

other day," Rolin remarked, "by a man whom I'm sure I've never seen. He said I hadn't an ideal in the world beyond getting more and more wealth. But I have. If I had had a son, I should have wanted to found a family. Penrhyn's nearer to me than anyone but you. If you and he marry, you will be the richest couple probably in the world. I'd like that. Besides, Penrhyn has his father's grasp of things: he won't be merely a spender. You can be proud of him for something besides his good looks. So that if I turn out to be the ancestor of a herd of wastrels, they won't show their character till I'm in my grave."

Adela understood that her father was talking to her with deep seriousness.

"Father, I'm very fond of Penrhyn," she said, "and I've often wondered what it would be like to marry him. I recognize what an advantage it will be to his wife that he cares about business: she won't have to work too hard to amuse him. Then he's amiable, and as considerate as one can expect a man to be. But I don't love him—as I've heard other girls speak of love."

"You're twenty-five," her father said, "and your friends are settling down. You've no one in the world but me, and I'm not eternal. Of course you can marry at any age; but each year diminishes your chances of marrying a man who will love you for yourself as Penrhyn does."

"I've thought of all that," she murmured.

"The kind of love that you are dreaming of does not come to one woman in ten thousand. What the average woman is lucky to have is safety in love. You'd have that."

They paced the length of the terrace before they spoke again. Then Adela asked:

"Father, do you want this marriage?"

"I've set my heart and mind on it," Rolin replied.

"Very well," Adela said, "I'll marry him sometime: not just now, but sometime. I'll tell him so today."

"I know I can rely on your promise, Adela."

She felt a sudden drop of spirit, as if she had shackled her freedom too lightly. Then she said gravely, "I dare say we'll be very happy. I've always been happy, Father."

AN hour later she saw young Hale crossing the tennis court, and, her grave mood scattering, she threw down the book she was reading and went to meet him. "Welcome, Penrhyn!" she called to him. "I've such a charming plan!"

He was a dark, somber man; but his face lightened as he looked at her. "What's the plan? All your plans are charming."

"I'm going to propose to you this time, instead of letting you propose to me."

He drew his brows together. "It's a slight enough thing to you, isn't it?" he asked a little bitterly.

"Oh, Penrhyn dear, I don't mean to be flippant! It's just that I don't know how to surrender—or even whether you want a surrender. I care more for you than for anyone; but you'll have to teach me to love you. Give me three months to get used to not belonging to myself any more, and then, if you want me still, tell the whole world we're engaged, and I'll marry you as soon as you like."

"Adela!" he breathed.

"Oh, Penrhyn," she murmured, "don't think I don't appreciate the fact that you love me! It's just that I don't know what it must be to feel like that."

"Adela—my dearest, can't we go into the house? Can't we be alone?"

"Let's go for a canter instead," she proposed. "Remember, I'm still—very shy!"

EARLY in the afternoon Adela took one of the cars and went for a smart drive alone. This was strictly forbidden by her father; but her nerves were a bit unstrung as a result of the serious decision she had made that morning. One doesn't sign one's life away to another without a certain tenseness of emotion. Adela felt that rapid driving would smooth away her fears and bring her back her usual ease of mind.

She went a good many miles, coming at last to a bit of woodland, wild and lone as if it were in the heart of a forgotten forest. It was entered by a narrow lane, and she drove the car along this as far as she could. Then she dismounted and walked into the silent depths of the trees. She found a glade, narrow, but tall and arched like a cathedral. She threw herself on the long, thick grass, and looked upward. Gradually her perturbation left her and she felt her old elation. Life was a glorious adventure. Presently some suggestion from the arches of the trees, or perhaps from one of her bird neighbors, moved her, and she began to sing almost the first song she had ever heard,—the time-worn but still moving duet from "Il Trovatore."

She had sung but a note or two when the music was taken from her by an untrained but mellow barytone. "Out of the love I bear thee—" rang the voice.

For all Adela's careful training, for all her sheltered life, there was about her a touch of wildness, more than a little pagan imagination. She could not see the singer: she felt as if his voice and hers were alone in the woods, and miles apart. With a curious sense of unreality, she accepted the key he had chosen, and let her voice rise in a thin but sweet soprano.

With a strange elation the two voices kept on till the very last note had sounded. Then Adela heard the pushing aside of bushes, a quick tread, and her singing mate stood before her. He was a tall, broad young man, with red, curling hair, and a plain but winning face. He carried his hat in his hand: not as if in salutation of her, but as if he walked more freely with bare head. He wore a well worn tramping suit, and he had a small knapsack on his back. For one moment their eyes met in such a glance as Adela had never exchanged with any other man. Then he bowed, and turning away walked across the glade and disappeared among the trees on the other side.

"But how perfect!" thought Adela. "It was a little idyl, our song, and he would not spoil it by a word. That is the sort of experience not worth describing, and yet one always cherishes it."

She drove home slowly, rather subdued in spirit. Life had been care-free so far. It would be pleasant if one could always remain a girl; but age would wait for no one, and it was high time she married Penrhyn Hale.

She and her father dined with the Hales that night, and she was all that a prospective fiancée and daughter-in-law should have been. There was a good deal of flattery and some pathos in the way the two elder men were unable to conceal their pride in the young couple. Adela asked herself what right, except the right of chance, she and Penrhyn had to have such a golden future decreed for them.

