

# ALL FOR LOVE

By Margaret Sherwood

ILLUSTRATION BY F. WALTER TAYLOR



TO be sure it was very picturesque, this bit of Breton coast: seaward stretched blue water, edged with white foam; landward, green level spaces, broken by lines of tall poplar trees. Along the tidal river colored sails went forever up and down beyond the grass; and the quaint village where masts moved constantly beyond the houses, and where white-capped peasant women with comely faces—"as Irish as me own," said Mrs. Faunce—gathered about the old fountain in the market-place with their copper pots and pans, was just what she had expected. No one could deny the charm of the place, yet Mrs. Faunce was distinctly bored. The dinners were all that they had said, daintily served, delicious, with such soups, such entrées, such salads, such *sauce suprême* as will be found nowhere else on any shore outside of dreamland. There was no fault to find with the little hotel, gray as the gnarled and jagged rocks that lay to westward; every kind of comfort was at your beck and call, under the masterful management of Mère Fouqué, with her white Breton caps, her Breton serving maids in wooden shoes, and her Parisian *chef*. It combined, the Hotel Merlin, in all its details, those characteristics of subtlety and simplicity that belong to all high art.

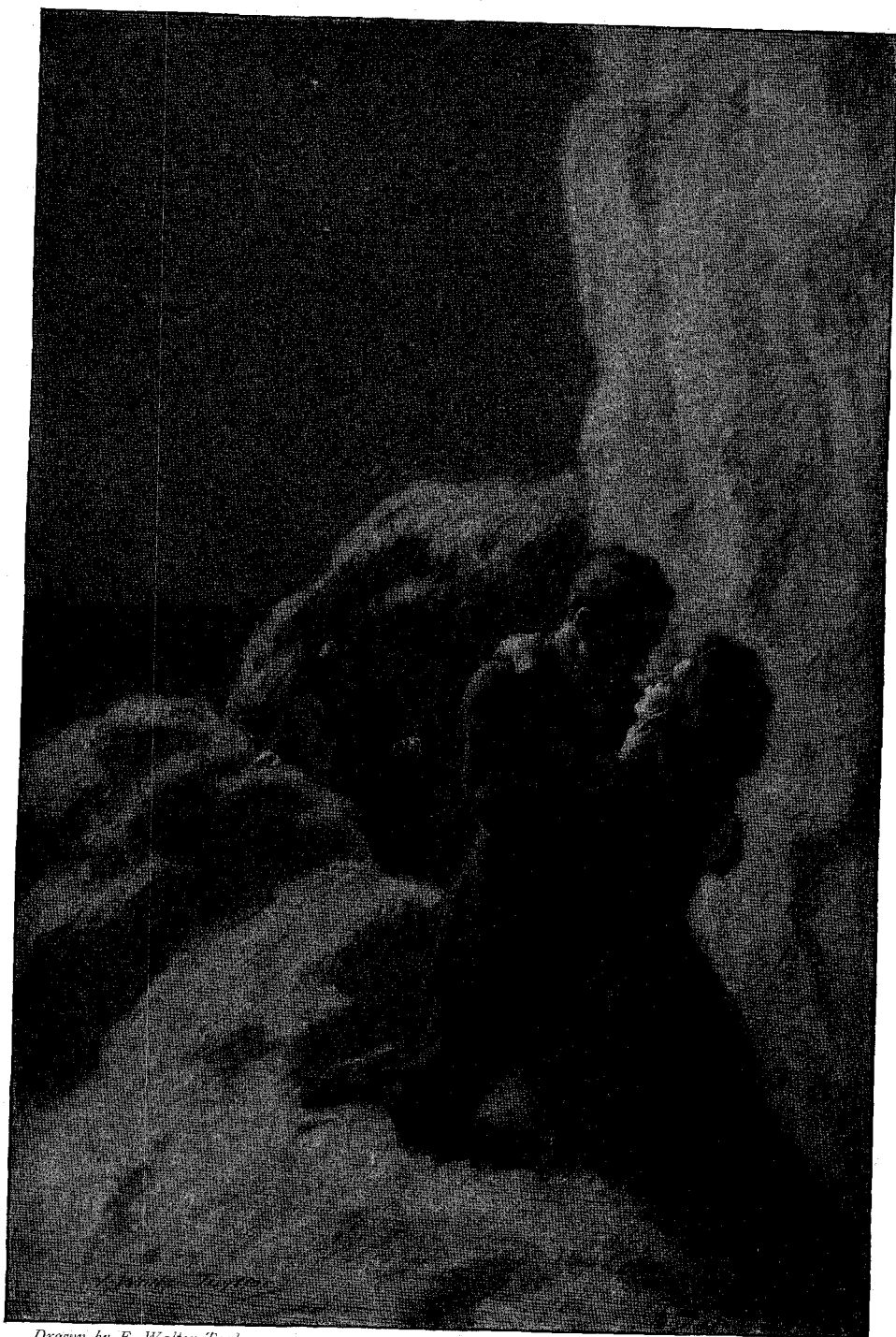
But the wandering old Irish lady, student of humankind, redresser of human wrongs, was tired of it all. She had come to the shore for mental rest, she who abhorred mental rest; for physical repose, she who had no need of it, and who refused to admit, even to herself, the twinges of rheumatism about the aging bones that were so much older than her spirit. She haunted the salon, impressive in her attire of more than decent black, for her bizarre pilgrim costume of taffeta petticoat, nondescript waist, and head-dress of lace was discarded on the occasions when she wished to make appar-

