CLASSICS TO GO

LUCY MAUD MONTGOMERY SHORT STORIES

1905 TO 1906

L. M. MONTGOMERY

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Short Stories 1905 to 1906

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A Correspondence and A ClimaxToC

At sunset Sidney hurried to her room to take off the soiled and faded cotton dress she had worn while milking. She had milked eight cows and pumped water for the milk-cans afterward in the fag-end of a hot summer day. She did that every night, but tonight she had hurried more than usual because she wanted to get her letter written before the early farm bedtime. She had been thinking it out while she milked the cows in the stuffy little pen behind the barn. This monthly letter was the only pleasure and stimulant in her life. Existence would have been, so Sidney thought, a dreary, unbearable blank without it. She cast aside her milking-dress with a thrill of distaste that tingled to her rosy fingertips. As she slipped into her blue-print afternoon dress her aunt called to her from below. Sidney ran out to the dark little entry and leaned over the stair railing. Below in the kitchen there was a hubbub of laughing, crying, quarrelling children, and a reek of bad tobacco smoke drifted up to the girl's disgusted nostrils.

Aunt Jane was standing at the foot of the stairs with a lamp in one hand and a year-old baby clinging to the other. She was a big shapeless woman with a round good-natured face—cheerful and vulgar as a sunflower was Aunt Jane at all times and occasions.

"I want to run over and see how Mrs. Brixby is this evening, Siddy, and you must take care of the baby till I get back."

Sidney sighed and went downstairs for the baby. It never would have occurred to her to protest or be petulant about it. She had all her aunt's sweetness of disposition, if she resembled her in nothing else. She had not grumbled

because she had to rise at four that morning, get breakfast, milk the cows, bake bread, prepare seven children for school, get dinner, preserve twenty quarts of strawberries, get tea, and milk the cows again. All her days were alike as far as hard work and dullness went, but she accepted them cheerfully and uncomplainingly. But she did resent having to look after the baby when she wanted to write her letter.

She carried the baby to her room, spread a quilt on the floor for him to sit on, and gave him a box of empty spools to play with. Fortunately he was a phlegmatic infant, fond of staying in one place, and not given to roaming about in search of adventures; but Sidney knew she would have to keep an eye on him, and it would be distracting to literary effort.

She got out her box of paper and sat down by the little table at the window with a small kerosene lamp at her elbow. The room was small—a mere box above the kitchen which Sidney shared with two small cousins. Her bed and the cot where the little girls slept filled up almost all the available space. The furniture was poor, but everything was neat—it was the only neat room in the house, indeed, for tidiness was no besetting virtue of Aunt Jane's.

Opposite Sidney was a small muslined and befrilled toilet-table, above which hung an eight-by-six-inch mirror, in which Sidney saw herself reflected as she devoutly hoped other people did not see her. Just at that particular angle one eye appeared to be as large as an orange, while the other was the size of a pea, and the mouth zigzagged from ear to ear. Sidney hated that mirror as virulently as she could hate anything. It seemed to her to typify all that was unlovely in her life. The mirror of existence into which her fresh young soul had looked for twenty years gave back to her wistful gaze just such distortions of fair hopes and ideals.

Half of the little table by which she sat was piled high with books—old books, evidently well read and well-bred books, classics of fiction and verse every one of them, and all bearing on the flyleaf the name of Sidney Richmond, thereby meaning not the girl at the table, but her college-bred young father who had died the day before she was born. Her mother had died the day after, and Sidney thereupon had come into the hands of good Aunt Jane, with those books for her dowry, since nothing else was left after the expenses of the double funeral had been paid.

One of the books had Sidney Richmond's name printed on the title-page instead of written on the flyleaf. It was a thick little volume of poems, published in his college days—musical, unsubstantial, pretty little poems, every one of which the girl Sidney loved and knew by heart.

Sidney dropped her pointed chin in her hands and looked dreamily out into the moonlit night, while she thought her letter out a little more fully before beginning to write. Her big brown eyes were full of wistfulness and romance; for Sidney was romantic, albeit a faithful and understanding acquaintance with her father's books had given to her romance refinement and reason, and the delicacy of her own nature had imparted to it a self-respecting bias.

