed him with a sudden sense of awe he had never fel before when looking on it, and he felt remote and lonely and very small, and for the first time since Lamoré had come to him with the message from the Comtesse, he wished that he was in the valley among the vineyards and the flocks.

How long he stood there — a solitary little figure — he never knew, and when at last he moved on, it was not to the great front entrance he had thought of in his dreams, but a smaller side one used for the upper class of the domestics. Here he met one of the footmen and delivered his message in a small, shy voice.

The footman held out his hands for the humble loaf of black bread.

"Give it to me," he said, "and your message for the Comtesse."

The boy started suddenly as though aroused from a dream, and he grasped the black loaf passionately. When he spoke, the man, who was a stranger to the Island, started at his tone — as peremptory as his own had been, and touched with a note of pride and scorn.

"I have come to see the Comtesse, who has sent for me. Show me to her."

Just what would have happened here is doubtful if the Comtesse's maid had not been passing. She paused to watch the scene, and when the footman looked as though he would have rudely expelled the boy through the door whence he had come, she stepped forward with a warning gesture.

"Idiot! Do you think so little of your place that you would offend the Comtesse and the Father himself? It is the boy Anthony — the Father's charge — the Comtesse has been awaiting him all morning. Show him to her. She is in the picture gallery with Mademoiselle the American."

The footman bit his lip, but did as he was bid, and the boy Anthony followed him with a head held as proudly as though he were a prince of the blood or the reigning heir of the house. An odd smile lingered about his mouth and was still ther when the footman drew aside the heavy portièr leading to the great gallery, and stood to one si for him to pass.

“ The boy Anthony,” he announced.

The boy Anthony took a step forward and th curtains fell noiselessly behind him, the curiou footman lingering on the other side to discover, possible, why the Comtesse was receiving a litt peasant boy bearing a gift of black bread.

For a moment things turned dark for Anthon and in that moment of blindness all his anger a his scorn vanished. He was about to see the gre lady of the chateau — the lady of his dreams — it should be that she should not be beautiful gracious, clad in outer and inward loveliness . if it should be! Then his vision cleared and stared straight ahead of him up the length of t great gallery, hung on either side by the portra of the long, long line of Grandcœurs. In an alm endless vista, it seemed to him, they reached, fr the forebears of the Count of the Crusade that hu not far from him, to the portrait of a child at furthest end, near to the great stained window t bore the shield and arms of the chateau, and whose light a lady stood. She was all the gall held for him after he had once raised his face hers and seen her clearly, and Blair Martin, sea on the cushioned window-seat and half hidden the velvet curtain, watched them undisturbed. the announcement of the footman, Cecile smiled and laid aside her work with a gesture of pretty and gracious condescension; the next, when the portières had fallen behind the child and he had stood at the foot of the great gallery alone, a simple childish figure in a simple childish blouse, she had risen to her feet with a sharp exclamation of surprise. Her work fell unheeded to the floor. Blair Martin saw her glance once toward the portrait on her right — a wonderful portrait, painted by a master's hand, of a child — a prince perhaps — walking in a garden, a great hound by his side; the black velvet of his suit, the buckles on his little shoes, shining out in sharp contrast to the rest of the portraits in the hall. From that portrait, whose frame was crowned, like the stained window, with the shield and arms of the Grandcœurs, back to the solitary little figure, barefooted, bareheaded, in his peasant's blouse, bearing the gift of black bread in his hands, Cecile's look traveled, followed by Blair Martin's own, and her face then was as her face had been the night the little Count had died.

The length of the great gallery they looked at each other in silence. In silence the Comtesse, with a face like marble, awaited his coming. In silence the little boy in the peasant's blouse moved slowly, as one asleep, up the length of the long gallery toward the lady of his dreams. No sound within broke upon that silence except the child's light footfall on the polished floor; the portraits by which he passed seemed to look down on him, some smilingly, some curiously, pitying the child who perhaps had lost its way in the great gallery. On he came, the gift in its covering of white linen borne in his arms, as in the old days one of the sons of the early Count had borne the helmet and the sword for him before he started on the long Crusade. He stepped lightly, yet moved with a grace strangely at variance with his dress, until beneath the picture of the child he stood and paused, looking up at the Comtesse and holding up his gift in silence to her. The Comtesse stepped from the raised window-seat to the gallery floor, and the light from the stained window seemed to follow her and illuminate her figure in its dress of azure and of gold. She came up to the boy smiling, and laid one hand upon his hair.

Suddenly and without warning the boy dropped upon one knee, as he had been taught to do when he greeted the Great Cardinal, and with eyelids instinctively lowered, as though to hide from all human gaze the love and worship that dwelt in their clear depths, he raised his gift to her, while he stooped to kiss her hand.

VIII.

THAT night the Comtesse did not appear for dinner, which Blair Martin had alone in the great dining-room, and the next day she spent alone also, as the Comtesse's maid announced that she was ill. She spent hours in wandering around the chateau before she settled herself to some long-delayed letter-writing in the quiet of the perfectly appointed boudoir connected with the suite she occupied. She found it difficult to concentrate her thoughts that insisted on dwelling on other things than the task at her hands. Earlier in the day she had gone to the chateau garden, with the intention of gathering some flowers for the Comtesse, but Giovanni, who had been jealously watching her, learning of her errand, had announced shortly that he himself had taken the garden's best to the chatelaine an hour ago. She had risen from her knees by the bed of lilies with a quick indrawing of the breath that very successfully hid from the dimmed eyes of the old gardener the hurt his words had given. The few lilies that she had gathered had slipped to her feet, and she had not been conscious of it as she took her way toward the house. The odd resentment that had come to her of late returned strong and throbbing — an almost tangible thing. Why had

Lamoré urged her to come here, where even the old Italian gardener, so tender with the flowers, so devoted to his mistress, treated her with veiled disrespect? The curtains at the Comtesse's bedroom windows were drawn as though to shut her out, and it seemed to her for a moment as though she walked the paths of some shadowed and enchanted place of mystery alone and unprotected. How often she had read such tales in German to the boy Anthony at sunset on the steps of Toinette's cottage! Would that she were back again at Toinette's. Would that the boy Anthony was with her now. As though in answer to her wish and as though in truth she walked the paths o Anthony's fairy tales, she saw him crossing by th box hedge at a corner of the garden. She stoo still, waiting for him, wondering what had brough him here to-day. He came on unconscious of her and would have passed her but that she put out detaining hand and touched him on the shoulder The boy started as though from a dream.

"Is there anything that I can do for you, Anthony?"

He shook his head. It seemed to her for th first time since he had come so intimately into h life, he was impatient to be gone.

"Nothing, Mademoiselle, and many thank The Comtesse sent for me, and I am just returning home. Did you know that our lady was ill? He looked at her with grave, troubled eyes. "S is ill," he repeated slowly.

Blair Martin smiled kindly.

"It is surely nothing serious, Anthony, or I should have known, or —" noticing that the shadow did not lift from the child's face — "or the good Father would have been sent for."

The boy raised his clear eyes to her.

"True, Mademoiselle. She would have sent for the good Father. How kind of you to think of that. Yet —"

"Yet what, Anthony?"

"She lies so white and still, Mademoiselle, on the long couch. Then she makes me kneel down by her and she takes my face between her hands, and once —"

"Yes, Anthony?"

"She weeps, oh, Mademoiselle, she weeps."

The boy looked up at the Comtesse's window and its drawn curtains, and his lips quivered.

Blair Martin took the boy's small, sunburned hand and held it to her with a friendly pressure. Some instinct warned her not to attempt other familiarity. What was for the Comtesse was not for her, in spite of the long months of her friendship with the child.

"She weeps — for what?"

"I know not, Mademoiselle," said the boy slowly, and then he set his lips tightly together and without another word turned and left her. What was this thing that he had done? The Comtesse's tears — were they not a sacred thing? If she had meant the American to have seen — the kind American with the gentle voice — would sh not have wept yesterday in the long gallery? H would need absolution for this thing that he ha told. And slowly, bowed beneath the shame of betrayal, the boy Anthony made his way toward th valley and his home.

Blair Martin watched him until he was out sight, then turned to the house. Just what it wa that led her steps to the long gallery she could n have told, but she found herself there and walkin its long deserted length until she stood beneath t portrait of the little Count. Long she looked at until the velvet suit and the big buckles on the litt shoes and even the form of the great hound fade and in its place she saw again a little peasan blouse, but the faces of both children were strange alike — the face of the boy Anthony and the fa of the little Count who had died — except that the boy she knew was a maturity of form and e pression she sought for in vain in the picture of t dead heir of the Grandcœurs.

She sat down on the raised window seat in t deserted gallery, remembering yesterday. T shafts of light fell in long stretches through t stained glass of the window to the floor. She cou not take her eyes from the picture.

"It is for this that she is ill to-day," she thoug the odd resentment giving way to pity, "it is this she sent for Anthony again. It is why s weeps."

IX.

THE next night the Comtesse came down to dinner, and the two women met by the long table with its fine damask and splendid linen. In the hours since Cecile's seclusion Blair Martin had often fancied what the meeting would be, and hardly cared to acknowledge to herself her inward dread of it. The longing to leave it all — the grandeur of the chateau, its strange chatelaine — had come to her again, following in the wake of the wave of pity she had felt in the deserted gallery the day before. Soon — as soon as she could — she would make her excuses to Lamoré and the Comtesse, and join Hannah in Devonshire, since she might not now in courtesy return to Toinette's. She could hear the Comtesse's light footfall on the great stair in the hall; she could hear it coming nearer, and she stood waiting by her chair, looking down at the white and silver of the chateau dining table. When she came and stood by her, the slender, dark-eyed mistress of all this lonely splendor, Blair Martin forgot alike pity and resentment in admiration. To-night it seemed to her she saw the Comtesse as she really was, the acme of the culture, the refinement, the beauty and the graciousness of a princely line. She watched her from the far end of the table; she listened, herself almost in silence, believing that in truth one of Anthony's fairy tales had come to life. The Comtesse talked on books, on politics, on music and on art; of the latest edict from the Holy Father, of the peasants' crops in the valleys fa below the chateau heights, of her hopes and plans for the further education of the peasant children as though she were exerting herself to charm and hold an assembly in a court salon, or the Great Cardinal himself, instead of one woman — a guest almost a stranger.

“ To-night I know her as she is,” thought Blai Martin, as they rose and together stepped out o to the terrace. “ No wonder that Lamoré and th people love her, or the Great Cardinal listens whil she talks.”

But on the terrace the Comtesse sat quiet fo a long while, looking out over the chateau garde and watching the moon rise from the sea. Wit the darkness of the night lit only by the youn moon and stars, with the scent of the flowers an shrubs close by, it was as if the brilliant mood wit and learning had fallen from her like a cloa and she had left it behind in the lighted dinin room. Here, in the sweetness of the souther night of France, high on the chateau hill and ove looking the chateau valleys with their vineyard it seemed as though the quietness of nature and prevailing peace had become a part of her. Bla Martin watched her as she sat in her wicker ga den chair, her chin resting on the back of her closed hand, her eyes, dark and wistful, gazing on the night. By and by her voice came to Blair Martin — low and soft as the breeze that swept her cheek. She spoke in English, and slowly, musingly.

"Perhaps it was on such a night that Madrisa first saw the stream she loved," she said.

"Madrisa?"

The Comtesse turned her head and looked at the American.

"You were in Switzerland — they did not tell you of Madrisa?"

Blair Martin shook her head.

"It is a legend?" she asked.

"Yes, Mademoiselle. I heard it when a girl, one summer long ago when I went to Switzerland with my governess. It was in the district of the Vorder and Hinter Rhein, which is rich in folk lore and in legend. The people in the valleys of the Silvretta Range are especially noted for the quaint stories that they tell. There is not a child in all that part that has not heard of the doings of the Fenken — the fairies of those parts. There is among them one — I know not quite how you would say it, Mademoiselle — perhaps the queen — that figures in most of the narratives. Her name is Madrisa — a beautiful maiden of whom the natives tell strange tales on winter evenings and sing strange songs on summer nights — like this. Do I tire you, Mademoiselle?"

"No — no, please go on."

The Comtesse smiled a little. She leaned l elbow on the broad arm of the wicker chair a again laid her chin against her folded hand.

"It is she, Mademoiselle, the beautiful mai of the song and story, who has given her name the peak known as the Madrisahorn. Once, fell in love with a mountain stream, and day day and night by night she would rest beside listening to the music that it sang to her and lo ing on the form which smiled on her from its cl depths. This was the beautiful spirit of the stre and it was always there except when the d weather fell. But by and by the winter came v all its ice and chilling frost and the beautiful sp was imprisoned in its hold — that tender spiri Madrisa's lover."

The low voice paused. The whispering w blew past them laden with the odors of the gar — of the flowers and the smell of wet box a the summer's rain. The Comtesse did not m Her eyes still searched the night. By and by took up the tale again.

"Then — then it was that Madrisa could see her beloved — she could only hear him n in his distress. And they resolved — he and sh that were he ever released again, the two of t would hasten to happier, fairer lands, where ter was unknown — lands the winds told ther — lands, which in spring they had heard of f the returning birds. And they waited, Made selle, — the story does not tell of that slow agony of waiting — but sometimes I have guessed . . . " she broke off again, and for a moment it seemed as though her eyes sought those of the American. Then she went on. " At length the spring came and once more Madrisa and her lover saw each the other's face. They decided to go at once to the happy lands the winds and the birds had told them of so much, where they would marry and live happy ever after. . . . Poor Madrisa! Poor Spirit of the Stream! They started, Mademoiselle, but they had not made a two days' journey before the water of the stream was mixed with other waters and became so clouded she could not see his face. His voice, too, was not as it had been in the old days, but was sad and mournful — full of the talk of terrors she knew nothing of and of mysteries to come. Then Madrisa cried out in her dread, 'Oh, Beloved, let us go back to our mountain home, to its little ways and delightful music, and if we can't be as happy as we want, we will be as happy as we can. Come, Love!' So, Mademoiselle, they went back. And all through the summer season Madrisa sees and knows her lover and hears his voice and tries not to remember the winter coming with its dark days and its silences, and it helps her to think, 'Perhaps I am happier and nearer to him than I dream.' "

The low voice paused, and the Comtesse rose from the wicker chair and came and stood by Blair Martin. The latter felt her touch upon her arm.

"Mademoiselle, that is all," she said; "perhap
you will remember the story, too."

An instant she lingered there in darkness b
Blair Martin's chair.

"Do not disturb yourself. Sit here and drear
It is a place for dreams — the chateau terrace
the moonlight. You will excuse me? Ah, yes,
am very tired."

Blair Martin watched her as she crossed th
terrace to the house. Once she walked in a sha
of clearest moonlight before the shadow of th
great chateau enveloped her. At a casement wi
dow she paused and looked back, and though Bla
Martin leaned forward and tried to pierce th
shadows that lay around her that she might see h
face, she could not. But Cecile's voice reached h
with a new strange note of tenderness bidding h
good-night.

Long after she had gone Blair Martin walke
the terrace alone. She remembered Cecile as s
had been at dinner, as she had been later here wi
her — the varying moods — the brilliancy of t
table talk — the odd vibrating note of sympathy
her voice as she told the legend of the Swiss. T
mystery and the charm of the southern nig
around her, the charm and the mystery that hu
around the chateau's mistress was borne to h
afresh. She felt the resentment falling from h
as though it had never been, and she stood st
listening to the thousand voices of a silent nig
that all can hear who will, and stared across t

garden to the sun-dial standing in a shaft of light. As she looked the softness of the light increased and above the dial hung suspended that long Bridge. Long — long she looked at it — a prayer upon the lips that were learning here in the Island of the Angels to pray again [illegible] by there came to her the consciousness of [illegible] face. It seemed a great way off — [illegible] part of the Bridge to-night — she was [illegible] one looking on a picture. [illegible] and [illegible] led but the face remained.

An hour later she [illegible] at the casement looking toward the sun-dial before she went indoors. It seemed to her that here to-night, in the chateau garden she [illegible] felt faintly, dimly, something of the [illegible] — the Scheme that with infinite patience had waited for this hour to draw her understanding and her heart into Its Vast Embrace.

She closed the casement softly and drew the curtain. Then she crossed the great hall and climbed the stairs. [illegible] she passed the apartments of the Contessa she remembered the Swiss story.

Like [illegible], 'perhaps I am happier and [illegible] to him than I dream,'" she thought, as she [illegible] own room.

X.