ent the simple truth that she was a lady. She conversed with the few guests in her fluid French with its touch of brogue, dozed after luncheon, wondering sleepily about the two people who passed so often, mother and daughter evidently, and as evidently English, the elder lady having that military look of being ready for battle which only the British general and the British matron wear to perfection, the daughter following with listless step as if in a dream. Mrs. Faunce watched them and yawned. Who was it, anyway, who had told her of this secluded spot? Was it M. Mostet of Julien's? She would get even with him! Did he think that she would care for the blue-smocked goatherd who came driving his flock gayly before him from door to door every night and milking in the presence of his customer? Oh, yes, she loved the pastoral thought of the goatherd with his flute and his carved staff, but, when you were near, the goats smelled so vilely—of goat!

"'Tis no nymph nor yet dryad I am," said Mrs. Faunce to herself, "to dance to that music."

Perhaps it was Herr Bernhard who had advised her to come. Just like a sentimental German to rave about these bareheaded, blue-aproned, red-petticoated women washing in the pools. It was none of this superficial picturesqueness that she wanted, but share in some bit of emotion, ripe from the heart's core, for to the old lady, insatiable of experience, the only real *sauce suprême* was human life.

Nothing in Maramol really appealed to her save two inn signs, one, "*Au Bon Diable*," the other, "*A la Réunion des Amis*," and she gazed longingly at both, missing the friendly and intimate laughter to which she was accustomed, the chatter, the keen and affectionate gibes. The hours were long between dawn and dawn; the little barelegged French children strolling with their nurses across the sands to eastward looked remote; nothing happened in the ten long days



*Drawn by F. Walter Taylor.*

She realized in dismay . . . that these two young creatures were actually planning to take the long leap into the dark.—Page 662.

whose hours rippled away along the shore, and, the old Irish lady was wistful and lonely. Life seemed very far away! She even thought longingly of her family, of that daughter—English now since she had been foolish enough to marry an Englishman—in her stately home, and of the formal and unendurable ways that went on behind the tall park gates.

"If me daughter hadn't taken it upon herself to inherit me less amiable traits; if she hadn't been as obstinate as meself, we might have been happy together," mused Mrs. Faunce. The grandchildren must be growing up; the little lad, Jack—could it be that he was almost a man by this time? The dark head had been far below her shoulder when she had escaped from a life that stifled her, and had become a free lance in the larger world. She actually yearned, though she would not have confessed it, to see little Jack once more, and to find him little.

Hidden in a cleft of the rocks one day she heard the waters lap and watched the waves wane; sand-pipers hopped near on slender legs, and white-winged gulls flew low, but none of these things pleased Mrs. Faunce. She looked long and hard at the ocean, then lifted her fist and shook it in the face of the vasty deep.

"Curse on you for an unsociable companion," she said grimly. "They talk of the whisperin' waves! Here I've sat, two hours and a half by me watch, and never a word have you spoken."

She paused, listening, then beat a tattoo upon the rocks.

"Sure, if you speak, 'tis English you speak with your sulky voice, and never a word of Irish. Come now, a bit of the brogue to warm me old heart!"

Here she caught sight of two people strolling across the sand, and, as they began to climb the rocks, she recognized them as the mother and daughter who had often caught her eye in the past ten days. The girl was fair to look at, except for an expression of rebellious sadness which robbed her face of its natural charm. She toiled behind her vigorous parent with a hurt, dragging step, like that of a wounded soldier. They passed, not saying a word.