THE next morning she was walking past the Hale estate with her favorite Airedale when she was startled into a standstill by the sight of two figures coming out of the carriage gate. One was Penrhyn, and the other the unknown singer. Both men lifted their hats. "Good morning, Adela," Hale said. "I wonder if you chance to remember Baldwin Crane? He visited me when I was about twelve, and, as I remember, he tried to improve your tennis."

Adela held out her hand. "I remember vaguely," she said. "At any rate my game did improve about that time. Are you stopping with Mr. Hale?"

"I suppose I am, in a way," Crane said. "I'm to be his secretary,—social, more or less, for this summer, and business in the autumn, when we really buckle down to work."

"Of course he's stopping with me," Hale said. "We don't mean to let our work spoil our summer fun."

Adela saw a sudden glint of determination in Crane's eyes, which she knew meant that if he were an employee he intended to earn his salt. She remembered faintly a colossal failure that Crane's father had made, and then the emigration of the whole family to the West. And now young Crane had come back to make his fortune in New York! It never occurred to Adela that any man who worked could be working for anything but a fortune. As she looked at Crane's smiling, plain face, she wondered if it could have been a dream that their voices had met the day before. Certainly he looked conventional enough now.

"It's a holiday with me today," Crane said. "Don't you think, Pen, I might see what my labor over Miss Rolin has really done for tennis?"

"We'll get someone else and have doubles," Hale assented. "May we turn back with you, Adela?"

Adela smiled consent. Crane had become a stranger to her. It was not until evening that he won back what he had lost. She and her father were giving a rather large dinner party, and Crane and the Hales were present.

Afterward Crane, in a quiet corner of the terrace,

told Rolin of his father's life on his North Yakima ranch. Rolin and the older Crane had known each other well, and the young man spoke frankly when he described the hundreds of acres that his father had bought with the remnants of his fortune, when he told of how the older man had lost his city ambitions, when he pictured the new, peaceful life the Cranes had built up for themselves. He spoke to Adela rather than to any other listener. She felt his imagination flame to hers as he talked of acre-wide droves of cattle, of miles of white-blossoming apple trees in the spring, and of the gorgeous sunsets of the short winter days. He had figures and crop statistics for Rolin, but pictures for Adela. She learned too that he had come to New York to please his father rather than himself, and she guessed that whatever his ambitions were they did not lie along the road where Rolin and the elder Hale had succeeded and where the elder Crane had failed.

Afterward Adela walked with him in the moonlight: not for long, but long enough to realize that she had never known a man quite like him. That night she dreamed of him, and woke suddenly to find her room silver with moonlight, and the memory of his voice in her ears. When she went to sleep at last it was with a determination to fan her affection for Hale into a strong flame. Yet the next day when she saw Hale coming she felt a quick relief that for three months she still had a measure of freedom.

IN those first days of her acquaintance with Crane, Adela fought against her attraction for him. She tried to regard him critically as a dependent of Hale's. In the difficult position of guest and employee she had to admit that he conducted himself perfectly. He was neither subservient nor too much at home, and he met with perfect dignity the attitude of certain of Hale's friends who did not care to consider him on the same footing as themselves. She could find no flaw in his conduct, nothing tiresome in his personality. He was not exactly witty, nor a fluent talker; but he had a droll point of view, and unflagging good humor. At first Adela avoided his society, and then she sought it.

Before July was well over she admitted to herself that she loved him. Now, for all her beauty and power, for all the joyful confidence in herself that life had taught her, she was as humble, as uncertain, and as unhappy as the poorest suppliant in the wide realm of love. That Crane knew Hale loved her there could be no doubt: their world understood that a match between two such great fortunes would be suitable. Adela told herself that if she and Crane were meant for each other, love would come to them and all obstacles would be torn down. Yet this philosophy did not content her heart: she would have employed almost any device to insure the coming of love.

The weight of her secret oppressed her. It seemed to her as if those about her would surely have discovered it, had it not been for the appalling and momentous event that lifted them out of their own affairs and made them share the desperate tragedy of all Europe,—the war.

Discussion over that was so keen that Adela's unusual tenseness was unnoticed, even by Penrhyn Hale. Like his father and Rolin, Hale was concerned about the effect of the war upon their own property, and upon Wall Street operations. Adela told herself that her life was nothing beside the war of the world, and yet she felt that her suspense was unendurable.

IT was chance that brought it to an end. She was riding with Crane and Hale, trying a horse which her father had just bought at an exorbitant rate from a Belgian who was going back to fight for his fatherland. Hale had dismounted to tighten his girth, when his horse took fright at a passing car and ran away. Adela's horse followed, and Crane, galloping after her, saw that she was losing control of it. They raced on; then Adela's horse turned up a narrow lane, shied at a stone post, and threw her. In a minute Crane was kneeling by her side. Her eyes were closed and she was very white.

"Adela!" he called in a hoarse voice.

"Are you hurt, my darling?"

Then she opened her eyes. "Not now," she said, "not since you love me."

He helped her to her feet.

"We must not talk of that," he said. "Forget my presumption. Are you hurt, Miss Rolin?"

"Your Adela is safe, now that you love her!" she replied, with a full, sweet look.

"I am no traitor," he said. "If you are able, we must go back to Hale."

"I know all you could say to me about treachery and obligations, and my father's wealth and my pledged word to Penrhyn, and I tell you it weighs nothing with me," Adela said. "We will speak again of all this; but nothing under heaven will make me marry a man I do not love, nor keep me from marrying the man I do love."

He helped her mount, caught Hale's