IN the days that followed a stillness and a brooding peace seemed to settle on the chateau, such as it had not known in centuries. It apparently came from no definite cause, and was for all who tried to analyze it an intangible thing. It was as if the mental atmosphere of the park and the chateau and its inmates, had slowly cleared from a lowering danger, as a threatening storm is sometimes averted in the world of material things, by the slow, steady pressure of a changed wind. Giovanni, in the garden, although unconscious of its cause, worked with greater skill, more untiring patience, and was surprised to find himself bringing, almost unwittingly, and a bit grudgingly still, the tall American, a daily gift of flowers. The tall American herself grew happier again and wondered if it was the remembrance of the Bridge she had seen above the sun dial in the garden. The sun dial became a favorite haunt with her, and here she would bring her work or books and sit leaning against it, and when tired of her task let her eyes rest on the white sails at sea. From here, too, she could see St. Michael's in all its white splendor, and the glory of its golden cross, and the church and the dial and the garden came in a mysterious way to be connected, not so much with the Comtesse who was mistress of it all, as with the face and form of Stone. Of the mistress, she saw not over much, yet there had grown up between them, slowly, the nucleus of an understanding that meant much to them both. It was perhaps the boy Anthony who was the center in those early days of their growing friendship, who drew them both as a vortex draws two streams to itself, and of the boy Anthony they saw much. At the Comtesse's orders, each day, when the tasks at the Rectory were ended, he climbed the chateau heights and came to them. It seemed to Blair Martin that all through the day the Comtesse waited for that hour — that it represented more of happiness to her than all her lands and all her possessions and all her wealth alike. Always, when she was able, she met him at the wicket gate alone, a pleasure that Blair Martin, with the exquisite sensitiveness that divined another's need, never asked to share. And when the little boy in the blue peasant blouse would come — the Comtesse protested in her pretty way against the Sunday and the fête-day suit — she would make him rest a little on a stone bench near the gate, and once Blair Martin saw her wipe his flushed and perspiring forehead with her own fine handkerchief. Sometimes they would walk toward Blair Martin, if she were in the garden, and together they would all sit down. The two of them — the Comtesse and the little peasant boy — became a curious study to Blair Martin, and as she had in the old days at Toinette's cottage, she marveled at the strange mixture of simplicity and proud bearin in the child. She watched him intently, seeking fo a sign that the sudden favor of the Comtesse ha spoiled his manner or his charm, but it never di In all the intercourse, that grew more intimate a the days went on, he remained as she had know him first. He sang for her again, this time upon th chateau heights, the Canticles and the Swiss slumbe song, as months ago he had sung them for her i the wooded valleys near his home, and because sh wished it — wished to see his expressive face chang and his eyes turn from sunlit patches to shadowe pools — he would repeat the wood lore and th legends of the sea that Lamoré had told him sinc his birth. Lamoré himself would sometimes joi the group and watch the pretty picture that th child and the two women made. He was strangel silent these days and used to study intently the Comtesse's face as she watched the child. She seeme when others were by, to be content to listen and t watch. It might have been that Lamoré was repai by his visits and intent study of the Comtesse, fo as day succeeded day and made the months, shadow of a sorrow not his own lifted from hi face, and he would return to the Rectory and say prayer before he wrote to Stone. He knew tha Stone relied on him for news, and he wrote him a one man writes another whom he cares for, withholding nothing that he fancied Stone might want t hear. It was perhaps of Cecile's health alone tha he was reticent. After all, there was nothing tangi ble — an added languor perhaps, a loss of strength, an increasing frailness of the face. Once he talked of it to Blair Martin, who listened, suddenly grown white with a new dread. She had never realized until that moment all that this new growing friendship might mean to her life. Once Lamoré, with a tact grown keen with the practice of years in delicate missions, wrote a personal letter to a great doctor in Marseilles, a friend of his, and asked him to the Island. Then he climbed the chateau heights and begged the hospitality of the chateau for the eminent man, urging on Cecile the impracticability of any fit entertainment in the humble Rectory.

"It is all your own fault, Father," Cecile had grumbled, trying to conceal her shining eyes. "Long, long ago my uncle wanted to build you a fit home. You should not ask eminent men to visit you if you cannot entertain them yourself. How much will the great doctor see of you, if he is perched high up on the chateau heights? Shall you provide him with a spy-glass — or a stethoscope?"

Lamoré started guiltily.

"Who told you that I wrote to him to come?"

Cecile clapped her hands like a delighted child.

"*Bien!*" Then she touched her head wisely with one finger.

"You are incorrigible, my child."

"Do you desire that the Cardinal's suite be placed at his disposal?" the Comtesse went on, rising from her chair on the terrace with a laugh. "There, there, do not look so shocked. Has not the suite been kept sacred for centuries for the cardinals of the house? Ah, you do not mind if I leave you for a moment? Your little Anthony — or is he mine? — it is time that he were here."

Lamoré watched her as she crossed the garden until her slender figure was lost behind the foliage of the trees. Then the mirth vanished from his face.

"The last of the line," he said, "except what the Church holds; and no heirs — no heirs for all this splendor and this beauty."

He was so intent on his own thoughts that he did not hear Blair Martin approaching, and indeed did not know that she was near until she took the chair deserted by Cecile and spoke gently so as not to startle him.

"Dreaming aloud, Father Lamoré?"

"Perhaps, Mademoiselle. And may I ask where you so adroitly secrete yourself on my visits of late?"

"I fancied Madame the Comtesse would prefer to see old friends alone."

He looked at her curiously.

"Women are strange enigmas," he said with a faint smile. "They can live weeks together under the same roof and share, perhaps, the same diversions, have the same tastes as to music, perhaps, and to art, and yet remain to each other 'Mademoiselle' and 'Madame the Comtesse.' I think men in dealing with men are less formal."

The American flushed a little.

"I make friends slowly, Father. At first, to be quite candid with you, I had no desire to call the mistress of all this splendor other than by her formal title. I shall never call her by anything less familiar except at her request. Of late sometimes I have fancied she and I might some day reach a point where the conventionalities and the formalities of life might melt away and we should know ourselves as — friends."

Lamoré laughed a little.

"Already, Mademoiselle, you are friends, although you know it not. Some great shock — some mutual experience — coming suddenly alike to you and her would reveal you to each other as you are."

A troubled look crept over her face at his words.

"I do not think I understand you, Father, nor, if I may say it, do I think you understand either the Comtesse or myself as well as you might think."

Lamoré, following the American's example, rose. He bowed a little.

"Perhaps," he said.

She smiled at the gravity of his answer.

"I promised the Comtesse, that I would play for her this afternoon after you and the boy Anthony left. Will you excuse me if I go and practise a little while? She tells me she loves the violin and — Beethoven."

"You do not ask me nor the boy Anthony to remain, knowing that we both love music. Is that not unkind, Mademoiselle?"

"I would not have you hear my poor music for the world — a master organist like you, and a critic so the Comtesse tells me."

"I can be lenient, Mademoiselle, with those who interest me; with those whose technique rather than whose interpretation is at fault. But as you wish, of course. You did not perhaps know that the Comtesse played?"

Blair Martin looked up at him in quick surprise.

"Since I have been here I fancied that the great piano had remained untouched. I have wondered, sometimes, at the appointments of the music room. They are so perfect. I should have guessed."

"The music room was added years ago to replace one that was burned in the fire that also destroyed the old chapel wing. The new music room was rebuilt under the personal direction of the great Twanciski, a friend of the present Comtesse's mother. The Comtesse Clarisse, Mademoiselle, was a superb musician and one of Twanciski's pupils."

Lamoré stopped suddenly and looked down at the gravel at his feet. For the first time since she had known him, in some way remote and strange, age seemed to touch his face and form.

"I shall be afraid to play for the Comtesse now — as I am afraid to play for you," said the American to break the long pause.

Lamoré looked up and smiled; the impression of age slowly slipped away.

"The truly great are the truly simple, Mademoiselle. To-day ask the Comtesse — the little Cecile

— to play for you the Russian piece that her mother composed. The Comtesse Clarisse used to play it for me when I came here as a young soldier — a kinsman — to visit the place . . ." he spoke a little dreamily.

"A kinsman — I did not know —" said Blair Martin softly.

"How should you, Mademoiselle? A distant kin to our lady here and to his Eminence the Great Cardinal. There are some who think that the life of the Church breaks all human ties, but I, Mademoiselle, and the Great Cardinal whose pupil I still am, are not among the number."

He bowed to her again, and again there came to her the impression that it was rather a courtier and a nobleman than a priest, who spoke to her. In silence she inclined her head and made her way to the music room.

. . . .

Here an hour later the Comtesse found her. She was standing by the window and on the table near was the open violin case. The instrument lay untouched.

"I have come to hear you play Beethoven and I find you standing dreaming by the window. The good Father tells me you excused yourself on the plea that you wanted to practise. Was it only an excuse? Was our Island priest worrying you or mentioning casually to you the benefits of a conversion?"

The American smiled faintly.

"I need hardly remind you that Father Lamor preaches his faith with his life. I had thought t practise when I left him but — and Madame th Comtesse will excuse me — I cannot play Beetho ven to-day."

"Ah! I am sorry." It was characteristic of th older woman's breeding and birth and the inn fitness of things that she neither urged against he will nor questioned one who was her guest.

Blair Martin laughed.

"You would be sorry if you heard me play."

"Mademoiselle, I have often heard you pla Your interpretation is extremely good — you touch one, a player more perfect in technique, pe haps, might envy and strive for through lor years. The technique is the brain of music, b the touch — its heart."

Blair Martin turned from the window.

"You have heard me play, Madame — may inquire where?"

The French woman shrugged her shoulders little and looked at her half appealingly.

"Must I confess, Mademoiselle? I have hea you play right here in the chateau. Often — oft when you thought me resting or away and ca here to practise I would hide behind that piece Flemish tapestry there, which conceals a little cess, and listen by the hour."

The American flushed.

"You flatter me, Madame. Yet — I cannot pl Beethoven to you to-day. One may play unco sciously before a real musician where one cannot play face to face."

"Who told you that I played?"

The American laughed and brushed an imaginary bit of dust from the violin case.

"Who but Father Lamoré? He told me today that you and he were kinsfolk. Is your music like his own? And the Russian piece your mother composed and used to play for him — he told me to ask you to play it for me." Then seeing the Comtesse hesitate, she added quickly, "You would not refuse a request of his?"

The Comtesse went to the great piano and slowly opened it.

"Nor a request of yours, Mademoiselle, that I had power to grant," she said in a low voice as she sat down.

She laid her long, slender fingers on the keys. She had not played since that last night in the suburban home in far-away America with Stone for audience. She was glad that her guest had not asked for Schubert. She felt that she could never play Schubert again. The Russian air — she had almost forgotten it. She sat quiet a long time, looking down on her hands resting on the keys, and once she closed her eyes. Little by little the air of the piece came back to her, and with it something that the Great Cardinal had once hinted at. She had been too young then to really understand. Just why she spoke aloud she did not know.

"My mother wrote the piece when little more than a girl, here at the chateau where she visite her father's people, and before her marriage to th son of the old Count. Father Lamoré had a com mission in the French army then — had serve with distinction in the Soudan. He often cam here too — she used to play for him. The Grea Cardinal told me once, when I last played the piec for him, she composed it the night the young cap tain decided on the priesthood."

The Comtesse began to play. Blair Marti leaned against the window-frame, trembling a littl

"I wonder why," she said below her breath.

Low as were her words the Comtesse heard he but silently played on. If the American was hu man, possessed of a woman's heart, a woman intuition, the ear of the artist — all of which sh believed the American did possess — she would n question further what the Comtesse felt she coul not answer, after she had heard the piece and i appeal.

Softly it began — as softly as an awakening c spring — and underneath the softness pulsed th joy. Then the movement became more sombe and more rapid, and here and there were long run ending in a burst of passionate despair. From th spring time that reminded one of the chateau gar den at the door, came hints of thunder and of sum mer rain; then, like a dirge that sang of winte frosts and barren Russian steppes, the piece wen on toward its close. It tolled the death-throes, an it seemed a human thing that in impotent weakne beat against a will inflexible and stronger than its own, whose force it could not break. It ended as slowly as it had begun and its climax was one discordant chord.

Blair Martin leaned against the window-frame, white and still.

"Wonderful!" she said.

By and by the Comtesse rose from the piano, her soft footfall making little noise upon the floor. She came and stood by the table where lay the violin and lifted it gently from its case.

"My mother was a Russian," her voice, low and cultivated, broke the silence of the room. "She came from that land of beautiful women and heartbreaking music, and she called the piece 'The Way of the Cross.' Play for me, Mademoiselle, as I have played for you," she held out the instrument to Blair Martin, "not something that you know, but, like my mother, something that you dream, and may the dream be fairer than her own."

As one asleep Blair Martin took the instrument and bow and began to tune the violin.

Her brain was a blank. How play after what she had heard — how play her dream? Yet a voice of which she was inwardly conscious — a voice that she had not heard since she had parted on the pier, said "Play!"

She drew her bow across the taut strings, unknowing that the instrument of her soul had been tuned to even a more perfect pitch by the magic of the music she had heard. Hardly conscious of

what she did, impelled by that inner voice o
strong command, she laid the violin beneath he
chin and drew her bow with a long sweep.

It was as though a human voice had cried ou
touched with the shadow of divinity. It echoe
through the silence of the room and beat agains
the brain of the Comtesse persistently as wave
beat against a shore. From a corner where th
Flemish tapestries cast long, strange lines of shad
she sat and watched her, leaning forward on he
elbow, from her low chair. Before the window -
her figure a silhouette in its light — Blair Marti
stood and played, alike unconscious of audience o
surroundings. She had laid the bow against th
strings, not knowing what she was to play — ho
play at all — and now she was improvising som
thing new and strange. She composed as sh
played, not thinking, not planning, or even tryin
to guess bar that should follow bar. She stoo
facing the far dim corners of the room that, as sh
looked, faded from her sight, and it seemed to h
once more she was at the Anchorage — at hom
It was night — could the darkness of the dim f
corners deceive one so — and she was standin
under a mimosa tree in bloom, the moon-flowe
near. It was youth and summer time. Low not
infinitely low and infinitely tender — full of ho
— crept from the heart of the violin. . . . Besi
her was some one — could the darkness in the di
far corners in truth take on a human shape. .
Who said the night was still? Ah, it was thro

bing — throbbing. . . . Had she not looked into his eyes? . . . Deep as the clouds at sunset that rest above the sea and Naples in the fall, full of a glory, veiled, crept forth a wonderful note from the frail thing of wood, that note of love, and vibrated to it as two chords mingle and become one — as two lives mingle and lose their separateness. Again and again she called forth from the frail thing of wood, that note of love, and it underlay all the piece she played and became the keynote on which she built the whole. . . . The shadows lengthened in the far corners as she gazed, and there crept into the music slow notes of waiting — somber notes of hope deferred — despair. The shadows took on new shape — across the darkness stretched a Bridge for her. She saw it as she had seen it that day on the pier: as it had come to her in weary months of travel: as it stretched its mighty length from alp to alp: as in wonder she had looked at it from the portal of St. Michael's standing forth from the woods and sea; again as in the moonlight in the chateau garden: and the Bridge was always the same yet always different, as though built from different fabrics of her mind. She realized now it had never come to her until all human helps had failed — that in truth it had been to her the dry land that brought her safely through the rushing torrents of a Red Sea that had threatened to swamp her life. . . . The violin sang of the Bridge — of its mystery and its power, of the doubt that it had spanned, of the peace it had led to — of a faith that was in sight. . . . Now the music left the low lands and the darkened valleys and as a lark soars upward and beats its impotent wings against the fading stars, it rose a triumphant pæan, as though wholly conscious alike of its limitations and its attainments; its human frailty and its immortal birthright; of its unity with the One Reality of all.

Above the strings she held the bow silent in the air.

The Comtesse remained motionless, leaning forward, her elbow on her knee, her face resting in the hollow of her hand. For a moment Blai Martin stood looking straight ahead of her. Th long, dim shadows in the room were only shadows after all, and she had awakened from a dream Her hands still holding the violin and the bov dropped nerveless to her side. The Comtess stirred a little.

" But the end." the Comtesse said, " the end?

Blair Martin laid the violin and the bow in it case and closed the lid. Her hands began to tremble.

" I do not know the end," she said.

XI.

IT was the next week that the great specialist from Marseilles arrived. It was not his first visit to the Island. Years ago, when he had been a struggling young doctor fighting his way upward from the obscurity of humble birth, Lamoré, a young captain in the prize regiment, had met him and had realized his worth. It had been Lamoré and the position that Lamoré had held by right of title and of wealth that he had afterwards renounced, who had been the first to help him — whose influence in the society in which he moved had been a potent factor in Duport's success. He had never forgotten Lamoré or the debt he owed him, and when Lamoré had taken orders and left behind all and more than he could gain, he had cried as a strong man cries beside the grave of some cherished hope. It had seemed to him that in truth he was burying his friend, whose talents had charmed the big cities of Europe, whose influence, political, military and social, whose executive ability had excited comment, even envy, in the world of men. He had come to know, however, to see, even while sometimes he failed to understand, that the talents had not been wasted; that in a mysterious way that few could comprehend, the promise of Lamoré's youth had been fulfilled.

He had been used to come to the Island alm every year to renew the long friendship, to p up again the strands from the hand of Time; a long ago he acknowledged that he not only ca here to rest from the fret and turmoil of the ci not only to enjoy the gifts of Lamoré's mental but to learn from him as well. Lamoré's pres request had therefore come to him more in the li of a command than a favor requested. He wa the zenith of his life-work and the days were of a labor that represented the toil and the st and the fight of years. Already he had made brief trip of pleasure to the Island for the y He could ill be spared, yet it never occurred to to refuse. He would have come at a line f Lamoré as readily to serve the poorest peasant the Island as the chatelaine thereof. He had seen her since she was a young convent girl of teen, living in the summer time in lonely s chaperoned by her old governess, in the great teau on the hill.

He knew most of the story well, for he eminent in other branches of his profession bes his specialty, but it was a subject, as intimat the two men were, which they never discussed gether. In the breast of the great doctor from obscurity to eminence and decorated with medals of Europe, as in the breast of the hu priest fallen from worldly rank and station to scurity, were deep wells that hid many secret our frail humanity.

It was Lamoré that met him with the great touring car of the chateau, and Bernard Duport smiled as he entered the tonneau, where the priest followed him, remembering Nanette and the chaise. He inquired of them as they started from the wharf.

"You are to be the guest of the Comtesse," said Lamoré with a laugh. "For her, who lives upon the heights — this," he motioned to the car; "for me, in the valley — Nanette and the chaise."

Duport raised his eyebrows.

"So! I am to be a guest at the chateau. Now tell me briefly of the fears that made you summon me."

. . . .

Duport remained at the chateau a week and seemingly did little but enjoy the life there. If he were impatient to be gone; if he ever recalled the work accumulating for him at home, he gave no sign. Years ago he had learned by some keen instinct so often developed in the physician as in the priest, that some strange tie, born of the past, bound Lamoré's love as it did his loyalty to the chateau. What matter it then, the work piling up for him; the delayed convention papers only half finished, the hospital clinics unattended? Let the clinics and the convention papers wait; let the work pile up and up until it was a huge mass that only a giant will and a giant intellect could fight through at last. Lamoré had sent for him — Lamoré leaned on him and needed him as in the early days he had leaned on and needed the

young captain in the regiment. If it was the fir
time that the favor was his, it should not be th
last, provided Lamoré said the word. So he ro
in the great car with the Comtesse the full leng
of the Island's twenty miles and back; and walk
the terrace in the evening with the tall Americ
with the liquid voice, and watched the women wi
the child Anthony, while he lounged in the gard
smoking his cigar. In the evening the great c
shot down the heights and stopped before Lamor
door and brought him back to dinner to cro
swords of wit with the chatelaine, who was alwa
charming — always gracious. Later perhaps L
moré and himself would play chess. Lamoré, w
for years had made the faces of men a study th
he had reduced almost to a science, now search
a human face in vain. He had summoned h
friend here because of his skill in ferreting o
obscure cases of disease that eluded others, a
he had fancied that on the evening of the first d
he would there read some clue, but Bernard D
port's face was inscrutable. So the days pass
until the week was ended, and the Comtesse ga
with sincere regret, the orders for the tasks
tending the departure of her guest. He h
stepped into the life of the chateau, into the broo
ing peace resting there, as naturally as though
had known the chateau and its inmates all his li
Greatness had set her seal and sign on him a
he was completely hers — too great to regard h
talents as a personal thing of pride, holding th

for the service of the world; too great to demean himself and hide, from the titled men and women that he moved among, with shame or denial or deceit, his peasant origin. He never alluded to it deprecatingly; never boasted of it, that one might judge the greatness of the height to which he had climbed by the abyss from which he had come, but partly from instinct, partly from the lessons he had learned from Pierre Lamoré, he had built the structure of his life on it, as a man builds upon a rock. The whole world knew him — or might have known him by a word of inquiry — for what he was, for what he had become; the Comtesse herself knew it even as she placed at his disposal the suite that once had been occupied centuries ago by the great Louis and kept only for distinguished strangers, yet she marveled at the stories she had heard of his hungry, barefooted boyhood in the Pyrenees, and it seemed to her that not the great Louis himself could have bidden her farewell at the entrance to the chateau with a pride, a bearing and a grace that excelled his own.