"Any more than the sea," murmured Mrs. Faunce; then, just beyond a tall rock that concealed the old lady, the mother halted abruptly.

VOL. L.—61

"I must go back to the villa for a minute. Sit down here, Gladys, and do not stir until I come back."

The girl was left alone, her fair hair and pure profile silhouetted against the blue sky, and something in the drooping figure made Mrs. Faunce aware, for the first time, of the pathos of this rippling, gentle sea, and this coast, wearing forever on its desolate rocks that sad expression of looking northward. Suddenly the girl's whole manner changed, and she flung out her arms toward the water with a passionate gesture of appeal.

"Hal," she said softly, with a little hurt, inarticulate cry, "Hal!" The slender figure was quivering with grief and longing. Mrs. Faunce, watching unobserved, felt a kind of awe, for it was as if she had seen a bit of inert clay suddenly smitten with the flame of human life. The face which had been as a pallid mask glowed suddenly into beauty with the hurt and the joy of love. The old lady sat very quiet, with shining eyes, and the blood beat warmly once more within her.

"He's over the water in England," she murmured, nodding to herself, "and there's trouble enough for some reason."

When the mother reappeared and led her daughter away over the rocks, Mrs. Faunce fastened her eyes on the erect, tweed-clad figure of the older woman, and watched her vigorous step.

"All English muscles work well," she said to herself, "except those of the heart." It was plain that there was tragedy here, and that this all-too-energetic woman was the maker of it; why else were the girl's footsteps so closely guarded by rock and sand and roadway? The lonely shore became suddenly full of interest for the old lady, as her keen flair for human story joyously recognized a new trail. That night she put back into her purse the bank-notes she had counted out for Mère Fouqué, for she had meant to go back to Paris tomorrow.

"Jeanne D'Arc," said Mrs. Faunce to the dark-haired Breton peasant who came thumping softly upstairs every morning with a little tray upon which rested a huge bowl of delicious *café au lait*, a monstrous table-spoon, and two small rolls, "Jeanne D'Arc, who are the two people who pass here several times a day, mother and daughter?"



Jeanne D'Arc, whose real name was Margot, stood with arms akimbo, smiling a wide smile.

"Say paw," she answered.

"The young lady," continued Mrs. Faunce, "has beautiful golden hair."

"Ah," breathed Jeanne D'Arc, "and there is always the mother?"

"Always!"

"Mad," said the girl, tapping her forehead, "the young one, else why always the mother?"

"Nonsense!" cried the old lady. "Who are they? Where do they come from? Where do they go to?"

"Say paw!" said Jeanne D'Arc, "but they go to—Madame surely sees them going into the gates of Villa Camelot, close by?"

The old lady shook her head.

"But yes!" cried the girl. "Hundreds of times I have seen them. Look, Madame; it is but the throw of a little stone to their windows."

She drew aside the curtains of an eastern window, and there, truly enough, beyond a high wall, and beyond two slender poplar trees, appeared a building whose gray sides, long windows, and picturesque roof, hardly noticed before, became suddenly significant.

"Jeanne D'Arc," said Madame, fumbling successfully with an old-fashioned netted silk purse, "bring me the name of the English lady who lives at Villa Camelot."

That evening Jeanne D'Arc appeared again, this time with a bit of paper, which she presented triumphantly.

"But the servants are all English and dumb! They have no speech at all!" she announced. "It was the postman."

It was the same postman who, the next day, carried away from Hotel Merlin an unusual number of letters, some directed to England, some to Paris, and one to Château Miraban in Brittany, and Mrs. Faunce waited, watched, and listened.

"But why," demanded Jeanne D'Arc, as she was making the old lady's bed, "why, if somebody is not mad, do they keep the villa gates always locked?"

"Do they?" asked Mrs. Faunce, who knew it perfectly well. From the eastern window she was looking intently at the Villa Camelot, where, upon a window ledge of the second floor, a girl's head was bowed upon folded arms with an air of hopeless

abandonment that brought the ever-ready mist to the old lady's eyes.

No mist, however, was dense enough to veil her keen vision, and a hundred and one things about the Villa Camelot which the tenant supposed were strictly secret were known to this elderly neighbor. That the mistress of the house never allowed any one but herself to see the postman, if she could help it, was evident, for she always, even in the rain, waited for him at the villa gate. Mrs. Faunce even knew something that the vigilant lady of the villa did not know, to wit, that the kindly gray-haired maid, on one of the few occasions when she was permitted to watch for the mail, hastily whipped something into her pocket, and that, a few minutes later, the face of the girl at the honeysuckle-bordered window grew radiant as she stooped to kiss an unopened letter. It was not hard to read the story of unhappy love that was going on; it was clear that mother and daughter held heated debates, for the sound of them, if not the words, floated over the wall, and more than once the girl was seen, with her back braced firmly against the window embrasure, making remarks of undoubted firmness.