She stood by Blair Martin's side watching Lamoré and her departing guest drive to the wharf in the great car. If she had had any thoughts of fear as to her condition, he had allayed them all, even when that morning, because of a request of Lamoré, whom she never could refuse, she had asked him for an examination of her lungs. He had gone through the task as quietly as though it had not been the thing he had been waiting for ever since he came, and his face and manner had rea sured her from the first. Now she turned to t American with a sigh of loss before she went i doors.

Lamoré and Bernard Duport were silent un they reached the wharf, where the former d missed the car. Together the priest and the phy cian sat down upon the luggage to wait. Fauch was late and it was too perfect an evening to w inside the little station the Comtesse had had bu there since her return. Duport took a cigar-ca out of his pocket, offered it to Lamoré, raised eyebrows slightly as the other shook his head, th took one and lighted it in silence. Lamoré studi him with grave eyes so long, that finally the phy cian turned to him with a smile.

"Well?" he questioned.

"Well?" said Lamoré, and his eyes were to be denied.

"It is as you feared," said Duport slowly, has been creeping on her for months. I knew before the examination this morning."

"You have known it all along?"

"Certainly — since my first evening in t most delightful place of entertainment, the c teau." He glanced up as he spoke to the great of stone upon the chateau heights.

"How — you scarcely seemed to look at h Once I fancied you had mistaken me, the way studied the American."

"The American — she interests me," said

port irrelevantly. "As for the other, my dear Pierre, to eyes long trained as mine have been, the ear — the stethoscope — is of secondary importance."

"Yet I spoke to Keller, the chateau physician, about it less than three months ago. He used the stethoscope. He could find little wrong except a general debility."

Duport laughed a little.

"Voilà! Keller is a German!"

Lamoré smiled. It was evident that beneath the jest there was more. He waited. Duport studied his cigar carefully.

"The gift of a rich but undiscriminating patient — although a colleague and one of my best friends." He puffed on it slowly, critically; finally rose and flung it far into the waters and began to pace up and down in front of Lamoré, who knew that truth was coming.

"My dear Pierre, it is no reflection on Keller that he found nothing more serious in his diagnosis nearly three months ago. He was one of my pet pupils at the Academy, and it was for that I recommended his name to you when you wrote to me after the old doctor died. I do not say that the salary offered — a fortune for so poor a man — did not attract him, but I predict great things for Keller, and there will come a day when double the chateau gold will not tie him here. Then he shall come back to Marseilles to me and learn secrets not taught in Materia Medica or even from the lecture platform. For such as will read th signs of the time, to them will be given the know edge that they seek. Some of it will require yea of effort, of concentration — some of it is taug in simple guise. Some day the true physician wi be the true philosopher and the psychologist as we He will diagnose by watching the simplest thin of life — the walk of a patient, the color of th hands perhaps, and where all material senses fa he will read with a developed instinct as we trained as is to-day his eyes, his ears, his hands

He paused before Lamoré, who still sat on th luggage, immovable, looking out to sea. In th distance — a quarter of an hour away perhaps - he could just discern Fauchet's new boat roundi the point that partly hid Grenette.

"As to the little Comtesse — there is real nothing that one can grasp at as yet," the doct went on. "We cannot say the seed has be planted while it yet rests on the bosom of the wi — but the wind is the tendency — the wind is ne The gravest symptom that I noted — that I mo often wage my fiercest war against — is her utt indifference to her life, though well concealed - *bien* — well concealed!"

He paused. Lamoré rose and joined him a together they walked the little wharf, keeping st

"I did not study the tall American with t beautiful voice entirely from curiosity or — a miration, although she excites both. It may that through her Madame the Comtesse will be stored. She is steadfast. She has the quality of uncompromising truth stronger than any woman I have ever seen except my wife. There rests in her the promise of a love and of a soul-fulfilment more marvelous than the physical growth from the embryo to the man. Let the Comtesse lean on her — confide in her if she will — " the doctor looked keenly at his friend. "All women," he said, "sometimes need a friend; the peasant woman with her new-born at her breast, as the great lady on the heights in the splendor of her heart-break and her memories."

Fauchet's tug came still nearer — a dark spot upon the shining waters. Both men watched it. On the light breeze was borne to them the faint throb of its engine.

"But above the friendship and confidences there is something that Madame the Comtesse needs more than all else — happiness! A great shock of happiness, perhaps — who knows — who knows! Ah, mon ami, I have known it to do marvelous things."

Lamoré did not answer, but he set his lips tightly and quickened his walk a little. The tug came nearer.

They did not speak until it had tied up and the gangway had been thrown out and two of the men from the chateau had gotten the luggage aboard. Then the physician and the priest shook hands.

"Rely on Keller — if he is a German," said Bernard Duport with a parting smile. "Trust him

— he has directions from me. Whenever I a
needed I will come again."

Lamoré stood, an immovable figure watching t
tug until it was out of sight.

That night he sent for Hector Stone.

XII.

THE next afternoon but one was Saturday — an afternoon on which the boy Anthony came late. Each week's end he helped his mother sweep up the floor and wipe the wooden benches of the village chapel, built long ago by the Comtesse Clarisse, and where Pierre Lamoré had preached and had administered the Blessed Sacrament for so many years. The boy sighed as he worked. He was not afraid of toil — it had been his portion almost since his birth — but the afternoon was hot — he wondered why all the Saturday afternoons seemed hot now — and he kept thinking of the grateful shadow of the trees in the chateau garden. Of course the work must be done first — especially the work that concerned in any way the good Father whom he loved — but the chateau garden. . . .

Up in the chateau garden Blair Martin sat alone. The Comtesse was resting, and Blair Martin remembered with a smile that on Saturday afternoons the Comtesse always rested now. It helped to pass the time until Anthony should come. From the chateau heights she looked down at the valleys and the fast ripening vineyards. The houses and the little village church, tipped with its wooden

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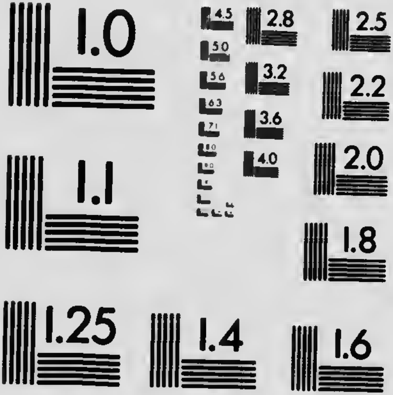
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Roman cross, looked infinitely small and far awa The peasants, too, toiling in the sun, were spec upon the landscape. How hot the sun must upon their arms and backs! How slowly, most wearily, walked the traveler over the ro that wound upward to the chateau park. S watched him curiously. A stranger, perhaps (she had been weeks ago) on a trip of curios from Marseilles or Grenette, or a messenger ma for the Comtesse. She remembered how primit in many ways the Island still was. Lamoré h told her, almost with a shade of regret in his voi that the present Comtesse had really been the f to bring modern civilization to the Island. T telephones between the rectory and the chate between the chateau and Keller's residence, and intricate fabric of wiring from the chateau to numerous houses of those in the Comtesse's ploy, were soon to be installed. The Comtesse even considered the matter of a wireless stat for the Island.

She continued to watch intently the figure of man walking up the winding road, and frowne little. The distance was so great and yet —

Presently the turn into the wooded road hid traveler from her sight and she turned away a sigh of relief. She would sit and rest a l while on the terrace under the big tree.

She did not see him enter at the wicket gate stand there looking around as one in profo thought, or hear his footfall as he came ne over the grass. By the sun-dial he hesitated and stood there, leaning against it, and he looked at her. Something in the consciousness that she was watched made her turn her eyes from the pages of her book and meet his own. The book slipped to the ground and she slowly rose — colorless.

He neither moved nor spoke, only looked at her, and the look drew her as the magnet draws the steel. He watched her coming; noted the color of her dress, her hair blowing soft tendrils in the wind, the clasping and the unclasping of her hands, the pallor of her face. When she was quite close to him; when the breadth of the sun-dial alone separated them she spoke.

"You?" she said.

"Yes," he answered, and he wondered at the whiteness and the beauty of the pearls she wore.

"Why are you here?" she said at last with an effort.

"Lamoré sent for me."

She looked into his face.

"Why?" she asked again.

Then it was he knew that he must tell her.

"Come," he said. "There is much I want to say, and I cannot here. Let us go through the woods up to St. Michael's Rock. There I will tell you."

She followed him. It never occurred to her to question what he asked.

High up on St. Michael's Rock he spread wide his handkerchief that she might not soil her dress.

She smiled faintly at the consideration that reme bered trivial courtesies when Time stood by w tablet and stylus to mark an epoch in their lives.

After she was seated he sat down beside her a began to play with some pebbles lying near. S watched him in silence, in a silence that she co not have broken if she would. How strange face looked. . . .

He glanced up to her wide, questioning ey but his own fell before them and he looked tow the memorial chapel near.

"Beautiful," he said, "pure Gothic — bea ful!"

She heard him, but she waited.

"It was not here when I was at the Island firs he said. "Then St. Michael's Rock was crowned." Suddenly he shook off the mood t had fallen on him and turned to her with his resolution in manner and in voice.

"Blair," he said, and she began to tremble he spoke her name. "Chance — perhaps I sho say Fate, who brings to us all our unpaid debts settlement — brought you into my life, too late the happiness that some men know. That, it se to me, I could have borne more easily than som whom such happiness has been denied, because the views I hold, but it touched your life — meeting, too, and it touched another life of wh I have told you little."

He broke off and he shook the pebbles in hand and looked down at them for an instant.

"You never questioned me of her — some natures are too big for finite failings like that — yet have there not been times in which to your inner consciousness you pictured her?"

"Yes," said Blair Martin in a low voice.

"Have you — have you ever pictured her as a great lady — the owner of great estates — the possessor of vast wealth —"

Blair Martin put one hand suddenly to her forehead, as though it pained her, and pressed it there, but she did not answer him.

"Or slender, perhaps, and fair to look at — gracious in her ways as the great ladies are in books?"

Blair Martin rose suddenly to her feet. A wave of color swept over her face and receded. Her eyes, intense, commanding, looked at him.

"A great lady — like the Comtesse Cecile de Grandcœur?" she asked quite steadily.

Stone stood facing her. Slowly the pebbles slipped through his fingers and fell noisily to the ground.

"Yes," he said.

The American turned away, her eyes to the ground. Up there on St. Michael's Rock the wind blew steadily against her face as a refreshing draught. It helped to clear her senses and helped her to breathe. By and by she stirred and it seemed as though she groped to move away.

"My God," she whispered, *"my God!"*

He put out his hand and touched her on the arm.

"Let me help you from the Rock," he said.

She allowed him to do so, in silence, hardly co
scious of his hold of her that at any other ti
she would have acutely realized. Except for
pressure of her hand in his, it was the closest p
sonal contact they had known.

He did not speak, as though appreciating
need of silence, but from time to time he glan
at her face as though to read therein her thoug

Her thoughts! At first they chased themsel
across her brain, confused and incoherent, with
beginning and leading to no end. Then the mot
of walking and the strong pressure on her arm
unwavering and gentle as it was strong — brou
inward composure and control.

How blind she had been! His wife! *His w*
that long ago, in the winter in the Alps, she
known she would some day meet; that their li
would cross as the warp is woven in the w
The shadowy third — Cecile! She recalled Ce
as the months had revealed her — her graciousn
her talents and her charm, and she wondered
it was, as though she were judging the matte
an outsider, just why that charm, those talents
the graciousness had failed to hold him — or
ing failed, had not the power to win him b
There had been those seven years in Montrea
that exile from him — from all that life held sa
and most dear! Seven years in darkness that
the remembrances of the Island of the Angel
the recollection of him! A pity in which t
was for the moment nothing personal, stirre

her. What a fate for what a life! . . . She noted now that they were almost at the foot of St. Michael's Rock, and she wondered whither he would lead her. Once she slipped a little and the pressure and support upon her arm increased. . . . Then came hurried torturing memories that burned. . . . She remembered how she had come here. Had Lamoré known — had Cecile known — *had Cecile known?* Was it because of this that she had asked her here? In those first days there had been that strange reticence on the Comtesse's part — that vague distrust on hers! . . . Stone — had he known? Had they all known — but her? Had she walked blindly into a trap?

She drew a gasping breath as does a man who has been long under water. All helplessness, all indecision fell from her with that breath and she became acutely conscious of the touch that led her through the shadowed woods back to the chateau. Very quietly her hand removed his own.

"I am quite myself again," she said, and she wondered at her own voice — so low, so even, was it in spite of her despair. "Thank you for your help — thank you for what you have told me. I was blind not to have guessed before."

"If I could have spared you," he said, "if I only could have spared you this!"

"It would have been better if I had been spared earlier," said Blair Martin, staring into the leafy shadows of the woods ahead, "better for — us all."

"Perhaps," said Stone, "I do not know."

She stopped in her walk.

"It had been kinder never to have sent me to tl Island of the Angels, or having come, spared r from the misery of this — my visit to the ch teau!"

"Have you not been happy at the chateau?" asked in a low voice, studying the ground.

She laughed a little — mirthlessly.

"As an Arab who treads the hot desert, w struggles towards an oasis only to find it mirage

He raised his head with a passionate gesture denial.

Blair," he said, "look at me."

She looked because she could not help it because he had bidden her, and she read truth his eyes.

"Do you fancy that I sent you here for this that I dreamed you two would come togeth sleep under one roof; eat of the same food? Wl you came to the Isl[illegible] — my wife — Ce — was with me in A[illegible] One night she ca across the little silk bag [illegible] had bought from you the fair on our first meeting — you remember little bag?" He paused for a moment as thou waiting for an answer. She nodded. "She fou the bag — and a long white glove of yours — was full of the odor of the perfume that you alw use, of violets, the perfume that I can smell r as I am standing here. She asked me nothi She simply laid them on my shaving-stand tha might know she had found them, and give explanation if I wished. I told her the next day. I withheld nothing but your name, for which she never asked. I told her what, until to-day, I have never said to you — at least with my lips — that I loved you."

He broke off suddenly and suddenly turned away and began to walk up and down along the wooded path. His mouth was working a little. Then he came back to her, where she had remained immovable, standing at the foot of a great tree. She leaned against it for support.

"After that we remained together until I went on a western tour. It was while I was gone that she returned to the Island of the Angels. To the world we gave the reason of her health and Lorimer's orders to a warmer climate. To Lamoré here I wrote the whole truth. He received the letter after you had come to visit at the chateau. I think that is all," he added. His voice was weary.

"The Comtesse — Cecile — did she know when I was asked?" Blair Martin's voice broke the silence of the woods.

Stone met her eyes.

"I do not know," he said. "Do you?"

"I am not certain yet — "

She did not finish, but he understood.

"I had thought to let Lamoré tell you when the time came. Never in all my hours of pondering and of dreaming had I thought to be the one to come and tell you this. To-day on landing I went direct to Lamoré's house. They told me there he was on a sick call at a distant part of the Island and later expected to come here. I came to the chateau in the hope of seeing him and — met you instead. I took the chance and — failed."

She looked at him with wistful eyes in which there dwelt more than she was aware.

"I am glad that it is so," she said simply.

"His cable — in cipher — was re-sent from America and reached me in Marseilles early this morning. I had just time to make connections here."

"The cable — I do not understand."

"Lamoré wired me night before last the result of Duport's visit here. He seemed to think that I could help — Cecile. In what way I do not know. I was not in America — I left there a fortnight ago for Marseilles. The cable made little difference except that it found you unprepared. I was coming to the Island anyhow."

"You were coming — why?"

She regretted the question as soon as it was asked, and would have recalled it, but he shook his head.

"After all, why should you not know? Let us be truthful with each other — and with her. I came first because it seemed to me I owed it to Cecile to help her, if I could, win back peace if not happiness. You believe me when I tell you this — my first reason?"

"I believe you," she said, and her voice was the voice of the woman who had spoken to him one Sunday afternoon in the little tea-room at home.

"Ah — I might have known. Sincerity can be judged only by sincerity, although some would doubt that I would have come to the Island if you had not been here. Yet — and I would not be honest with myself or you, did I try to deceive myself into the belief that the hope of a sight of you meant nothing to me. It has been the hope of that sight of you that sometimes I think has kept me from going mad."

. . . .

On the outskirts of the woods, near to the wicket gate, they paused, and it was Blair Martin who first broke the silence.

"Let me return to the house — alone."

"As you will," he said. He took her hand in parting and bent over it before he let it gently fall.

She left him by the stone bench where each day Cecile waited for the boy Anthony. She wondered what time it was. If Cecile would soon be coming here?

As she skirted the great garden Lamoré's voice arrested her. It was anxious, and his face more troubled than she had ever seen it.

"Mademoiselle, I have been searching for you for an hour. The servants told me you were in the garden, and when I come I find only an empty chair — an unread book."

He tried to smile a little, but she knew that it was forced.

"Almost constantly for two days I have been with a dying peasant. I came as soon as I could. There is something that I feel that I must tell you — about a cablegram I sent from Grenette to — Hector Stone."

She felt herself beginning to tremble. She felt that she must get over the interview quickly and be alone.

"Mr. Stone is here."

Lamoré stared at her.

"I do not quite understand you, Mademoiselle I only cabled to him late night before last afte Duport left. America is many miles away."

"He did not come from America, Father. H was on his way — he was in Marseilles — when your cable was forwarded." She turned from him as though all had been said.

"You have seen him since he landed, Mademoiselle? He has told you?"

"Yes, Father."

She forced herself to look him in the face, an neither the lips quivered nor the eyelids, but fo the pity of it — for the stricken woman's soul tha looked from their depths — he glanced down.

"He is here — at the chateau?"

"At the wicket gate, Father, by the stone benc hidden by the trees."

She turned to go and he did not detain her.

He watched her as she entered the chateau. H guessed something of the battle raging behind thos steady eyes.

She walked through the great hall and up the wide stairs, and it seemed to her each step she took was weighted as with lead. She had come to the Island thinking to find peace, and the Angels whom the peasants prayed to as guardians of the Island had laid a sword in her hand [illegible].

. . . .

It was the same night that Lamoré, seated in his study, heard a knocking on the door. Marie and the boy Anthony had long ago retired, and in wonder Lamoré rose to his feet and picked up a lamp. It was another sick call perhaps — some child in need — an infant to be hastily baptized.

He opened the door and stood a little to one side. Across the threshold Hector Stone passed in.

The priest looked at him questioningly.

"It was as I thought," he said, "in spite of Duport. Duport may be right — he probably is — but, Father, she cannot, will not, take the little happiness that I can bring her. It is not enough — that feeble semblance of a sacred thing. *I* do not — can *you* blame her?"

Lamoré shook his head.

"It was a hope — a chance — yet I who knew her might have known," he answered.

Stone entered the little study.

"May I rest a while until Fauchet is ready?"

"Fauchet? He is making an extra trip tonight?"

"Yes, and I go with him. There is nothing to detain me here — much to take me away."

He met the eyes of the priest unashamed. Gre
love is like great sorrow; the all-purifying flame
its mystic alchemy leaves nothing which the sc
refuses as unworthy to be built into the great te
ple of itself which shall eternally endure.

"Is there — nothing that can bring her pea
and happiness?" he asked after a moment. A
he thought only of Cecile.

Lamoré drew his hand slowly along the ed
of his desk and looked down at it thoughtfully.

"I do not know," he said. "There is a ch
here — a peasant boy. He is strangely like
boy you and Cecile lost. She is learning to lean
him for happiness, and he may teach her much.
think she loved him from the first time she s
him, but the love she bears him, the happiness
may get from that comradeship is not the hap
ness of which Duport thought. It will never ke
her tied to earth."

By and by Stone rose, and Lamoré went w
him to the pier and watched him, by the aid of
big lantern, board Fauchet's boat. He thought
the Comtesse and of the American as the eng
started and the tug began to move slowly fr
the wharf. From the deck Stone waved his
to him. The intricate pattern on which he
been working — to which Duport and Stone
lent their aid — had proved too difficult for
hands and spoke of the fallibility of man. Wit
sigh he turned and retraced his steps to the Recto

XIII.

IN a hotel on the summit of the Schynige-Plarre Blair Martin sat by the window in her room waiting for the mail. Her eyes, fixed on the scene before her, seemed hardly conscious of it — the wonder of the meadows, the dun-colored cattle peacefully grazing below her, near the half-way station of Breitlauenen, or the peaks that rose clear-cut against the summer sky. For weeks she had been here, had studied the meadows and the mountains in their every mood. She had walked the pastures in the light of sunset; she had climbed the Gummihorn and found upon the top, with the aid of Robert, her Swiss guide, the rare Martagon lily, now so seldom seen. She had rested there, basking in the sunshine, literally lying on a bed of flowers, wondering why the Alps no longer gave her rest. From the shadow of the big hotel she had seen the night fall with its mystery and its beauty on the snow peaks outlined against the sky; had later watched through the big telescope for the chamois coming out of their hiding places in the rocks to seek their evening meal.

She was keenly sensitive, as she had always been, to the wonder of Nature, the Great Architect, but she had begun to long, as she never had before, for something — for some one — to lean on; for some

one to whom she had a right to turn and who i
turn needed her as well. True, in the adjoinin
room sat Hannah; the ever faithful, who had
her call turned her back on the Devonshire th
she loved with the passion that increasing age fee
for the scenes of youth, but there were momen
when she wondered if Hannah understood her
well as Toinette. She could count Hannah's service almost by the years of her life, and Toinette —
why, she had only known Toinette a few months

She wondered if she would ever see the Islar
again, and she thought it doubtful. Sometimes
seemed as though a force stronger than her ov
will was forcing her back there and she resist
almost passionately. Some day she would forgi
perhaps — perhaps. . . . There had come to her
word from the Island since she so suddenly le
the day after she had met Stone there. It w
as though her life and the life of the Island we
as things apart. Yet once when she had been
need the Island had welcomed her. . . .

There was a knock on the door and she turn
listlessly to see a servant bearing her mail to h
on a wooden tray. She took the letters — the
were only two — indifferently. The mail mea
nothing to her these days, except a dressmake
bill or a remittance from her bankers in Paris,
perhaps a note from some slight acquaintance
America who wished to keep up the remembra
of casual meetings for what Blair Martin co
do for her socially or otherwise.

The servant closed the door deferentially behind him. The fees of the tall American with the gray eyes were always liberal, and where patrons were so inclined, the servitors should have just regard for nerves that jangled from the hasty slamming of a door.

She let the letters fall from her hands. She did not even care to see whom they were from, and for a while they lay forgotten in her lap. Then she picked one up and fingered it, letting her eyes rest on the postmark and its inscription, and gave a sudden cry as she read the well-known handwriting. It was from her father — the first sign in all these months from — home. She tore it open, and it seemed to her her hands were all thumbs, so awkward was she in her haste. She could not read it at first, although she brought it up close to her eyes, because of the mist there. There were no tears in her eyes — she had forgotten when last she had cried, it had been so long ago — but the mist was there and would not lift at her will. Her father! When she had permitted herself to think of him it had been with a sense of loathing and disgust. All through Europe on her travels, when her identity had become known — when she had been pointed out as the great magnate's daughter — she had drawn within herself, ashamed. It might be that the letter had been written on the eve of the marriage he had threatened, and after he had blackened still further the name he had given to his only child and the mother who was dead. The mist that had begun to clear se tled over her vision again. . . . When she w able, she unfolded the pages and began to rea It was characteristic of her and of the control a reticence she had inherited from her Scotch fathe that once having begun she did not pause un the pages had all been turned and she had replac the letter in its envelope. The letter, dated at t Anchorage, read:

"BLAIR — MY BAIRN: — I write this with lit hope of its soon finding you. For the last t months I have been trying to discover your ban (which was a more difficult task than it seem and to him I must trust this letter. He will his own time and discretion in forwarding it you — in the usual way of bankers. You m perhaps, if you care to let your mind dwell on past that was after all not *all* unhappy, rememb my dislike to that most obnoxious but necess branch of finance.

"I have heard nothing from you since you — it has seemed to me longer than a year. I ha run across no one who has seen you, heard of y or tracked you down while 'doing Europe.' hardly expected to hear of you in the usual bea paths of travel, but in these modern days I wou a year ago, have thought it an utterly improba thing that the earth could so successfully swall up a good-looking young woman like yourself a humble old maid, unless indeed one resorted the secret-service men. Of late I have even questioned Brewster, who for so long has wooed Hannah with a perseverance that in the world of finance would surely have won for him his spurs. But if Brewster knows anything — which I am pretty sure he does — he very successfully plays the clam. I often marvel at the devotion of the servants for you in this age of fickleness, and I have remembered that Hannah, in spite of her loyalty to you, was one on whom I could rely did any ill befall you.

"Therefore I take it for granted that you are well. I have often wondered if you were happy; ever wished to see the Anchorage or Ajax perhaps, or — the mimosa tree the three of us planted before your mother died. The gardens — I have never seen them look better, although Thomas is morose; Ajax shows signs of age, but the mimosa tree is wonderful. It is strange what friends the mimosa tree and I have gotten to be. I spend a good deal of my time at the Anchorage now. I am beginning to feel that when a man gets along in years, as I am doing, it is just as well to let up a little and the new manager promises well. You have not heard, perhaps, that I have pensioned Jenkins? He wasn't altogether up to some new innovations I wanted to try in the mills, and really seemed glad to rest. It strikes me that weariness is getting to be pretty near the keynote of modern existence in America. Hector Stone is, I believe, the only man I ever saw who does not seem to know fatigue. He's still an enigma to me, and I still contend that his views (up to a certain point are barbaric and socialistic, but sometimes I hav wondered if he has not a finer grasp on things tha most men. I have seen him seldom, and if by ar chance he knew your whereabouts he never tol After all there is no reason, I suppose, why l should know. His marriage was a great surpri to me. I fancied once — oh, well, it doesn't ma ter what I fancied. Old men are old fools, I su pose. His wife is in poor health and living som where in the south of France. I understand th he has recently joined her. I confess I am a b curious as to the woman Hector Stone wou choose. I saw him a week before he sailed. seemed to me he looked worried and older. H doing big work in his own particular line here America — the press and the people are mentio ing him for District Attorney or even Govern He's on the high crest, and yet he looks old a troubled. It may be his wife's poor health. I carries his success with a better balance than a man I ever saw. Success is a wine. Most of who drink of it find it as insidious as absinthe. V take a little more to dream more dreams, and the dreams are not to our liking — big enou perhaps — we drink again until we are drunk. . I wonder why I am writing so to you? I dou if this letter ever reaches you, or if it does, wheth you have not destroyed it before you have reach these maudlin ideas of an old man. . . . I w der has it ever entered into your conception things, the nature of a man who has been drugged by success? Could I, I wonder, — who all my life have worked, not studied — tell you in a few brief sentences something of the temptation of the average man in the world of finance to-day? You may have thought all these things over in the months past and you may see it from another standard. I do not doubt that the standard will be higher than that to which I have conformed my life. Has it ever occurred to you that a man's standard is in proportion to his development? It is one of the many thoughts given me by Stone. 'Growth,' he says — 'growth — *all growth* — always!' I asked him once what growth he found in the degenerate and the criminal. He said that in his years of work among men of all types and of all strata of society he had never met one that was not possessed of a ruling passion. It might be lust of flesh, or lust of gold, or jealousy of wife or child, or pure love without a stain. He called it the Center of Proportion. He claims it is the standard to which men conform their lives — the sinner as the saint; the ignoramus as the sage. Is it true, I wonder? Is it eternal growth because it is eternal experience? Do we unconsciously, by the law of balance, adjust our lives by it and judge the world and men by the measure of ourselves? If so, it shuts out competition as to standards — although we may never see it. . . . I have had long hours in which to think since you left me, and while there is much in Stone's philosophy that I cannot grasp — perhaps

would not grasp if I could, since we are utter
different types — yet he and his work interest
immensely. I am trying — on a very small sc
of course — some of his ideas as applied to
question of labor. The manager is a friend
Stone's, and while I do not give him the leew
in these matters that some radicals think I mig
he seems satisfied that they should be tested out
a small way. They could never become a part a
parcel of my life as they are a part and parcel
his life and Stone's, and so I leave it much to h
— within limits. . . . It is one of the many
tractions I have sought in your absence. Last
I took enough time to cross the ocean. Somewh
in Europe you were — the rest interested me lit
The hotels — except in London — were execra
and exorbitant; perhaps because my coming
heralded according to the abominable methods
the modern press. The food was not to my liki
the cabbies impertinent, and the little town n
Glasgow where I was born quite changed. Neit
am I up to European art. The museums are
some with their dried mummies and their coa
wooden, peasant-faced Madonnas and saints. O
long ago, the night that you were born, I saw in
face of your mother a divinity that was enough
me. She was my religion, although she had so f
and poor a worshiper, and I have judged by
She has been my Center of Proportion as far
women were concerned. No one ever came nea
that ideal but you. . . . I fancy I can see you s

with the scornful look upon your face that was on it that morning in the garden . . . yet, Blair, it is true — it is true! You will say that the money and the power has been, still is, my Center of Proportion, and in a measure you perhaps are right. It is only in silly novels, written by dreamers or young girls who know nothing of real life, where the traits of a lifetime are changed by the hero's words or a woman's smile; where the deep-dyed villain becomes suddenly the wishy-washy penitent, and where the man who has amassed a fortune by work that has become at once his passion and the real pleasure of his life — who has drunk deep of power, success and fame, — is willing to put the cup aside. The passion for power is an intoxicating thing — a disease if you will — and no one but the man who has controlled vast enterprises, thought out vast schemes for aggrandizement, wrestled with the chances of fate, and seen the balance waver, can know how the fascination of the game grips and becomes part and parcel of his life. Yet when one is growing old, and the darkness that no faith has ever come to break steals from the night of time, a man is something of a kid again. It was a woman's breast that sheltered him at first; it is a woman's heart he needs toward the close.

"I ask of you nothing that you do not care to give — I have no desire for you to think me other than I am, since I am what I am. This much at least I have learned from Truth; but if from your Center of Proportion you can see things as they are, judge them still by your high standard and yet remember that the standards of others are not (cannot of necessity be in their non-development) the standards of yourself, which is in proportion to your personal growth, I shall be glad, for it will mean that you will come home again."

The letter was signed by the well-known signature, that had lost nothing of its power, and was without one term of endearment except the Scotch word at the beginning.

She replaced it in its envelope, and the gesture was one of infinite longing and pity, and she laid it on the table by her side, staring down at it.

Then something white in her lap attracted her attention, and she slowly picked up the other letter that had come, and broke the seal. She had forgotten it. She smoothed out the sheets — there were only two and the message was brief. It was in Lamoré's hand. Like her father's it held but little appeal, but it stated facts, and when she had read it, so potent was the spell that it had wrought she forgot her father and all the world except that spot upon its surface — the Island of the Angels and the woman there.

She rose swiftly to her feet and went to Hannah's door and called her. Some note in her voice made the old woman, who was nodding in her chair, rise, wide awake, at once.

"The trunks, Hannah; let us get at the trunks!"

Hannah looked at her with hurt eyes.

"Where are we going now?" she asked, and her tone was a mixture of fatigue and patience.

Blair Martin smiled. For an instant she laid a hand upon the bent shoulders.

"You are to go back to Devonshire, you good old soul, after you have gotten me off for the Island."

Hannah regarded her with stern eyes.

"The Island! One would think it was your home, Miss Blair, the way you love the Island."

Blair Martin looked up from some business papers she had begun to sort on the table. She did not know that her hand touched her father's letter.

"You will wait for me in Devonshire, won't you?" she asked in the tone that Hannah never could resist. "When — when something that I have to do there is over I will join you, and then, Hannah, we will go home."

The old woman stared.

"You mean — " she said, and then broke off. She suddenly bethought herself of Brewster.

Blair Martin fastened together some business correspondence with an elastic band. For the first time she was judging life as it was, unconscious that in so judging she had by growth raised her Center of Proportion.

"I mean to the Anchorage," she said slowly. "I mean back to Ajax and all the old servants, and the garden and the mimosa tree. I mean home to my father."

XIV.

THE harvest of the vineyards had been gat
ered when Blair Martin returned to th
Island of the Angels. She was shocke
at the change in Cecile, and the first night of h
return she could not sleep for remembering i
She had come back in humbleness, as a little chi
returns home to acknowledge its mistake, a
Cecile had met her at her own level. If she h
feared repulse, remembering their last intervie
and the stinging reproach with which she had ca
the dust of the chateau from her, it vanished
the moment that she met Cecile's grave, questio
ing eyes. Indeed in those first days, in spite
failing bodily endurance, it seemed as thoug
there were times in which Cecile was the strong
of the two. If the shadow of an impending lo
lay upon Blair Martin's face, it was Cecile w
charmed her back to cheerfulness by her br
liant mind, by the keen wit and humor of h
tongue. Then there came a time — it was aft
Duport had made his second trip, the reasons f
which this time he took no trouble to conceal
that she awoke as from an evil dream and the
stirred in her the fighting blood of her fathe
Scottish clan. When that came she threw hers

with all the broadness of her nature into a self-appointed task. She sat beside Cecile's bed, the room in shadows that only the moonlight broke in long shafts of light, and hummed the slumber songs of the blacks of her mother's land. She read to her beneath the trees the songs of France in the beauty of originals, her perfect accent and her modulated voice making the listening a de[illegible] When Cecile grew restive from the weakn[illegible] she found harder to bear than physical pa[illegible] Blair Martin would slip away to the great mus[illegible] room and take from its case her violin, knowing that the sonatas of Beethoven or bars of Handel that she played could be heard upon the terraces, and would bring Cecile as surely as the magnet draws the steel. Cecile, on joining her, would sometimes open the great piano, and together they would play some well-known concerto; sometimes she — the Comtesse — played alone, and it was the American who listened, marveling at the strength in those frail hands that had of late found the embroidery needle heavy. She learned much from the French woman's interpretations of the masters, much of mental and spiritual benefit, from watching the swift changes on that expressive face. The Comtesse often played the Russian air now — repeating it over and over as a cloistered sister in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament in some dim chapel, tells over and over the beads that hang from her girdle. Schubert she never played.

So the days went on. Each afternoon after the

work was done — and for some reason Lamor
shortened the work now — the child Anthon
climbed the heights, and as by a tacit understand
ing between the American woman and the Frenc
priest, the Comtesse and the boy were always le
alone together. Lamoré, in his study in the valle
or before the sanctuary of St. Michael's on th
Rock, would then kneel and pray — perhaps loo
up to the great window above the altar where, lea
ing on his spear, the Archangel Warrior looke
down on him through marvelous tints of green an
red and blue and gold. The window held but tw
figures — the Archangel and a boy child in fro
holding aloft the helmet of the leader of the hea
enly hosts. The peasant — little Anthony Carrè
— had posed for it. Long, long Lamoré migl
kneel here, while the real little Anthony was wal
ing the winding garden paths with the last Con
tesse of the line, long he might kneel drinking i
the message of St. Michael's, at first too tired c
too anxious to find prayer coming readily to h
lips, until, soothed by its peace, his soul steeped i
it, he would emerge from the side entrance of S
Michael's, as likely as not to find the America
sitting waiting for him on the stone steps, gazin
out to sea. They saw each other much these day
as though a mutual interest and a mutual fea
bound them in some close tie. On such occasion
coming from the cool splendor of those Goth
arches, from the strange influences that dwelt ther
he would note a yearning in her eyes, as he locke

the door behind him, of which she was not aware. Nor was she aware how in those days he was weighing her heart and soul on the delicate scales of spiritual perception, but he never asked her to St. Michael's. Together they would descend the heights, as they had that day when she had first heard him play and seen the Dream Bridge built of the music, span the southern sky. Sometimes they walked in silence that neither felt it necessary to break. Sometimes they talked together, and their talk was mostly of Cecile. He never questioned her as to her sudden leaving or why she had returned, and it was she who one day abruptly brought the subject up.