One day Mrs. Faunce met her mysterious young neighbor in the quaint cemetery among the weather-beaten slabs that marked the resting-places of the peasant dead. Bees were murmuring over the green spaces, and near the late yellow roses, that grew about the gray stones, and all was peace, for the soldierlike mother, who felt the need of much exercise, was marching up and down outside the wall. The girl was tracing with her finger a lichen-grown inscription upon a rough granite cross. As she heard footsteps she looked up; these two had passed each other so often that a silent friendliness of kindly glances had been established between the old lady with the gay, aged face and this girl with despairing eyes. Mrs. Faunce gave one swift glance toward the cemetery gates, and then held out her arms with: "Come, dear, and tell me all about it! Where is he?" She was one of those rare personages who recognize an opportunity when it comes. The girl, alarmed, started away like a frightened bird, then crept back, just beyond the other's reach. She did not want to be touched, apparently, by any hand but his.

"'Tis a queer name they have given you, Gladys, that have made your eyes look like that."

"How did you know," asked the girl, breathlessly, "about him?"

Into her eyes, dull blue, dead with sorrow, life came leaping, and the pupils, expanding almost to the iris's edge, were all alight with leaping flame.

"I've been alive meself, me dear," said the old lady.

"Did you ever care for—for some one more than for all the world beside?"

"I did," said Mrs. Faunce, dashing away a tear with a mitten-clad hand.

The girl looked at her steadfastly, with that longing to read the writing of the lines, the very hieroglyphics of life, that one sees often in the faces of the young in looking on the old.

"Were you happy?" whispered Gladys.

"Whiles, and whiles not. To be happy always is not the human lot. Surely monotony of any kind would fall short of happiness; 'tis that that's the matter with the idea of heaven."

"It would be wonderful," breathed the girl, "to be happy even for a minute."

"Me poor darlin'!" cried Mrs. Faunce, "tell me all about it"; but the girl's finger was on her lip, and her eyes were fixed on the cemetery gate.

"I must go," she said hurriedly.

"Go on," said the strange old lady; "but remember, dear, I'm your friend, and 'tis me intention to help you."

She looked wistfully after the young girl as she went away, past a gray inscription: "*Que Dieu augmente sa joie!*" and the old lady murmured over and over in behalf of the living the carven prayer for the dead. Many a one had she known to whom love was much, but never before one to whom it was all, who was dedicate, soul and body, every nerve and fibre edged with flame.

It was perhaps ten days after the letters had gone, and five or six after answers had been despatched to the replies that Jeanne D'Arc brought Mrs. Faunce a black-bordered card, upon which was engraved the name of Mrs. Reginald Lucas. After a fitting delay, Mrs. Faunce descended to the salon, dignified, bespangled, trailing after her a long black gown, and holding her head high in the grand manner that was all her own. The military mother, no longer

attired in tweeds, yet still wearing the air of one booted and spurred, rose and held out her hand.

"My friend, Lady Andermere, has told me of your being here, and has asked me to call, Madame——"

"Mrs. Faunce," interrupted the old lady quickly. "I've come incognito, for I need seclusion and rest."

Mrs. Reginald Lucas was deeply impressed, as who would not be? The remarks of the hostess were all that were courteous; not so her thoughts, if the truth were known, for her first one was: "'Tis a cruel mouth you've got, for all your smiling." Wheedling, but tactful, she made innumerable inquiries without seeming to do so, and this is what she learned from the preoccupied mother whose anxious eyes kept turning toward Villa Camelot. She was here for the sake of her daughter Gladys, who was far from well, and they were leading the quietest possible life. The child was suffering from a complicated disorder in regard to which expert opinion had pronounced itself uncertain; she was subject to sudden seizures, and had to be constantly watched.

"Now that is where I could help you, if you would permit me," cried Mrs. Faunce. "I've nothing to do, and I'm eating me heart out with the loneliness of it all. I'm fond of the young." She got no promise from her guest, but hope that she might share the guardianship of the girl was high within her as Mrs. Lucas stalked away.

"Actin' the part of affectionate mother," muttered Mrs. Faunce, "as well as if she'd been trained for it on the stage. I can't help thinkin' of the rehearsals."