"You have never asked me why I came back to the Island, Father," she said, as they crossed the clearing to the wooded slopes.

He smiled a little from his height at her.

"I never thought it necessary, Mademoiselle."

"You knew it was your letter sent to the Schynige-Plarre, that brought me?"

"Not entirely. I fancied you would have returned without the letter — perhaps not so soon — but returned certainly."

She sighed a little and looked off toward the sea before the woods closed the vision from her eyes.

"I fancy you are right. I was not altogether happy at the Schynige-Plarre. I had a strange fancy that the Island was calling me." She laughed in a half-ashamed way, but Lamoré did not even smile.

"The Island has a strange way of calling her own, Mademoiselle — or perhaps it is St. Michael's — I have felt the call whenever I have been in foreign lands," he said gravely.

"I do not know whether it was entirely the Island, Father. I think it was more Cecile and her need."

"Mademoiselle, your coming has brought happiness to the chateau, and our lady needs all of happiness that we can give her."

Blair Martin's mouth trembled a little.

"It has seemed to me of late that I could not give her happiness enough. I was very cruel in my sudden leaving — "

She broke off. It would have been a relief if he had questioned her, but he did not. His steady, even footfall on the pine needles and the rustling undergrowth near the trail alone broke the stillness of the clear, bright air.

"Why or how she hurt me has no part in this confession. It is enough that I thought she had wounded me so I never could forgive. My nature was too small to overlook the hurt — my pride too unyielding to condone. Of late, Father, it has seemed to me that the one unpardonable offense in the sight of the Most High must be the pride that warps our souls as metal is warped in the furnace heat."

"You forget, Mademoiselle, it is the furnace heat that shapes the metal into things of beauty and of power. We grow only by experience, Made moiselle. It was for experience that the Great Love first evolved the Eternal Scheme of Things, that man might pit his finite strength against its force and prove the latent divinity within him."

She flushed a little.

"It is because I would not have you think me better than I am that I told you."

"I have never thought you other than you are," Lamoré said aloud, meeting Blair Martin's eyes. To himself he said, "No wonder that he loves her."

He helped her in silence over a huge boulder that lay in their path.

"Sometimes in your strict honesty and self-accusations you remind me of my little Anthony," he said at length.

She laughed.

"Would that I had the child-heart of your little Anthony. He interests me strangely. I have dreamed strange dreams of him of late — what will his future be?"

"I know not, Mademoiselle. A child's nature is unformed, yet sometimes I have fancied he would carry on my work here in the years that lie ahead."

"I fancy Anthony in some dim way thinks that too, although I doubt if he has ever thought of his life without you or — his lady at the chateau."

She paused a moment before a rustic seat. "Let us rest a while. It is the child's time with Cecile. Sometimes it seems to me she could not love him more if in truth he were the little Count."

Lamoré played with a pine cone he had picked up at his feet. Suddenly his restive hands paused in their task and he looked at the American.

"Had you ever thought how different things would have been, Mademoiselle, if the little Coun had lived? Have you ever thought of the loneliness of the great chateau — after she is gone?"

Blair Martin nodded.

"Yet I suppose there is an end to all things — as stars fall and dynasties fail — the line some day would have become extinct. Cecile has told me that even without your church orders, neither you nor Cardinal Venusti are in the line of succession I fancy if the little Count had lived he would have been by now the counterpart of the little peasan boy, and — the little peasant boy says he is to be a priest. . . . Sometimes in my fancies I have seen him, just grown to be a man, walking the chateau gardens in the early morning, or perhaps when all is quiet toward evening, a breviary in his hands."

"There is an old legend of the Grandcœurs Mademoiselle, that says the curse shall end only when a Grandcœur can forgive; only when Grandcœur can forget — then and then only wi the strife of the centuries be replaced by peace And strangely enough, Mademoiselle, it is writte in the old records that are still in the chatea library, that the peace shall be bought some day a the hands of a little child."

She traced a pattern in the pine needles with th toe of her Oxford shoe.

"Since I left America, not so very long ago, I have sometimes felt that I was living in a book."

He smiled.

"We are very real," he answered, "all of us — our Island and our peasants and our little Anthony and — our lady."

"Your Island and your little Anthony and your lady," she repeated musingly, staring into the shadows of the woods, "they are all dear," her voice was tenderer than he had ever heard it. "When I return to America I shall remember it all. When my task here is ended I am going home, you know."

"I did not know, but I am glad, Mademoiselle."

"There is work there to do — work that in my despair and unbelief I laid aside; there are wounds to heal and burdens to lift and little children to rescue. It may be that I can help, but even millions, Father, seem so small."

"It is not the millions, Mademoiselle, that lift the burdens of the world. Millions may endow an university, but it is the men who teach there and who in teaching give themselves, who really serve. The universities will crumble, the endowed libraries will burn, and the memory of the men whose millions built them will be as nothing. It is the influence of the books written there — the lessons taught the people — that will remain, and be poured into the great reservoir of mental and spiritual force for the uplifting of the world. So will our monuments endure after the marble has been broken and the wood decayed. It is the only

earthly immortality worth striving for — wh
Time will leave us. How frail — how great
man!"

She looked in silence on him, at his face light
as from an inward fire, and she was strange
moved.

"I shall remember what you say," she answere
"always."

"Always, Mademoiselle, will my blessing follo
you and your work, when you go from us after t
task you speak of is ended. May I, because I a
your friend, ask you what it is?"

Slowly she turned her face to him.

"It is Hector and Cecile — that I may bri
them together before I go," she answered.

. . . .

It wanted some two hours of sunset when L
moré parted from her at the wicket gate. T
chateau garden was deserted and there were n
even on the terraces any sign of the Comtesse a
the child. At the big entrance to the house a ma
met her.

"The Comtesse requests that Mademoiselle w
join her by the big window on the north landing

Clair Martin mounted the stairs at once a
turned down the winding passage that led to whe
Cecile awaited her. She had not stopped to que
tion or to wonder. She found the Comtesse s
ting on the window-seat of the north stairway, a
that commanded a wonderful view of land and se
She made a lonely, lovely picture with the bac

ground of mediæval grandeur, a basket of keys at her side. She turned and smiled as the American came near, and Blair Martin was struck anew with the nobility of face and bearing.

"Where have you been, mon amie? I have waited, oh — some time! I let Anthony go early — I cannot permit myself to see as much of him as I would wish. I have not held him near me since Duport's last visit here." She looked up at the American, a veiled sadness in her eyes. "Ah, well — how is it you say in your great America, 'it is all in the day's work?' I am stronger today, and I wanted to go through the house again — as its chatelaine. I thought you might like to go too."

She rose from the window-seat and for a little while stood there looking out across the great stone buildings of the chateau down the steep heights to the valleys. Thoughtfully, she let her gaze linger on each familiar thing. She spoke musingly.

"There, the great gateway through which a king of France rode, and there, the courtyard where René, the Crusade Count, drilled his men, and there, where the gardens make a loop, the house used for years by the private confessors of the Grandcœurs — how they needed them! The Cardinal in Rome — he was the last who lived there in my mother's time, before the Church honored him: voilà, the house has been closed since, Mademoiselle — Father Lamoré being all I need." She smiled a little. "The old chapel under the chateau roof burned and never rebuilt, and for the first time in centuries no chaplain for the house! The Count Ren would declare we were turning heathen." Sh began to walk slowly down the long corridor, stil smiling a little.

The American helped her up some winding stairs

"The Count René never dreamed of a St Michael's."

"True, mon amie. You have been inside St Michael's?"

"No," said the American gently as she helpe the Comtesse up the last stair.

"Ah!"

In silence the American followed the Comtesse She wondered why the slight figure ahead did no lose her way, so many were the passages, so numerous were the turnings, so vast the suites she led he through; but the Comtesse never paused excep to show her guest rare tapestry or ornament o artistic or historical value with which the chatea was filled.

"It is priceless," said the American as the Comtesse took from its scabbard a jewel-hilted swor that hung on the wall of the bedroom once occupie by the great Louis, and which he had left as a gif to the Grandcœurs. "How have you kept th treasures hidden for so long? They would fill museum — bring almost fabulous prices."

"Strange as it seems, Mademoiselle, there hav never been admitted beyond the salons of the chateau men and women of the type you mentio

It is an unwritten code. We have kept our gifts as we have kept our sorrows, much hidden from the world." The Comtesse replaced the sword in its scabbard with a sure, quick thrust and rehung it on the wall.

From room to room they wandered, and it seemed to the American that neither the rooms nor the wonders of the chateau would ever be exhausted. The chatelaine, upheld by a sudden strength, seemed conscious of no fatigue, but Blair Martin noticed, as they left each treasure-filled, memory-haunted room, the chatelaine lingered and gave one swift, solemn glance around, before she locked each door.

The glow of sunset had faded from the sky when they mounted the turret steps and half-way up in a little recess paused before an oaken chest.

With deft fingers Cecile chose the key from her long chain and lifted the lid. Blair Martin watched her as she knelt by the chest, herself seated on one of the steps of the winding stair. She wondered what new marvel was coming next. Her mind was crowded with thoughts of the journey they had made through all the chateau splendor; the great suite hung in crimson for the cardinals of the house; the state chambers once occupied by a king of France, the rooms where the Comtesse Clarisse had lived and died — where Cecile had been born — the nurseries, with the silent, unused toys as the little Count had left them years ago, and touched by the light of sunset.

"Ma chère," it was the voice of the little Count's mother that broke upon her revery, "behold!"

Blair Martin looked up. Before her stood the Comtesse, almost wholly hidden by a huge squar banner, whereon was embroidered the Grandcœurs arms; gold fringe bordered it, and it swept th floor around the feet of the American like a rob of state.

"What is it?" she asked softly.

"It is the last great treasure of the house— centuries old. It is the Great Banner that flies fron the turret when the heir of the chateau dies. Se the wonder of the silk and the embroidery and th brightness of the gold thread that has almost outlived the race and line."

The Comtesse touched the thing of silk as on might touch a child. Blair Martin neither spok again nor moved.

She watched Cecile refold it and she forgot t offer help at the task. The Comtesse replaced i in the chest and knelt regarding it.

"New," she said, "new, in the time of René,' and it was as though she were speaking to herself "Once more it shall fly from the high turret. . . .'

Blair Martin rose swiftly and knelt beside he and threw her arms around her. The arms hel the frail being to her with a sudden strength.

"Hush! Hush! My dear," she whispere sharply. "The Great Banner shall sleep withi its chest for years."

The Comtesse looked long into the face nea her own and saw it stricken with emotion. Then she kissed Blair Martin's hair.

"What matter it, mon amie?" she said, a strange yearning in her voice. "The Banner shall know at last a happier fate. For years it has flown as the sign and symbol of violence and of woe — it shall fly once to signify rest for the line, and love, since at last a de Grandcœur has gained — a friend."

Then she rose and closed the lid of the oaken chest and locked it for the last time.

XV.

IT was Blair Martin who a fortnight later met Lamoré at the entrance of the chateau. Her eyes, like somber pools in shaded woods, reflected shadows deep and still.

"I am glad that you have come. She has been watching for you."

"She — my child — has needed me?"

Blair Martin shook her head.

"She wants you. She seems to have something to talk to you about. She doubtless needs you more than any one else — except perhaps Hector Stone," the voice took on no change. "He is coming. I wrote to him last night from her. But need? I do not think she needs any of us very much. She is very quiet. She seems — content. Perhaps it is weakness or —" the voice that had not changed at the mention of Hector Stone's name trembled now, "or — oh, Father, she talks about the little Anthony — she talks about the child she lost —" Blair Martin's eyes were turned to him with tears of which she was unashamed.

He did not speak, and bowed his head in silence, and in silence he left her and crossed the great hall hung with its old tapestries, flanked by its armor of gone and dead de Grandcœurs. "The last of her race and line," he thought. "A great race in spite of the blot and sin on its escutcheon, and she — the daughter of Clarisse — the last of all!"

He was out on the back terrace now, where habit and instinct told him he would find her. His footfalls made no echo on the perfect greenness of that well-kept spot, and for a moment he stood regarding her, himself unseen.

She was sitting in a large, low wicker chair, some fine white sewing lying in her lap, where in weariness she had laid it down. Her pale gown of pink shone out like a bit of sunrise against the verdure of the big trees. Her work-bag, a fragile thing of lavender beauty, lay on the grass beside her chair. As though becoming conscious of a presence, she turned her head in his direction, but without haste and without surprise.

"You were bad — very bad — not to announce yourself. Did you not know that that ridiculous little Keller, and even the great Duport, said I was not to be suddenly alarmed?"

She leaned forward and held out her hand eagerly.

He crossed the terrace with an answering smile.

"The same Cecile who, ever since she could but half pronounce my name, has teased and abused me. Nay, do not draw down your mouth so or look so grave. Cannot two play at the little game? And besides, Madame, surely it is the privilege of your sex — for you especially, for are you not the Chatelaine of the Island of the Angels — does not all this beauty and this peace, and the respect and the devotion of our hearts belong to you? '

The smile of welcome faded into one of wistfulness.

" How well you say what gives pleasure and — help," she said in a low voice. " Yet in these last months I have thought, dearer than the beauty of the Island of the Angels, sweeter than its peace, more to be prized than the devotion, is the respect of which you speak. I have strange thoughts, here in the sunshine of these gardens overlooking the sea and the vineyards and the homes of my people far below — strange thoughts as I look toward St. Michael's — and somehow I fancy that all lives have to be built on that — respect of others, respect of self — as we built St. Michael's on the Rock."

He sat down in a garden chair near her, leaned his elbow on the arm, his chin in his hand. He was conscious that his presence was a relief — as great a relief as was the silence of her heart that she was at last breaking. How often had the great heart of humanity, crushed, bruised, sin-stained, been laid near his own for healing. And she — was she not Cecile?

" It is about St. Michael's that I want to talk to-day — St. Michael's and other things. I do not talk much now — it tires me — and there are so many things to think of, Father; some of them are beautiful things — like the face of a little child — or a peasant's gift of flowers — and then there are other things that hurt — " she made a swift movement of pain — "does it not seem strange that anything could hurt one in all this beauty and this sunshine?"

He followed her gaze. Far out on the waters the white sails of the fishing-boats were shining and swinging idly in the warmth of the late afternoon. A delicious languor enveloped all things. A pale slender moon hung like a curve of light in the changing heavens and shone out behind the gold cross on the steeple of St. Michael's. One low, sweet bird-call echoed in the air.

"Can you not think, my child, that the Hand that wrought this splendor — that gave the gift to you — can heal all hurts?" he questioned.

She leaned forward suddenly, her elbows on the low arm of her chair, her hands clasped tightly. How white they were, he thought, against the color of her dress.

"Yes — yes — but a broken law — laws of health — of honor — and of truth!" Her voice sank to a whisper.

"If a child consciously puts his hand in the flame, does he not know he will be burned? If he does not learn the lesson in an easier way he will be forced to by that experience. But is the healing withheld? Men of science will call it the recuperating power of youth, of nature. I. call it God. It does not really matter. Are not youth and nature but a part of the Great Force?"

"Yes — yes — but when the hurt — the broken laws — touch other lives?"

"There is nothing in this world — in any world of space — my child, beyond the touch of the Compassionate Ones, beyond the ken of the Vast Omniscience. From chaos is brought order — from disorder, harmony; on the wrecks of civilizations and empires are reared others — each with their own beauties, their lessons of experience, their records of immortal truths — of mortal sins. From the revolutions — civic and religious — are wrought the involutions of progression and of peace — " He paused for a moment and for a moment it seemed to Cecile he had forgotten her. Then his eyes came back to her face.

"My child," he said, "as it is with worlds it is with men. All things work together for good. The Eternal Good of all would have us know that. Did it ever occur to you the wonder of a flower's progression toward the light and sun — the hidden darkness — the struggle to take root? Some one once said we are in the School of the Infinite, and the Teacher's lessons are according to the measure of our understanding. There are some souls in the great School that have never learned the lesson of pity. They learn it some day when they go to America and watch much of its vast commerce upheld by the feeble labor of dying children. Blair Martin has seen the children. She has watched others learn the lesson, and gone up to a higher class. There are others who have failed in knowing justice. Hector has told you of them. And so it is with all things — truth and honor and true love — they are all branches in the School. And we can never learn a lesson that we do not need. If you have hurt another, that other needs that lesson as much as you, although the results on each will be different. It is the Law of Cause, the Law of Effect — the one Eternal Law of Justice and of Tenderest Love. There are many ways of looking at it — it goes by many names. In India men call it Karma; in Arabia, Kismet; in Europe, men of science, Natural Law, and I — I — " he broke off. The light of the coming sunset was upon his face. "I, here, in your Island of the Angels — again — I call it God."

He leaned forward in his chair and raised his face toward the glowing sky. By and by shadows appeared and were reflected on the grass and through the trees — faint shadows, the first entry by Night into her book of Time. A hundred bird voices broke the stillness with their evening song.

"Cecile — all scholars in the same great School, in different grades. And, my Little One, all of one family — all of us — everywhere, who at night return to the Heart of the One Father."

He stopped, and Cecile leaned back in her chair white and still. The pale oval of her face showed out against the trees. For a minute she rested so, as though gathering strength; then she leaned forward and looked him in the face. Years ago, as a youth in the Soudan, he had seen a man look so as he went into action.

"Toward the end, Father, I fancy we see all things clearly — like this sunset lighting up this day before it goes to rest. Toward — the — end!"

He did not answer, knowing that his time for speech was past. He waited.

"Toward the end, all things are made plain — all the wrongs and sufferings — all the loves. It has only been the hurt to others that has remained, and that, too, is passing since your words," she smiled.

"It is of the hurt to others that I want to speak," she corrected herself hastily, "that I *must* speak. I have been months coming to it, Father. Yet of late truth has seemed to be more prized than your regard. Have you ever thought all that your regard has been — has meant in my darkened life?"

He looked at her with eyes of tenderest affection and he leaned over and took her hand and held it in a strong, firm grasp. The pressure helped her.

"Cecile," he said, "my Little One."

"There is more light now than darkness," she said, "indeed more light than I have ever known except when I was a very little child, and one other time, Father, — can you guess when?"

"When Hector Stone came into your life," he said.

"Yes; but even that was not all joy — except that first wild dream of happiness when I forgot — forgot what I remembered afterwards — the shadow of the curse."

She was silent a moment, and Pierre Lamoré did not urge her by question or by look. He stroked the hand he held as he had once stroked a wounded yearling he had found amidst the crags.

"I knew of it, like many of my people before me. I can offer no excuse. I do not want to offer any. When one is near the end — or is it the beginning — " she broke off again. She was tired but she must go on.

"I was told after the first flush of girlhood. My uncle, my only living relative, hinted at it — before he died of madness, — but he left the full truth to you. You remember, Father?"

Did he remember!

He bowed his head in assent.

"After all you were in truth the only father that I ever knew. My uncle tried to be kind — but he really never understood me, and — and, Father — Hector never understood me fully, either."

Pierre Lamoré continued to stroke the hand, and his own trembled. He was acutely conscious of the pain caused him by the quiet voice — by that broken cry.

"Even in those days his thoughts, his aims, his ambitions were different from my own. I dimly felt it even then, but I did not care. I only knew I loved him. . . . Sometimes when sitting here I have looked down to the valley and seen the vineyards lying warm and still, and I have watched a lark soar upwards, leaving it behind. The valley could not hold it, longing for the light and for the upper air. And I have thought that it was a symbol of our lives — of Hector Stone's and mine. The valley needed nothing more, but the lark — who could blame the lark, pulsing, soaring toward the light!"

She stopped and seemed to have forgotten him in revery. Her eyes came back to Pierre Lamoré's face as he begun to speak.

"Cecile, neither can one blame the valley. It yielded beauty, fruitfulness and peace, even if the crops sometimes — failed, my child. It has been said that we need the brooding stillness of the hills as well as the restlessness of the great ocean. The two together should form the completed picture — a man's ambitions should be balanced by a woman's calm, and the two should make but harmony — a perfect whole. It was not that, Cecile, that wrought havoc in your lives. There were some essentials lacking."

"How well you have understood and read our lives, yet, Father, you have not read — all."

She leaned forward in her chair again, and the work that had been lying idle in her lap slipped to the ground, unnoticed by them both. It lay there a spot of clearest white in the deepening shadows of the trees.

The eyes of Pierre Lamoré were fixed on her, half yearningly, half commandingly. He shaded them lest she should notice his emotion, but her own saw nothing. They were cast down.

"That is true," she said, and her quiet voice took on a new odd strength, "the essentials were lacking. Hector never loved me as — he might — as

Hector Stone *can* love. And I — I — loved him far too well. I loved him better than I loved truth or honor. I allowed him to marry me — not knowing."

She flung her arms across the arm of her chair, and pressed her face against them with a terrible cry.

"I have always known it."

She raised a white, strained face to his.

"You — have — known — always? How?"

"Hector never told. He is far too great a soul for that. But there was much that did tell me — principally yourself. Did you dream, Cecile," his voice was full of deepest tenderness, "that I, who have known you all your life, could be deceived? Did you not go and meet Hector Stone in Marseilles and marry there, knowing I would have forbidden the sin of deceit although it broke your heart? Better broken hearts than broken honor or — blighted children's lives!" Pierre Lamoré looked toward St. Michael's, and unseen by her, his face changed swiftly. For one brief instant he saw the chateau gardens as he had known them as a boy, walking there with Clarisse. . . .

She was leaning back in her chair now, the tense emotion passed. "I — might — have — known — you — always — knew," she murmured.

"And you were afraid to trust me," said Pierre Lamoré. "For years you have eaten out your heart without laying your secret before me. For years I have waited for this hour."

"Why?" she said. "Why did you not let me know — you knew?"

"No man — no one — not even the Most High," said Pierre Lamoré reverently, "has the right to tear aside the covering from a sacred wound, until the stricken heart brings it for healing and for help."

"Do you know all the rest, too, Father? How when — before the child came, I — I was threatened with the shadow of my people's sin, and how in terror I confessed to Hector? Ah, you may have guessed at it, but you never saw the look of loathing and contempt I read for an instant on his face. I saw it, and the horror of it caused the shadow to mercifully blot out all for a little while — and when a month later I awoke to clear reason again — I awoke to the knowledge that he was still with me, nursing me and surrounding me with the tenderest care, but the look — I never forgot." She paused a moment and looked down at her hands in her lap. Her voice, that had been speaking rapidly, became slower and more calm.

"He never knew the hours I watched his every tone and look, nor the hours when I listened to him talking in his sleep. Once in his sleep he cursed the child and — me.

"I used to pray that the child would be born dead — or if living, die the first day of its life, and while he never said it — while he gave me all that wealth and care could give, I knew, in his saner, waking moments, he prayed so too. . . . You remember I came back here, and by and by the boy was born, and he lived. I used to watch him day by day, searching for the faintest shade of the shadow on his face. Ah! do you know what the watching for that shadow meant! And as I grew stronger, I grew to need him — as I had never needed in my life before, and I prayed that he might live. Was it selfish, Father?"

He did not answer and she did not seem to expect him to do so.

"And as time went on and he saw how much the child had grown to be to me, Hector left us more and more alone together, and I think it was a relief to him. It was about this time that he began planning for his great work in America, but I used to see him sometimes watching the child, and I knew his brightness and his health reassured him. His work took much of his time — his attention — I made my headquarters in Italy that I might be nearer him in his comings and his goings — but he never by a look or word neglected me — you understand that?"

"It would not have been Hector Stone if he had," said Pierre Lamoré quickly.

Cecile smiled a little.

"*Good* Father — always so to understand!"

There was a long silence.

"Then he made his two months' trip to America and I came here — "

The sunset changed from deepest rose to gold. One by one the birds were going to their rest.

"And then the baby died. . . . I have grown to be thankful, Father, for that, too."

From gold the sunset melted into silver — into gray. A faint breeze from the sea stirred the branches of the trees.

"Then, the long night of horror settled down again — those years in Montreal — seven years, Father. Seven years!"

After a while she went on.

"When I awoke — I awoke to a horror more terrible still — to the knowledge that I had only found Hector again to lose him. I came home then to St. Michael's and to you."

"And in all these months, Cecile — in all this time — you have sought neither my poor help nor the greater help of the Sanctuary."

"I went to St. Michael's once," she said in a low voice, "alone — last Christmas Day. And I unlocked the door with the key that you sent to Hector's care when the chapel was finished. He brought it to me — to Montreal — and I dimly remember his putting it on a gold chain around my neck and bidding the Mother Superior to let it stay there. It was one of the few things I brought with me on my return."

"Did you not find peace and comfort there?" Lamoré asked. A strange smile was on his face.

She covered her face impulsively with her hands.

"I could not bear it, Father. It was the first time I had ever been inside and yet I could not bear it. I did not even see clearly the window to the child — over the high altar. I only saw the golden cross upon the Sanctuary door. . . . I came away."

The strange smile faded from Pierre Lamoré's face.

"I understand, so much better than you dream. . . . Next week, my child, is the feast of the great Michael — will you come again, Cecile, and listen to the Mass, and take with me the Eucharist Bread?"

Her mouth quivered a little.

"It is years since I have eaten of the Food," she said.

"I know."

"My sins — and they are many — a man's wrecked happiness, another woman's heart, my honor — and my truth — when I come to you again, will you absolve me?"

Pierre Lamoré's face was grave.

"My child, there is no shipwreck possible for a life like Hector Stone's — no real blow for a soul like Blair Martin's. And the child — have you ever thought, Cecile, all that those few brief years meant, the lesson that they brought — the glory that they left?" He raised his eyes and looked toward St. Michael's. One lingering cloud of gold and gray rested in the heavens behind the cross. As they watched, the beacon light was lit, and hung there high up on the cliff to guide the fishers on the sea.

"Your own mistakes — your sins perhaps — have been your own to bring to God. While it is

His law that we must bear the consequences of our acts, has He ever withheld His mercy or His love? Cecile, did you ever, while he himself bore the pain of his own small hurts, cease to console your child?"

She shook her head.

"So are our sins in the eyes of the Most High. All mistakes — all sins — are to be counted gain that brings a soul to the consciousness of God."

She rose from her chair and began to walk up and down slowly on the terrace. With a quick deference he followed her example.

"Sit down, Father, — there, do not cross me to-night. Are you not double my age — are you not tired with a long day of service among our people? Let me walk here a little — I who have nothing to do now, yet who grow so tired. Sometimes I am restless with sitting still so long. There is something else I have to tell you, but it is growing late. Can you spare me the time?"

"I am at your service always."

"I am sure of that, and after all the nights are mild — mild as only the nights in southern France can be," she smiled a little wistfully. For a while she was silent, and once as he watched her in her slow walk he saw her press her right hand to her breast in agitation.

"Speak, Cecile."

The words were fraught with infinite pity, yet they came to her as a command.

She turned on him abruptly.

"I will," she said, and the indecision and agitation fell from her like a cloak. "It is about Blair Martin."

Lamoré's eyes did not leave her face.

"Yes?" he said.

"I knew her from the first — from that first meeting in the chateau garden — as the woman who had come into Hector's life and mine. Do you want to know how? I am not sure if it was wholly instinct or if I partly guessed from the French extract that she always uses. It is very [illegible] — and once smelt never forgotten. The white glove I found near Hector's trunk was permeated with it."

"Yes," said Lamoré again.

"Well — Father, it was the old, old story of the Grandcœurs. At first she interested me. Then — it seemed to me that I could kill her —" the Comtesse broke off.

Lamoré waited.

"But we do not kill in these days as in the time of the old Count of the Crusades. I am not exactly sure why I asked you to bring her here — perhaps to study her at leisure; perhaps later little by little, with maddening cruelty, to tell her who I was. I do not think I ever meant her physical harm of any kind — that is so crude a torture. But I meant to hurt her — soul and heart — I meant to watch her writhe —"

She stopped in her walk and stood quite still in front of Lamoré, and there was nothing in her voice or in her manner that asked for the quarter of his mercy. Now — as it would be until the end — the sign and the seal of the Grandcœurs was on her.

"Why did you hesitate?" Lamoré asked after a while.

The Comtesse's eyes, dark and wistful, met his own.

"Because of a little peasant boy," she answered, and Lamoré did not ask to know more.

The Comtesse seated herself again in her garden chair and leaned forward, looking up into Lamoré's face.

"Then — because of that little child — I later grew to love her and to need her in my life. But I could not live the treachery or give her the lie — we may be sin-stained, cursed, but we are not all bad — I wanted the friendship to be built on honor and on truth, so I took my chances and — failed! The night Hector came and I sent him away, I told her. She did not speak until I had quite finished and then — as years ago Hector had looked at me in loathing — she looked, too. She said but little. The next morning she left for the Schynige-Plarre."

"She forgave you long ago — as long ago Hector forgave."

"There is little more to tell you except that Hector is coming back. It was my fancy that Blair Martin should write the letter to him from me, since writing tires me so and because it was through her

I found my need for him again." The Comtesse played with the soft silk fringe that trimmed her dress. She smiled a little. It seemed to Lamoré that her manner and her voice was more buoyant than he could remember it in years. She had asked no comment from him and he never dreamed of making any. After a while she spoke again.

"Then about St. Michael's. I have a favor to ask you for St. Michael's."

"St. Michael's — like the Island and the chateau — is yours, Cecile."

"Have you ever thought," she said at last, "what will become of the Island of the Angels — of the chateau — of the little village church — of St. Michael's — after I am gone?"

"I have sometimes thought but I have never found the answer. Perhaps they will pass to Hector Stone?"

She shook her head.

"Hector does not need the Island, neither does he love it as I do. His remembrances of the place are mostly very sad. His work calls him to his own country — to America."

For an instant Blair Martin's face came before Lamoré. As though divining his thoughts she looked up quickly.

"Blair Martin does not need the Island of the Angels — " she hesitated a brief moment — "any more than Hector does."

"Who then, Cecile?"

She leaned forward and stretched out her hand until it rested on the arm of his chair. In the growing darkness her face showed white and smiling.

"Who needs it more than — you?"

He started, a troubled surprise on his face.

"You cannot mean it, child, — you —" he broke off suddenly.

"I am quite myself, Father."

The simple dignity of the words touched him strangely.

"Cecile — you must know that when I took orders I retained nothing for myself — that I never can hold possessions. I gave over my Russian inheritance to my younger sister Servia, for her son. What should I do with the Island of the Angels?"

"Keep it in trust — as you have in reality done all these years — for all that come after, and in memory of the last of the race and line — in memory of the child."

"I do not understand." The lips of Pierre Lamoré were hard and dry. He spoke with difficulty.

"Then I must make it plain. It is all in the will that the lawyer made last week. When — it is over — he will come here from Marseilles. I have left the Island and all that it contains or yields to you, with a few exceptions. The suggestions on a written memorandum, to be handed you, are suggestions only. You may have a better plan — see wider needs."

She broke off again, and he waited in a tense silence for her to resume.

"I have directed that a certain sum be laid aside in case Blair Martin ever marries — for her eldest child — to be given it on its wedding day, as a gift from me." The voice was low and even. "Then there are legacies — one for the Hôtel des Invalides at Montreal; one for Fauchet; another for the education of the boy Anthony and for all the old servants — enough to keep them in simple comfort for life."

She broke off an instant and looked around the chateau garden, up to the beautiful home itself — then across to St. Michael's, looming white and still against the late twilight sky.

"Once at Christmas you are to take the village children — all the children — there, and say a Mass for the child. And again at Easter, the children are to go there with you and say a Mass — for me. For the rest of the year St. Michael's is to be a place apart, and in the future, as it has been in the past, only those you or the Great Cardinal wish to take there are to enter — except the children. It must be always open to the children. Your successor is to be named by — you. Sometimes I have fancied that it will be the boy Anthony, with his strange likeness to my own. And your successor is to name his successor, and so on down the years, while the Island of the Angels and St. Michael's stand. . . . Then there is the chateau, the home of my people — my poor people — I have left that to you to do with as you will. In case you are troubled — I would not have you troubled — I have left a suggestion in regard to it. I have thought that instead of being the home of one boy, it might be made into the home for many boys. You and the Cardinal, with his great heart yearning over the needs of humanity, would know where to find them. You would see that they have the freedom of the garden — the benefits that true beauty and true culture gives. You would see that, without thought of faith or creed, there were only gathered here, the most homeless, the most forsaken, of the Master's little ones."

Pierre Lamoré suddenly rose to his feet. He stretched his arms upwards and turned his face to the stars.

"Lord — Lord — what have I done for *this!*"

. . . .

An hour later he turned to go. He took Cecile's hand in his.

"It is well, my child?"

Through the increasing darkness he could see her smile.

"Father — it is well."

XVI.

A MONTH later Fauchet's new tug stopped at the Island wharf and deposited one passenger, and Continental trunks that showed signs of much travel.

Blair Martin, standing amidst her own baggage, saw him descend the gangway, for a moment herself unseen. She noticed how grave and troubled was his face, how slow his walk since those far off settlement days — since the night by the mimosa. Had they really existed after all, she wondered. Had all the work together, all the suffering they had seen and shared, all those moments of that summer night, come to this — a formal meeting on a little wharf far off in France? She began to tremble and the smile that came into her face when she saw him raise his head and look in her direction, was forced and different from any he had ever seen upon her face before.

He came forward with hand outstretched.

"You must have been hidden behind all the trunks," he said, "or just arrived. I searched the wharf on our approach to see — if any one was here."

"I was a little late," she admitted, "there were many last things to see to — to tell the good Sister that arrived this morning, to help you with the nursing. Father Lamoré planned to meet you, but I suppose some sudden need for him arose. He is always busy doing good."

"I sent him a cable from California two weeks ago; another from Marseilles — there was a delay in your letter. Blair — I came at once."

"I knew you would," she said.

"Cecile?"

Blair Martin hesitated.

"A little stronger perhaps. She has seemed to gain a little lately. I left her asleep. She was very tired. All night she sat by the window watching for the tug."

"I am only an hour late. I was not due until one this afternoon."

"I know. But your cables were delayed in coming from the mainland, by bad weather. They only arrived last night, and Father Lamoré brought them up at once and told her. I think up to then she was not certain if you would come or not. After that she could not sleep. You will tell her when you see her that I left a note with the nurse — that I did not want to waken her to say good-bye?"

"Good-bye! You are going to leave Cecile?" he said suddenly. "These trunks are yours?"

"Mine, and one I brought for Hannah — good Hannah. I shall be glad to see her again. She is to join me — later."

"Where are you going, Blair — and why?"

She met his eyes quite steadily.

"I have left my address at the Rectory. If Cecile needs and wants me, Father Lamoré will send me word. Cecile will not need or want me now." She smiled.

The autumn sun poured down upon them warm and bright. Two of the chateau servants had stowed her luggage safely on board and were looking questioningly from the pilot to Blair Martin, as though uncertain what to do. The tug — the pride of Fauchet's heart and a gift from the Comtesse — rocked at her moorings. Fauchet lighted a pipe and lazily watched them from the window of his diminutive pilot house. Did they not seem glad to see each other in spite of their grave faces? Did they not both love the Comtesse — as did everybody? Were they not both loved by her? Well, one could wait their pleasure for her sake and think of the sweetheart far away in Avignon.

"I fancy the Sister that is to 'help' me will not know Cecile's ways like you. You have grown to be so much to her. I could tell it from the letter."

"Sister Marie Sebastian will soon grow to know her ways. She is a Bonne Secours — trained to her work. I forgot to tell her, though, about the heated milk at night. Cecile always has a glass at midnight if she cannot sleep. Will you see that the nurse remembers?"