On the days following the old lady waited with some impatience. Lonely walks and lonelier drives by shining, shivering silver poplars in the sad, cool air of early fall failed to divert her mind from its purpose. Yet she got small chance to carry out her plans, and she wondered if this inability to help meant that she was growing old. Life responded usually more readily to her touch. Once, in a brief talk with the frightened girl, reluctantly permitted by Mamma, who was vainly trying to speak the Breton dialect with the postman, she got a bit of information about the lover. Hal was young too, only twenty, but they had cared a lifetime, or at least two years, having met her first season in London. The trouble?

There was no real trouble that the girl could see. To be sure he was lame; a bad fall from his horse in the hunting field four years ago had crippled him for life. "I love him all the more for that, of course," said Gladys. Opposition on the part of her mother had roused his family and precipitated a quarrel, and now that opposition had hardened into stone. His mother had said that she would die before she would permit the marriage; her mother had said that they would go to the wedding over her dead body if they went at all.

"Tell me truth," commanded Mrs. Faunce. "Have they no reason better than that? Is there no wrong-doin' to keep you apart?"

The girl protested that there was nothing.

"'Tis all made up of little things, pique and pride?"

"Such little things," said Gladys of the violet eyes and wind-blown hair, "that you would think they would be ashamed to think of them."

"Hal," said the old lady, "Hal. 'Tis a pretty name, and one associated with more than one madcap." She watched shrewdly for the light that she knew was coming to the girl's face.

"To mention his name is to have all the pleasure of creatin' the child from the beginning," she said to herself. The girl laughed out.

"His real name is John Henry," she vouchsafed.

"And I presume he's a hero and a genius, and altogether the most gifted bein' that ever was," but the girl shook her head, smiling.

"He isn't a genius at all and he hasn't any extraordinary gifts. He's just the best and most lovable human being that ever was." Mrs. Faunce listened with humorous disdain.

"Now what you youngsters are made of I fail to know," she sighed. "If I had a lover, he'd be to me a hero and a genius, even if I knew 'twas contrary to the facts."

The very next day Jeanne D'Arc was much excited. An attempt had been made last evening, she was sure, to rob the Villa Camelot. She herself had seen a man trying to climb over the wall; should she tell the police? A broad smile illuminated Mrs. Faunce's face, as she promised to take the responsibility of communicating with

the people at the villa; and she set herself to watch. By many indubitable signs she realized that something was indeed happening. A shadow on the wall; the sight of a face beyond the furze hedge; a footstep under her window; a figure retreating swiftly beyond the rocks as mother and daughter went out for their walk, made up a chain of evidence that delighted her. She hurried up from dinner in the evenings, giving up desserts, and sat by her eastern window in the twilight, fearful lest some link in the chain of this story should escape her. Once or twice she saw a dark figure lurking under the villa wall, and more than once she heard the sound of a tinkling stone upon a window-pane. In the silence that followed, she knew that the intruder waited and listened, but he did not wait nor listen more eagerly than did she, her old Irish heart beating in sympathy. Try as she might she got no chance to tell the unconscious girl that her lover was near, and he was apparently as unsuccessful.

One evening, at sundown, Mrs. Faunce pricked up her ears, for she heard a familiar and yet an unfamiliar sound. Shrill bleating, the quick, multitudinous tread of many hard little feet, meant that the flock of goats was coming home, but it was an odd and uncertain melody that the flute gave out. The goatherd stopped, as usual, at the locked gateway of Villa Camelot; surely his step was odd; had he suddenly gone lame? Yet that was his blue smock, and the battered felt hat pulled down over his ears, but he was taller by a head than he had been. Old Breton tales of fairy folk rushed to her mind, of fays who stole for a time human form for the accomplishment of their purposes. What had happened to the lad out in green pastures among the furze and gorse? Anxious, she knew not why, she watched him as he led the flock—stepping daintily behind him, the kids darting out and leaping high in play—to the very door, and she saw, too, the quick flash of a hand all too white as something flew through the air into the open window by which Gladys sat, listlessly watching the dull red sunset that flamed beyond rocky coast and gray sea in the west. The girl sprang up as if she had been stung; a moment later she was at the back door demanding evidently, by signs, that the goatherd teach her how to milk. The maid who brought the copper

basin laughed aloud as she gave it to her young mistress, and Mrs. Faunce waited breathless; would the maid suspect?