"I will not trouble Sister Marie Sebastian about the milk. Sometimes I may need her help, but I have come myself to nurse Cecile," said Stone, looking straight into Blair Martin's eyes.

Blair Martin's face quivered a little in the sunlight.

"I knew you would," she said again, but softly, "I could not expect less from the man I — " she broke off, a slow flush mounting to her face, and she looked out to sea, "the man I — know so well," she said.

The slow flush faded, leaving her face whiter than before.

"I have never expected anything of you — I have not found," he said in answer.

She lowered her face quickly that he might not see it — folded her hands closely together that he might not note their trembling.

"I have tried to do right — oh, Hector, I *have* tried. But the way has not been always easy — " she broke off.

"Yes, Blair?"

"But of late — since I have returned to the Island of the Angels, to Cecile, I have learned much, and the way has seemed less hard. I owe Father Lamoré a debt for many things — and not the least the knowing of Cecile."

"She has taught me, too," said Stone. "Sometimes I fancy we have all taught each other, Blair. I have come to help her die — or live."

She nodded. She could not speak.

Fauchet, noting the time, and remembering the sailing hour from Grenette, blew the whistle softly.

"There! I must be going now. See, I have kept Fauchet waiting. My baggage must have been on board ten minutes." She stretched out her hand. "Good-bye," she said.

He helped her up the gangway and watched the little tug slowly move off from its moorings and slip out into the sunlit waters. From the deck Blair Martin waved her scarf at him. He was all she saw — or all she thought of — as she left the Island of the Angels.

Then distance came and a soft mist fell, and slowly Stone turned to climb the chateau hill.

XVII.

AT a sharp turn in the steep ascent he came suddenly on the rectory chaise and Nanette contentedly nibbling at the wayside grass. Pierre Lamoré sat on a bit of rock near by, thoughtfully looking out to sea.

"So this is the way you meet me?" said Stone with a slow smile.

Pierre Lamoré started up guiltily.

"My dear boy — I — "

"There, there, Father. I fancy I understand. It was like you."

"Neither you nor Blair Martin needed me, Hector, just now." Pierre Lamoré spoke with the simple directness of a child — the momentary confusion past.

Stone did not answer and looked down at the little mound of dirt he was making with the toe of his shoe.

"I am not sure, Father," he said in a low voice, "perhaps you know us better than we know ourselves."

"I know you all quite well," said Pierre Lamoré. "It is part of my profession, Hector — to know people — to help them when I can. But there is a largeness of some souls where overwatchfulness is an impertinence and — an insult. And now, since I have waited patiently and so long — and dismissed the chateau car sent down for you — will you not let me drive you up the hill?"

"Thanks; I see the old chaise is as comfortable as ever. What, the spring has at last been fixed? That *is* good news. Has Nanette acquired more speed with added fat?"

"You will hurt Nanette's feelings talking so," said Pierre Lamoré, his big laugh echoing through the rocks and trees, and he began to gather the reins together and undo the tangle Nanette had caused grazing, while he sat by unheeding. In silence Stone watched him from the chaise, too absorbed in thought to offer to help him at his task. He could not, in all his long years of studying men, remember seeing such a head as Pierre Lamoré's or such a face before. Its charm, its strength, was as intangible as its owner's personality and voice.

His musings were abruptly terminated as Pierre Lamoré completed his task and with a sigh of satisfaction settled himself comfortably beside Hector on the front seat and started Nanette slowly on her long climb.

"This is better than walking, is it not?" he said cheerfully, "except perhaps for Nanette."

"It is easier certainly — if no faster," said Stone with a laugh. "Nanette looks as though she could stand the pace. She looks neither overworked nor underfed. I wish I might show her to some people I know in America. We are a great country, Father, but we forget many of the simple humanities of life because of misdirected eagerness and haste."

Pierre Lamoré let him talk on — knowing that the topics of his work, his voyage, was helping him to recover from that meeting with [illegible] and to prepare him for the one ahead.

Slowly, with drooping head — she never knew check — Nanette pulled her burden up the cha[illegible] hill, and her master with slackened reins [illegible] straight between her ears to the winding road [illegible]ing out before them, as a tangled ball of worsted undoes itself at last, listening —

The warm afternoon sun lay in patches across the road and from the shadows of the woods to the right came the stir and chirping of the birds. To the left, through the trees and far below them as they ascended, lay the shining sea and [illegible] away off, as far as human vision could distinguish the outline of the Pyrenees.

The soft lights and the brooding [illegible] of nature after a while penetrated the wall [illegible] that Stone had built around himself that he might put off thinking for a little while. He spoke less often — his voice was [illegible] lapsed into silence altogether. [illegible] waited for him to break the silence as he had waited for [illegible] to fall, knowing that by and by the [illegible] and brain would assert itself and the balance would hang true.

"I think I never knew before how beautiful the Island is," said Stone, at last, very slowly.

The gaze of Pierre Lamoré went from the shaded woods, across the sunlit winding road and over to the left, where, through a vista, shone the sea. His clear eyes softened as he looked.

"I have traveled in many lands," he answered, "not perhaps as many as you have, Hector, but still I have seen much. As a boy in the army I was in Africa and later I went to Russia for a time —" he broke off a moment and into his eyes came an odd look of remembrance, " and then my father sent me to Germany and Spain and other places — wanting me to see life — to know men — before I gave up the great tracts of land and the titles my mother left me near St. Petersburg — before I decided definitely on the priesthood. Five years ago I went to your country, you remember, for a convention of the Church — it is a great country, as you [illegible] Hector — a wonderful one of promise for the coming race — but there is nowhere — no place [illegible] the Island to me. There never will be."

Unconsciously he had let the reins slacken more and more as he had talked, and he looked ahead of him, where through the trees the white stones of St. Michael's stood out against the sky.

"I suppose none of us can really judge for another," said Stone after a while. "I have heard you say so often — but I have never ceased to wonder at your spending your life here. While in Rome last winter I met Cardinal Venusti again — once I dined at his house — he spoke of you. He told me great charges had been offered you — a bishop's see — that would have meant in time a cardinal's hat. . . . And that you refused them all."

A slow flush crept over Pierre Lamoré's face as he gathered up the slackened reins with a quick movement.

"His Eminence is kind to remember me so," he said at last and briefly.

"But, Father, was he not right?"

Pierre Lamoré carefully flecked a fly off of Nanette's back with the lash of an old whip never used for any other purpose.

"I do not question the Cardinal's words — for years he has been to me a beacon light — from his point of view. Had I received directions to take a charge elsewhere, I should have gone as unquestioningly as a soldier who receives orders from his superiors, but always they have left the decision to me, and I — I have acted as I thought for the best. It has not been from a selfish point of view that I have remained, Hector — although not even you would dream what it would mean to me to leave the Island — but men are born for places as they are born for their life-work — and no one really knows that better than the Cardinal. I am not fitted for his place. He — hardly understands my people here. And who shall say which work is the least in the sight of the Most High?"

"But your birth, your breeding, your knowledge of humanity as well as books — would they not have done more good elsewhere? It has sometimes seemed to me a lesser man could have done the work for the Island. Has rot your light been hidden?"

"Did you count your education, your wealth, your leisure, as badly spent when you forsook the comforts and the rest to which you had been born? Who needed you the more, Hector, the fashionable people that you left or the heart-broken, weary, sweating men you toiled among?"

Stone smiled.

"The cases are hardly on a par. I never really sunk my position in the world of men — I still enjoy my millions. But you — you refused alike your title of prince in the world and prince in the Church. Great souls as yours are needed; great hearts like yours are yearned for by the world to help deliver it from despair and want and woe. You laid down great powers — renounced great influence. Have you gained as much?"

"You and Duport! Duport and you!" said the priest, and he laughed a little. Then he spoke more seriously. "The Great Cardinal is the Great Cardinal — deep in wisdom and in love — his honors are none too high for him. He is also a great statesman. One half of Europe knows him as the Churchman; the other only blindly feels the influences in the world of men of which he is the primal force. Do you fancy that my work is there with him — do you think his talents best for Rome or here with me? As for the titles and the lands — no, no, they are not such great things to renounce when one has learned to renounce more — and my sister Servia's boy bears them well. He is only twenty-five. I am very proud of him. Sometimes I think all my earthly hopes rest on him."

"I did not know you had any earthly hopes, Father," said Stone with a slow smile.

Lamoré looked out to sea.

"Most of them went a long, long time ago," he said, and Stone wondered if all regrets were dead or only stilled.

"As for the Island," Lamoré's voice broke the stillness, "it has not always yielded as I wished. Is any one in any work ever satisfied, I wonder? Sometimes the harvest here has seemed so slight — yielding so little for the sowing. It has been one reason why I stayed. I have sowed all the seeds I had — my learning and my sympathy, my culture and — my life. . . . Yet when I have seen them most forgotten, when I have been the most discouraged, I have remembered that a great flame might spread from a very little lamp; that — and I say it in all reverence — the teachings of my Master spread from one small distant spot to guide and teach the world."

There was a long silence, in which Nanette pulled more slowly at the traces and Lamoré let the reins fall slack again to give her greater ease. The echo of her hoof-beats in rhythmic time came to them; the low crackle of dead leaves beneath the carriage wheels. They were almost at the top, where the clearing was to be seen, and a breeze from the sea swept past them with a delightful sense of freedom and of strength. Hector dimly felt it as he spoke.

"You have always had a proportion on things most men lack. I think it was one of the first things that drew you to me — that and Cecile's devotion. Sometimes I think no one understands — has ever understood Cecile as you do. I have come to help her, Father, if I can. I have come because she sent for me. Do you know why?"

"I fancy, my son, because she needed you — because she loved you," said Pierre Lamoré.

"I am not sure. At least I did not question when I got the message. I am here to help her until the end — if she is to go. Or — I am here to help her live — to make a new beginning with her. I do not ask for one or the other — since I do not know which is best. I have come back just to make her happy if I can."

Pierre Lamoré turned in the chaise and faced him. His face was suddenly illuminated.

"Once long ago — on one dark night in your life, Hector — I told you that one day you would find yourself — would see the light!"

"*Is* it the light, Father? I do not know. I hardly seem to care. There have been so many days of struggle — hours when the soul was sick to death — " he broke off and bit his lip, annoyed at himself for speaking so even to Lamoré.

Lamoré noticed the sudden break — divined the cause, and with a quick tact said:

"You shall come with me and I will play the organ for you again. There is nothing like music for tired nerves like yours."

"That will be good of you. It is a long time since I heard you." Then: "Where were you taught?"

"In Leipsic first, later in Munich and Dresden and Berlin. Germany can teach even my France — even Russia — indeed the world — in music." Pierre Lamoré smiled. "I have not kept it up as I might had I more time or had the Island had a better organ than the little one we have in the village church, but now — " he paused.

"The Cardinal said in Rome you were a great master at the art."

"Again — I fear the Cardinal is prejudiced."

"I have understood that the Cardinal is considered a great Continental critic on organ music," said Stone with a short laugh.

"Strange as it seems, I have only played three times for his Eminence — the last, one Ascension Day years ago in Rome."

"He still recalls it. He said you had an organ there worthy of your skill."

"He has never fully heard the organ in St. Michael's. It is considered one of the finest in all France. You shall judge yourself, Hector, of the organ."

"You — are — going — to — take — me — to — St. Michael's?" said Hector Stone very slowly. "There is really no excuse this time? You know I have never been inside since it was completed."

Pierre Lamoré smiled strangely.

"Do not forget that you helped to built St. Michael's. When one has almost reached the top of the long hill of struggle — when one has won and yet — is soul-sick; then, Hector, he is ready for what St. Michael's has to give."

A minute later he drew rein in the shadow of St. Michael's archway, dismounted and fastened the bridle securely at Nanette's head and turned her loose to graze.

"Come," he said, and his voice was at once an entreaty and a command. "Cecile is asleep just now. She will not need you until later. The music will give you strength for your mission. Come with me."

From an inner pocket he drew forth a key slowly, and without turning to look at the view of earth and sky and sea spread out before them, unlocked the door for Hector Stone to enter.

. . . .

Through the falling dusk of the short day they later turned Nanette's head homeward. Only the contented whinny of the horse, the low chirping of birds going to their nests, the soft sounds of woodland life, broke the silence of the hour. The short road cutting through the woods at the base of the chateau garden was soon traveled. There Pierre Lamoré stopped the chaise and Stone descended. At the carriage step he paused. His face was colorless — an odd fire burned in the eyes he turned on the elder man.

"Good night," he said.

Then he turned and lifted the latch of the little wicket gate, and unheeding the glory of the chateau garden that he crossed, passed on to meet Cecile — alone.

XVIII.

IN the days that followed Lamoré visited but little at the chateau. If now and then the Comtesse spoke of it in the course of one of his infrequent visits there, he would throw the suggestion to one side, half laughingly, as a matter of little worth. Indeed it seemed to him, whose perceptions had been sharpened on the wheel of world experience, that for the first time the Comtesse really cared very little if he came or not. Sometimes, as he watched her, the thought came to him that there had come to her a brief period of matured perfection such as he had sometimes sensed when walking through the vineyards just before the harvest; that the essence of her was held in some abeyance now that the dark period of growth had passed and before this life's experience was gathered in. There rested on her nothing that recalled to him the wonder and the sweetness of her life in its spring hour, nothing to show even traces of the storms that had swept her life, but there was now a calmness and a completeness of all things in her bearing that was to be felt rather than perceived. If she was feigning happiness she feigned it well; if she indeed were happy it was the happiness of one who judged all things from the wider standard of eternity. Stone he rarely saw on visiting the chateau, although the former made many trips down the chateau heights to the Rectory in the vineyards. Like Lamoré, he rarely joined Cecile those afternoons that she and the child Anthony basked together in the sunshine of the garden, taking that time to work in the library over his American mail.

As for the chateau garden, it seemed as though it were reaching the zenith of a glory hitherto unattained, and in the hours after its presiding genius, old Giovanni, had talked to the chateau lady, he would go back to his work and press labor on his subordinates with an almost despotic hand. The flowers had been the deepest worship Giovanni knew, and it was not strange that through them the old man offered to his lady joy and solace by his life's devotion.

The perfection of the place struck on Lamoré one cool morning as he came through the wicket gate and found Cecile very slowly, very idly, walking up and down the paths. Her face was as quiet as the hands that held some lilies, and as he watched her he saw her lift them to her face. Above their perfect whiteness her eyes shone forth large, dark and luminous, and for the moment seemed neither aware of time or place. So, touched with the divinity of maternity, might she once have held the cheek of the little Count to her own. Then with a start she aroused herself, as though conscious of Lamoré's gaze. On an instant a smile that veiled her eyes swept across her face, and she came toward him, both hands outstretched.

"Good morning, and it *is* a good morning — is it not?" she called.

"Yes," he answered, "a wonderful day and a wonderful place."

She had reached him now and stood before him, a pretty picture in her pale blue dress, a soft shawl around her shoulders and the lilies in her hands. It reminded him how often as a child and as a girl she had stood before him thus.

"A wonderful place, Father — too wonderful to leave."

She did not cease to smile but she spoke yearningly. He listened in vain for the note of resentment or defiance.

"I know, Cecile. Hector stopped at the Rectory last night on his return from Marseilles. I suppose Duport's decision is not to be questioned."

She shrugged her shoulders and made a little *moue* that was far more fascinating than she knew.

"Voilà! Such is fame!"

"You are going then?"

"Assuredly; but *not* because Duport recommends it — no — no! I shall tell him so when I see him in his great offices in Marseilles! I shall tell him so when later we dine with Madame and himself, and I will snap my fingers — so!"

"Cecile, you will never grow up! You will never respect either eminence or authority," said Lamoré with a laugh. "Hector had best hasten through

Marseilles with you and get you to Mentone at once."

"Ah — Mentone!" with supreme contempt. "What a place to choose! What can Mentone offer that can compare to this? We will dine at the Winter Palace perhaps, and perhaps spend some weary hours at the Hôtel de Ville — in the little museum with its prehistoric antiquities! Hector will like that: therefore we shall go. But I warn you, I shall not attempt to walk through the tortuous and steep and badly paved streets of the Old Town, in spite of its picturesqueness; and you need not recommend me to worship at St. Michael's there when you have all driven me from my St. Michael's here. You can think of me — poor me — driving to Cap Martin and doing the usual things one must do at Mentone. The thought of it wearies me, *mon père*. Ah! but if I am there long enough — if I am strong enough by then — Hector shall take me to Sir Thomas Hanbury's garden, and I shall see the anemones again. Yes, yes, I had almost forgotten the anemones. I have not looked on them in years. One can be patient and wait even at Mentone — for the anemones!"

A wistful look replaced the bantering brightness of the delicate face. He watched its swift changes in silence.

"Perhaps they will not leave me at Mentone — Hector and that great inexorable Duport — for the anemones. If it grows too cold or perhaps too hot, we will go on to Nice and take the warm baths there, and try not to heed the hurrying crowds that tire one so! Or Cannes, perhaps, with its self-satisfied prosperity. Perhaps if I am good — that is, as good as *I* can be — they will let me visit Naples and watch the sun set over Sorrento before I come back home."

Lamoré turned away that she might not see his face. As though divining his need, she went to him and took his hand — half timidly, as she might have done at times years ago as a very little child. He did not trust himself to turn or look at her, but he knew that she was gazing intently on the signet ring he wore, a lapis lazuli carved with the arms of the Grandcœurs. It had once been the property of their kinsman, the Cardinal Venusti in Rome. It had been given to the first cardinal of the house of René by the great Louis.

"I shall see his Eminence perhaps?" The voice was low and clear.

"Undoubtedly, my child."

"It has been the custom of the house that, if possible, the heir receives the Last Great Blessing from its Cardinal — is it not so?"

"Yes, Cecile."

He forced himself to turn and look down at her. If she had thought to look into his face she would have seen for the first time in years its control broken by emotion. But she kept on looking at the signet ring, and once she patted his hand softly.

"I should rather that it were you," she said with a smile.

"If you outlive his Eminence, it will undoubtedly be I that shall have that privilege as your mother's kinsman and your priest, but, Cecile, Venusti is greater as a man than as a cardinal. He has taught me almost all of worth I know. For years I have drawn on him as from an inexhaustible well. If he lives — the Last Blessing is his right."