"Not she! She's but English and has no eyes in her head," said the old Irish lady as she saw Gladys kneel beside a black goat, and saw the goatherd's fingers reverently close over hers as he gave her a lesson in milking. The girl proved but a slow pupil, and, in truth, had but an awkward teacher. Watchful goat eyes were upon the two as the heads bent close together, and dainty noses sniffed curiously at the girl's white gown, but neither goat nor human ears heard the words that passed between master and pupil, if words there were. The old lady chuckled; so had love at last gained admission to the villa gates.

The next morning, as mother and daughter took their constitutional on the rocks, the girl's step was alert and quick.

"You are better, Gladys," said the mother. "The sea air is doing you good."

"Yes, Mamma," said the English girl obediently.

That afternoon Mrs. Faunce strolled out into the country, whose beauty of deep green furze and broom with golden butterflies fluttering above the yellow blossoms was still hidden from her. It was the life-worn, weather-beaten faces of the peasants that interested her, the thatched roofs of their houses, the cold little stone churches where they said their prayers, and she gave back the invariable "*Bon jour*" with friendly warmth. She passed an old, old wrinkled woman in wooden sabots, with a little shawl pinned across her flat bosom, kneeling, but not in prayer, at the roadside and breaking stones for the highways of the republic, and she was almost envious, forever jealous of every kind of human experience that she had not had. Then, between the hawthorn hedges, whose thick, ferny tangles bordered deep-set roads, she saw two shadows lengthening, and, lifting her head, she sniffed the breeze with new zest, for the shadows pleased her. She had no need to see the forms that cast them to know of intertwined arms and lips that met and met again. One glimpse she caught of the girl's transfigured face, but that of the slender lad at her side was hidden. The old lady drew a deep sigh of satisfaction, for the sight of young love was to her as the very breath of her nostrils, and it always

gave her the feeling of being on the very track of the meaning of things which had so long eluded her. For some reason it seemed nearer in other stories than in her own. Now she laughed aloud, as she watched unseen. Was that one of the sudden seizures of which the mother had complained? Probably Gladys had escaped through the agency of that kind, elderly maid; it was pitiful to see the terrified way in which she kept turning to see if they were pursued. When the lovers passed Mrs. Faunce she was kneeling at the side of the road, helping the old stone-breaking woman, and they did not see her.

"Have you the courage to do it, Gladys?" the young man was saying, and the girl's answer rang out clearly:

"Yes!"

That night something really happened. It was dim moonlight, but the stealing figure by the wall of the Villa Camelot was clearly visible to the keen old eyes that watched from the window of the Hotel Merlin. Presently the villa gates opened ever so little, ever so softly, and a dark form stole out. For an instant the two dusky shadows melted into one, and then Mrs. Faunce watched them as they went swiftly down the long, shaded avenue. The sudden hoot of a little owl sounded out satirically in the silence, and the listener echoed it with a groan. Those two young things were taking their lives in their hands, she knew, and running away together, for better or for worse, and she did not lift a finger to stop them, being sorry chiefly that she had found no opportunity to help.

"Few enough chances in a lifetime to be happy," she mused; "what little there is here they are wise to take." She felt lonelier than ever after they had gone, and got out her time-table, for she would go back to Paris in a day of two.

"That's all over," she said to herself as she went to bed.

But it was far from being all over, for there was that night in Villa Camelot a commotion of which Mrs. Faunce knew nothing, and she was sleeping soundly when a carriage drove furiously away from the villa gates at midnight. The next afternoon there was a commotion about which she knew much, a sound of servants' voices chattering excitedly, a picture of a closed carriage stopping at the gate, of a pale girl,



with head bent, escorted inside the villa walls by two men, so ostentatiously dressed as mere citizens that she knew them at once as detectives. The mother marched down the walk, with the air of a commander drilling his troops; Mrs. Faunce was glad that she could not hear the invectives poured out on that fair bowed head. Poor little prisoner, captured and brought back to her cage! Donna Quixote buried her face in her hands in agonized meditation. What could she do?

Her polite call, a day or two after, was not fruitful of results. Insisting upon seeing Gladys, she was at last permitted to, the mother evidently wishing to conceal the fact that anything was wrong. A minute only did she have for free speech.

"Cheer up, dear!" she whispered, putting her hand on the girl's damp forehead. Gladys shook her head.

"There isn't any hope," she said.

"Now, 'tis only youth that ever thinks there's no hope!" asserted the visitor with fine spirit. "'Tis worth living for, love."

"Is it worth dying for?" asked Gladys abruptly. Her eyes had a look of strain and of finality which escaped the old lady because of the moisture in her own.