She dropped his hand and turned away with a sigh.

"There are rights and obligations that come with rank even if one should be dying — are there not?" she said.

"Perhaps. Yet why talk so, my child? It is the thought of going that has made you sad. Duport is more than skilful — he is a wizard at his art — it may be that you will look on the anemones at Mentone and — come home cured."

She smiled. Across the waters she looked an instant at Grenette lying warm and peaceful on the far off point; at the cloud flecks on the sky of deepest blue — back to the cliffs where the little Count had died; then to Lamoré.

"I shall come home — cured, *mon père*," she said slowly. Then a faint color mounted to her face. "Voilà! there is Hector coming — let us smile. Long ago I left the Island for him — once more I go because he asks it. Come."

. . . .

The boy Anthony stood at sunset at the window of his little room and looked toward the heights. In one hand was clasped tightly the last gift the great lady of his dreams had given him — a gilded key for St. Michael's door. His great lady — his sweet lady — had come and gone. There would be no more black loaves to carry to the chateau, no more walks in the wonderful garden with her — at least until she should come home to them quite well. He turned away abruptly from the window from where he could see standing forth against the sunset sky the chateau, dark, in all its lonely splendor, and the bare flagstaff waiting, stripped and desolate, for the Grandcœur flag — the gold cross upon an azure field.

With a cry he flung himself on the floor before an image of the Sacré Cœur and pressed St. Michael's key passionately to his mouth.

XIX.

IT was Hector Stone that bore the light burden of Cecile from Fauchet's boat to the cottage of Fauchet's cousin near the wharf, and laid her on the bed to rest and wait for the coming of the Marseilles boat. By and by Cecile dropped off to sleep, and leaving Sister Marie Sebastian to watch by her, he crept out for a walk along the beach. For the first time in his life Stone was feeling the exhaustion that comes to overstimulated mind and nerves. All his life-work seemed calling to him from his own country — all his constituents were clamoring for him, and at times it seemed as though all the influences for good so laboriously gained were slowly falling from his hands. He spent hours — they were always hours when there was no probability of Cecile needing him, mostly after midnight — in struggling with his huge correspondence. He remembered with a sigh of relief, as he took off his hat and let the cool sea breezes sweep his face, that he had cabled Farnum to send young Turner to him. Turner was to meet them in Marseilles and would relieve him of much of the mechanical strain. Farnum could not be spared from the American end. For a brief instant he wondered just how long things would last — how long

Farnum would have to struggle with the American end alone. Then he remembered Cecile — frail as one of the chateau lilies she had left. She had left the chateau lilies only because of his request. He never doubted that, although she never told him so; and the greatness of his own nature rose up, at the remembrance, to meet her own. After all, what matter it if one's life-work failed? Some one else would pick it up where it had been dropped. There had come the conviction to him that this one frail, rich woman, with her titled name and lands, needed him just now quite as much as the striving, sweating, toil- and sin-marked ones, across the waters. He sat down on a point of land where tall pines grew, and watched the sea creep in with gentle persistency and break lightly on the sands.

He was aroused from his revery by a step on the pine needles near, and he looked up suddenly to see Blair Martin smiling at him.

"Did I startle you?" she said. "I did not mean to. I watched you coming here and I followed you to ask about Cecile."

"How did you come to Grenette? I thought you far away."

"I have never left Grenette. Father Lamoré and Fauchet kept my secret well. Did you fancy I could go far from her until I was assured that all was well between you?"

"It was like you," he said in a low voice. "So like you that I might have known."

"Each night," she said, "I have watched St.

Michael's light. Each morning I have watched to see if the flag on the chateau was still there. Each day — I have prayed for her — and you."

He stood near her, but he could not trust himself to look into her face; instead he looked steadily at the slow creeping in of the sea.

"Her life is like that," he said at last, "it is creeping surely, persistently, to eternity, but no man can tell how long."

Blair Martin drew a long breath that was like a sigh.

"Does she know?"

"She must know, but she has never spoken of it to me."

"What does Duport say?"

"That it is like the tide — very slow but very certain. We are taking her to Mentone on a chance. She talks of the anemones. She may see them this season — perhaps other seasons. She may slip out in a night. Duport says there have been heart complications developing."

"Father Lamoré told me something of it. He comes over once a week. He has kept me posted."

"So!" Stone began to pace the sands a little. He was conscious that Blair Martin had seated herself on a pine knoll, and that the soft breezes were playing with her hair.

"I have only waited," she was saying, "to be quite sure Cecile would never need me again before I returned to America. Now I know she does not, and it is as I wish. I think I am nearer contentment to-night — true contentment — than I have been since that hour under the mimosa tree." She spoke so quietly that Stone, arrested, turned and looked at her. She seemed to be speaking to the sands and sea rather than to him. "I do not understand it. I do not question it. I only know that after the dream of the mimosa tree that never was fulfilled, this — her going back to you — seems to me to be the thing most desired in my life. It has somehow ceased to be a question of personal happiness."

He sat down near her, a strange awe for her on him.

"Where, Blair, do I come in?"

She turned to him a face strangely illuminated.

"Can you doubt?" she asked, an exquisite cadence in her voice. "You come in — in all things; in all my thoughts; in all my aspirations; in all my faith for mankind; in all my hopes and plans of what I am to do when I return. As the shadow follows the sun, so my soul follows you sleeping and awake, and as the sands here have through the centuries waited for the coming of the sea, so through lives behind have I waited — so through lives to come, will I wait — for you."

He put out his hand and for an instant it touched the edge of her dress.

Still she looked at him with those strange grave eyes. They rested on the long scar on his face.

"I want her to have all she can of you — I want you to give her all you can. You — even you —

can only half divine a woman's heart and need. . . . As compared to her, how short is the time I have known you here, but at least the scar — is mine."

"I have known you always," he said in a low voice, "since the Primal Cause called the atoms into being. I do not reason about it. It is simply one of the things one accepts without need of proof. And of late I have fancied the remembrance of you has been the rock on which I have in reality built my life. If I have learned to be more tolerant; if I have learned more of pity or forgiveness or breadth of understanding, it is because of you."

She rose from her seat on the pine knoll and laid her hands in his. For an instant he held them close, then let them drop.

"It is because of each other that we live," she said. "Good-bye — good-bye — Joe Blackie."

. . . .

He watched her make her slow way across the sands, and it seemed to him there was a new dignity in her bearing; a new beauty in her face. Where the beach rounded the coast in a sharp curve to the village of Grenette, she stopped for a moment. She made no motion of farewell, but she turned and across the quiet sands she looked at him, before she went on her way.

XX.

BACK at Toinette's cottage Blair Martin lingered a month waiting for the sailing of the ship from Havre that was to take her to America. It was a strange month of poise and rest, in which for the time growth and life itself seemed almost suspended — a period of expectancy and of waiting, as the gray quiet hour before dawn lies suspended between the wonder of the night and the glory of the coming day. Like that hour which broods over the other twenty-three, and that contains at once the culmination of the darkness and the promise of the light, without being itself a thing of beauty, so was the month of waiting to Blair Martin.

She was unconscious of planning plans or dreaming dreams. She simply drifted in a mental sea of gray calm waters that soothed the child heart of her as tenderly as a mother could have done.

Lamoré she saw almost daily, and at first he was full of news of the travelers. They had reached Mentone safely, and Cecile had stood the trip far better than either Stone or Duport had hoped. Then the letters were less frequent — less hopeful — and the brief postscripts added by Cecile were missing. These last reports Lamoré did not show to the

American, partly because he was loath to break in upon her calm, partly because the chatelaine had forbidden it.

"Duport joined us here yesterday," had run the last letter from Stone. "He says little, and Cecile makes no comment on her condition except that it is to be kept from Blair Martin, that her leave-taking of the Island may not be shadowed nor her return home saddened. She still talks of Anthony and — the anemones."

The letter was in Lamoré's pocket when he called at Toinette's cottage that day. It was the afternoon before Blair Martin left for Havre. Already were the trunks packed and strapped; already had Fauchet been engaged to take her to Grenette; already had the rocks and woods and slopes been visited for the last time with Anthony, where he had sung for her a Canticle and the song of the Swiss children. The chateau and the garden and the path to the wicket gate lay untrodden and unvisited.

She found Lamoré on the rustic bench before the cottage door, and it recalled to both of them their first meeting there months ago. She was thinking of it when she touched the soft gray gown she wore.

"Not the old dress and Toinette's gingham apron to-day, Father."

"I find Mademoiselle the peasant-worker. I take leave of her as the great lady."

She smiled and smoothed the soft gray dress caressingly. It was the one that she had worn that

Sunday afternoon so long ago as she sat before the open fire in her little study at the Anchorage — the afternoon Stone had first told her of Lamoré and the Island of the Angels. She always wore the pearls with it, and she treasured it with a sentiment that recognizes no dictates of passing fashion, leaving it unchanged.

"Perhaps, Father. As one grows from the stature of the child to that of the woman, so I have sometimes fancied our inner self might grow from the humble to something perhaps a little nearer the divinity within."

She spoke slowly and simply.

He bowed again.

"Mademoiselle, it is because of that that I have come this evening to make a request."

She looked up at him with wistful wonder in her eyes.

"A request — of me?" she repeated.

He sat down on the bench by her and looked at her intently.

"Mademoiselle," he said, "before Fauchet takes you from us to-morrow, will you hear Mass at St. Michael's?"

XXI.

IT was early morning when Blair Martin slowly climbed the heights. The sun as with the tender warmth of youth sifted through the pine woods and with the shadows made a checkered carpet over which she walked. Here and there a bird flew in front of her, as though to guide her, or lingered unafraid near by, searching for its morning meal. For years the birds of the chateau estate had never heard the report of a gun or known its cruelty, and to all who walked their haunts they were friendly guides. One of them now — of splendid plumage — soared over her as she neared the clearing beyond which stood St. Michael's. She could see even from that distance that the great main portal was thrown wide, as though in invitation. She approached it without haste but without hesitation, and mounting the broad steps passed through the vestibule into the memorial chapel.

Her first impression was of grateful shade and coolness from the warmth and glare of the world outside, and she stood quietly at the foot of the main aisle. Near by her stood a basin of holy water. She noticed how clear and cool it looked in its marble receptacle supported by a beautifully carved column.

She slipped into the last pew and, without knowing that she did so, knelt, her elbow resting on the back of the pew in front, her chin in her hand.

There was no one to be seen, no sign of coming solemnities to distract her or break upon her calm, nothing to divert her attention from the beauty that surrounded her. The wonder of the whole came to her gradually and almost in detail. She could not remember — even at Cologne — seeing windows radiating in such mystic roses, or pointed arches more perfect in outline and proportion. The marvel of those pillared arches held her — their grace, the impression of upholding without effort the weight of the vaulted roof. The sense of color, perfectly, exquisitely distributed through the tall windows, the wonder of the one behind the high altar, commanded at once the respect of intellect, the worship of the heart. The impression of the whole was the impression of perfection imprisoned in white marble — the marble slabs that paved the broad central aisle that led up to the white steps of the Sanctuary — the gleaming splendor of that later thing of stone. Was it only stone, she wondered, quarried by the effort of man's hands with infinite patience and brought here at great labor and great price to immortalize a little child? Was the cross that shone transplendent on the Sanctuary door, nothing but metal after all? The great window and the Sanctuary had strangely enough attracted her attention last, and now they held her to the exclusion of all else. Outside the light grew more intense and increased in brilliancy the hues of the great window through which it shone. The window fascinated her — the heroic figure of the Archangel became a type of man glorified — symbolic of the growth he might attain. The child figure in front — was it the boy Anthony imprisoned in deathless glory there, or the little Count himself — a type of that innocence that the soul must regain and know, before it can be in truth reborn. Over it all ran the inscription:

> *"To the glory of God and St. Michael His Archangel and in memory of Hector René Louis de Grandcœur, last Count of the line."*

Some knowledge of the perfect love, the depths of the perfect sorrow, that the coming and the going of that short life must have meant to Cecile, came to her, and in that hour was born in her from the depths of her own unattained maternity, the understanding of a grief and love that had encased itself in glass and stone for centuries to come, as a flower, petrified but unimpaired, is sometimes found long after its death-blow, buried in the wrecks of time. There was nowhere any sign or tablet, any smallest word to commemorate the stricken heart that had thought out and ordered built this splendor. It stood the great memorial for a little child, but Blair Martin read in every curve and line, of perfect self-effacement, the undying monument to the woman whose brain had conceived the glory and whose heart lay buried here.

She looked upon the window and the white altar beneath until her vision became blurred and until the colors of the window mingled with the radiance of the marble altar where shone the cross — a sign and symbol — upon the Sanctuary door.

Then some one began to play the organ; the tones of it swelled out and came beating against her senses as waves beat against unresisting driftwood, carrying it whither they will.

She did not question the wonder of the music, which she supposed was Lamoré's, any more than she had questioned the marvel of the memorial chapel itself. She did not even sense what it was that Lamoré played. She only knew she knelt and listened, her eyes fixed upon the Sanctuary door and the red lamp that burned near by. She was conscious of a perfect peace. So rapt was her attention that at first she was not aware when the music ceased, and she was recalled to herself by seeing the boy Anthony, followed by Lamoré in his vestments, enter the Sanctuary by the side door.

The opening words of the Mass fell upon her ears, low, distinct, sonorous. They reached her in the perfect clearness of utterance, in the wonder of their simplicity, even where she knelt.

She made no effort to follow a service with which she was unfamiliar in spite of her visits to the village church. She only wondered vaguely if the service *was* the same; if it were only heightened imagination that it seemed to her the very vaulted roof, the very pillared arches, the very stained glass

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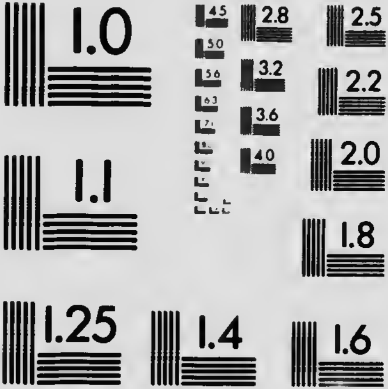
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windows and the Sanctuary itself, reëchoed Lamore's utterances and the clear flute-like responses of the child.

Then it was, unbidden and unthought of, there crept a mist across the communion rail, hiding Lamoré's figure and Anthony's as well. As she knelt and watched it, it formed once more the Bridge. With a quick indrawing of the breath she pressed closer to the pew in front and clasped her hands tightly together, as she waited for the familiar figure to appear. But to-day she waited in vain and with a strained wonder, for from the Bridge stretching there across the Sanctuary appeared no sign of Hector's face. Instead the mist slowly parted and shifted until it formed — and she looked upon — a perfect cross. From the center of it the face of the child Anthony looked at her — a thing glorified — before the cross itself assumed the heroic proportions of a Man. She knew not if she saw aright; she knew not if she dreamed, or if the figures in the great window in some strange way of reflected light had become confused with the figures of Lamoré and the child ministering within the rails. She only knew that, vision, reality or dream, the cross of mist became the Man with the face, the bearing of the St. Michael of the window, transfigured with a glory such as she had never seen. The face of the Man in the splendor of his full stature, faded, as the face of the child had done, and from the cross at its center burned a strange white light. Creeping from head and foot-piece and cross-bars stole strange colors to illuminate the Thing of fancy or reality. It seemed to her that along the headpiece in a strange vividness of gold there walked the great intellects of the world; that they passed before her in a strange review — the St. Pauls, the Platos and the Hugos and the Bacons; the Mozarts and the Wagners; the Angelos and the Galileos and the Brunos and the Pythagorases. Somewhere from their midst there looked out at her Venusti, the Great Cardinal, as she had seen him one spring morning at the altar rail, his hands on the boy Anthony's hair. From the right arm there came to meet them at that glowing Heart the Center, in a stream of palest green, the souls of action — the Elijahs, the Marthas, the Booths and the David Livingstones; and somewhere, almost hidden in all that great procession, but still there, it seemed to her she saw the faces of Lamoré and of Stone. Then it was that slowly from the cross's left arm, wrapped in a blue softer, more intense than even the southern sky without, there came to mingle in that Central Light, the high types of the world's servants of devotion: the St. Johns, the Marys of Bethany, the St. Francises and the Teresas and the à Kempises — all those on whom the seal of mystic longing had been set, and among them for a moment there came to her, as they passed, the impression of Cecile. Again she watched them mingle, melt into that One Center, and a light such as one sees at sunset sometimes behind the Matterhorn — a pale crimson toning into softest pink — enveloped the base of the cross, and climbing up the path thus made she watched the Peters, the Magdalens, the Damiens, the Coolidge Pattersons wind their way, and she felt herself among them — those who loved; but always — always — as a flame that soars toward heaven to be absorbed and lost yet is still a flame — the great procession moved toward One Goal, as though from out of that One Heart of Power, all intellect, all action, all devotion and all love had once gone forth in equal parts and were by their own individualized efforts bringing back, vitalized and perfected, the sum of all experience to Their Own.

The strange cross faded into one glowing Heart of Light before It in Its turn dissolved, and there came to her sight distinct again St. Michael's window, the white marble of the Sanctuary and the figures of Lamoré and the child. The Wafer had been blessed and Lamoré was giving the benediction.

. . . .

An hour later at the little wharf where Fauchet's boat waited at its moorings, she laid her hand in that of Lamoré.

"Good-bye," she said. "When I am living in the valley again — when the heights seem strange, remote and cold, I will recall to-day. I will remember that, however feebly I have interpreted it, however distorted and blinded was my vision, I have no cause to ever doubt or fear, since once, for a brief time, I sensed the One Reality of Things."

They watched her, Lamoré and the child Anthony, until Fauchet's boat was a speck upon the waters. Lamoré's face was grave. He seemed to have grown old. There was a strange sadness in his eyes.

"She — the good American — she will come to us again?"

It was the voice of the boy Anthony.

"I do not know, my child. We can only wait — Anthony — only wait."

The boy slipped his hand in that of Lamoré, that closed over it quickly.

"And hope," said the child. "Nay, do not be so sad. Always will *I* love you, *mon père.*"

. . . .

It was the boy Anthony who, three days later, by order of the Great Cardinal, climbed the turret stairs of the chateau and flung the Great Banner with its gold fringe to the breeze.

THE END.