"To be sure it is!" cried Mrs. Faunce. "What else is, if love isn't?"

The gallant old lady was ashamed of herself. Even she, heroine of many contests from which she almost invariably came off victor, found herself shivering at the sound of the military mother's returning footsteps as they echoed along the hardwood floor. She was afraid, so far down was she shaken by the frightened beating of this little heart! Disconsolate at her inability to help, she wandered forth after dinner, contrary to her usual habit, suddenly aware of the tragedy of this remote, desolate coast, with its endless, ill-fated fishing-boats, sailing out over this sinister water. A horror came upon her of she knew not what, and the gathering shadows in the west, the creeping twilight over the sea, the fitful gleams of a clouded moon only emphasized it. How long she sat there in the damp air she did not know; presently she became aware of human voices near. Listened? Of course. She had yet to hear the bit of human speech to which she would not listen, and it would have been physically impossible for her to close her ears to the sound of vivid passion here.

"Hal," said the girl, "it isn't any use."

There was no answer, only a long, long, breathless kiss, and all the air grew tense with silence.

"I am watched every minute, night and day," the girl's voice went on, "and I cannot get away again, any more than I could from London Tower. It sounds like the Middle Ages, but it is true. Jane let me come to-night, because I promised her it was the last time, the very last time."

"I am sure that, next time, I can get you away safely," said the boy stoutly.

"They would bring us back again; it would always be the same." The note of surrender in the girl's voice startled the old lady.

"But I won't give up, alive or dead!" Whatever of boyishness there was in the tones, the eternal masculine vibrated there bravely, and Mrs. Faunce nodded in delight.

"Good boy!" she chuckled, "the old-fashioned kind."

So she sat and listened, while great waves of life rolled over the two young bowed heads.

"Even if we did escape again—think of my mother sending detectives after me, detectives!—even if we did escape the police and went to America, we could do nothing. You could not earn money, for you have not health, nor could I. They have taught us no way of taking care of ourselves, and there is so much besides ourselves to think of."

A fine, creeping scorn was on the old lady's face; just like the present generation, always thinking about money, even in grand moments like these! The calculating young things could never lose themselves in finer feelings.

"It kills me to hear you say such things!" cried the boy. Mrs. Faunce's hands were clenched at her sides, as she instinctively felt that his were clenched.

"There isn't any hope," said Gladys, in dull despair. "Something must be done, for I am afraid. Why not now?"

As the old lady listened, she realized, in dismay touched with vivid appreciation, that these two young creatures, in this twentieth century, free children of the freest race, were actually planning, impelled by love, to take the long leap into the dark. They meant it, the desperate young creat-



ures! She was proud of them, and all her aged frame thrilled to the wonder and the mystery of the moment. Some were there left, even in this iron-clad generation, to whom love was stronger than death.

But she did not realize, even when she saw them clasped in each other's arms for a last long embrace, wherein vibrated great issues of life and death—she did not realize that they meant to do it now. It was only the quick working of her quick wit that made her leap in time. Standing together, at the edge of a deep chasm, hand in hand, they paused to kiss once more before they sprang.

"When I say 'Now,'" said the lad, "jump far!"

Another second and she had been too late! Stung by sudden, awful fear, she scrambled over the few intervening rocks and grasped the skirt of the girl's serge gown, the tail of the lad's sack coat. She caught and clung, falling upon her knees as she did so, thinking only how dark these rocks were to leap from into the dark water below. The bright moon, struggling with dark masses of cloud, revealed the slow tears trickling down over her wrinkled cheeks from her shining eyes.

"To think that you two young things cared enough for that!" said Mrs. Faunce. "Poor children! Poor children!" She stroked the girl's foot, the lad's shoulder. Gladys leaned against a great stone, pallid, with eyes closed, and the boy crouched low upon the rocks, his face hidden in his arms, trembling in every fibre.

"Few there is this day would die for love," said the old lady solemnly, relaxing her grasp long enough to dry her eyes, and hastily taking hold again. The girl said nothing; the shadows of eternity were resting still on that young face.

"And the wonder of your being English!" chuckled Mrs. Faunce. "I wouldn't have expected it of you! If you were Irish lad and lass it would be more natural."

"I'm half Irish," said the boy, from under his supporting arms.

"You are?" She shook him vigorously in her delight. "Sure the sound of your voice would prove it! 'Tis only an Irish lad could be such a lover! Now tell me your good Irish name."

"John Henry Bascome," he answered, sitting up; the moonlight shone full upon his face.

"John Henry Bascome!" cried the old lady. "*You*!"—but words would not suffice to express her feelings as this bit of life's pageant translated itself from pure romance into the misdeeds of her next of kin. "You here, me own grandson, with me own blood in your veins, makin' a coward of yourself in this way! How dare you look me in the face? 'Twas courage you should have drunk in with your mother's milk, she that was me own daughter. Shame on you for a coward, a coward!" she stormed. "Do you know what you're throwin' away? Life, I tell you, *life*; 'tis a wonderful thing, and how do you know when you'll get it again? When will legs and brain and a heart be meted out to you again that was too big a coward to use 'em?"

"Legs," murmured the boy bitterly, touching his lame foot.

"But you said," gasped the bewildered girl, looking about with dazed, wide eyes, "you said yourself that love was worth dying for, and it hurt; it hurt too much." The old lady turned in a fury.

"Hurt, you baby! Thank heaven that it does hurt, and that you've come to the stage in the great panorama of bein' when you're permitted to be hurt. Would you be a clod or a stick or a stone by choice when you've had life offered to you, and pain? Down on your knees, the two of you, and thank the saints for the hurt of it. 'Tis a privilege and an opportunity."

There were voices calling here and there over the rocks, and dark figures, lantern-lighted, searching here and there in the moonlight. Gladys shivered and covered her face with her hands.

"I am afraid," she said simply. "We did not know what else to do. Hal's father and mother are coming; they must be here now, for Mamma telegraphed. Mamma is——"

At the sound of her mother's voice, calling "Gladys, Gladys!" she trembled; then she was gathered close to the old lady's tear-wet bosom.

"Come to me arms, dears, and I'll make you a chance to live your lives as you want 'em. Jack, dear, did Granny ever lie to you? It cuts me like a knife to see your poor hurt foot, and to know you are driven to this. Wait! If me daughter has ceased to obey me, 'tis me daughter she shall be no longer."

The voices drew nearer; dark forms passed a few paces away, and Mrs. Faunce knew that the tall man who held the lantern was no other than the English son-in-law whom she had long scorned for his lack of feeling.

"Stay quiet where you are," commanded the old lady. "Play me no tricks when me back is turned with your silly jumpin' into the water. Jack, little Jack, when you sat on me lap as a baby I told you to be a man, a man! Be one now!"

When the searchers neared the summit of the highest cliff they saw, under the shifting light and shade of the uncertain moonlight, a bizarre figure standing there, weird as any witch or fay of Breton story. In silence the old lady waited as they drew nearer, the moonlight revealing the stricken faces of the women, and the grave anxiety of this gray-haired man. None of the anxious questions did she answer as to whether she had seen the fugitives, and she heeded none of the outcries as she was recognized. Her eyes were fixed sternly upon those of Mrs. Reginald Lucas.

"Do you know what you've done, you wooden image of an English mother? You've driven your daughter to her death!"

The mother's outcry was drowned by Mrs. Faunce's next words.

"And you, Ellen Aileel Denleigh Bascome, me daughter, to whom I gave life,

why have you driven with your foolish quarrellings those two poor young things into the jaws of eternity?" Her own, sharp set, seemed so grim an image of those of eternity that the spectators shuddered.

"My God!" said the man, shaken by great sobs. The old lady watched him admiringly. "I didn't suppose he had it in him," she murmured. Both women were weeping, their faces covered with their hands, and Mrs. Faunce looked on with grim satisfaction.

"My son! My son!" moaned Jack's heart-broken mother.

"O Gladys!" It was no wooden image that made that outcry.

"Tell me now," demanded the old lady, from her vantage ground of higher rock, "if those two were alive before you this minute, would you leave your silly bickering and let them have each other for better or worse?"

"God knows we would," said the stricken father.

"And you?" The gaunt forefinger pointed to Mrs. Lucas.

"I would," she answered, between her sobs.

"Then go yonder and find them on the rocks, alive but by the grace of God and the quickness of me old muscles. And may God have mercy on your miserable souls if you betray the promise you have made me."

## DECEMBER

By Ethel Hobart

Oh, the bare old trees in their sweeping grays,  
And the gleam of the sapphire sea,  
And the sun and the tang of these brilliant days  
Are bread and wine to me!

Oh, the firm white road beneath my tread  
And the stubble, pinkish-brown,  
And the hills in their wonderful purple-red,  
And the clear-cut distant town—

And the stately glow in the orange west  
Still and lingering—  
Have brought to weary hearts more rest  
Than all the balms of spring.