Presently she began to write, with a flush of real excitement on her face. In the middle of things the baby choked on a small twist spool and Sidney had to catch him up by the heels and hold him head downward until the trouble was ejected. Then she had to soothe him, and finally write the rest of her letter holding him on one arm and protecting the epistle from the grabs of his sticky little fingers. It was certainly letter-writing under difficulties, but Sidney seemed to deal with them mechanically. Her soul and understanding were elsewhere.

Four years before, when Sidney was sixteen, still calling herself a schoolgirl by reason of the fact that she could be spared to attend school four months in the winter when work was slack, she had been much interested in the "Maple Leaf" department of the Montreal weekly her uncle took. It was a page given over to youthful Canadians and filled with their contributions in the way of letters, verses, and prize essays. Noms de plume were signed to these, badges were sent to those who joined the Maple Leaf Club, and a general delightful sense of mystery pervaded the department.

Often a letter concluded with a request to the club members to correspond with the writer. One such request went from Sidney under the pen-name of "Ellen Douglas." The girl was lonely in Plainfield; she had no companions or associates such as she cared for; the Maple Leaf Club represented all that her life held of outward interest, and she longed for something more.

Only one answer came to "Ellen Douglas," and that was forwarded to her by the long-suffering editor of "The Maple Leaf." It was from John Lincoln of the Bar N Ranch, Alberta. He wrote that, although his age debarred him from membership in the club (he was twenty, and the limit was eighteen), he read the letters of the department with much interest, and often had thought of answering some of the requests for correspondents. He never had done so, but "Ellen Douglas's" letter was so interesting that he had decided to write to her. Would she be kind enough to correspond with him? Life on the Bar N, ten miles from the outposts of civilization, was lonely. He was two years out from the east, and had not yet forgotten to be homesick at times.

Sidney liked the letter and answered it. Since then they had written to each other regularly. There was nothing sentimental, hinted at or implied, in the correspondence.

Whatever the faults of Sidney's romantic visions were, they did not tend to precocious flirtation. The Plainfield boys, attracted by her beauty and repelled by her indifference and aloofness, could have told that. She never expected to meet John Lincoln, nor did she wish to do so. In the correspondence itself she found her pleasure.

John Lincoln wrote breezy accounts of ranch life and adventures on the far western plains, so alien and remote from snug, humdrum Plainfield life that Sidney always had the sensation of crossing a gulf when she opened a letter from the Bar N. As for Sidney's own letter, this is the way it read as she wrote it:

"The Evergreens," Plainfield.

Dear Mr. Lincoln:

The very best letter I can write in the half-hour before the carriage will be at the door to take me to Mrs. Braddon's dance shall be yours tonight. I am sitting here in the library arrayed in my smartest, newest, whitest, silkiest gown, with a string of pearls which Uncle James gave me today about my throat—the dear, glistening, sheeny things! And I am looking forward to the "dances and delight" of the evening with keen anticipation.

You asked me in your last letter if I did not sometimes grow weary of my endless round of dances and dinners and social functions. No, no, never! I enjoy every one of them, every minute of them. I love life and its bloom and brilliancy; I love meeting new people; I love the ripple of music, the hum of laughter and conversation. Every morning when I awaken the new day seems to me to be a good fairy who will bring me some beautiful gift of joy.

The gift she gave me today was my sunset gallop on my grey mare Lady. The thrill of it is in my veins yet. I distanced the others who rode with me and led the homeward canter

alone, rocking along a dark, gleaming road, shadowy with tall firs and pines, whose balsam made all the air resinous around me. Before me was a long valley filled with purple dusk, and beyond it meadows of sunset and great lakes of saffron and rose where a soul might lose itself in colour. On my right was the harbour, silvered over with a rising moon. Oh, it was all glorious—the clear air with its salt-sea tang, the aroma of the pines, the laughter of my friends behind me, the spring and rhythm of Lady's grey satin body beneath me! I wanted to ride on so forever, straight into the heart of the sunset.

Then home and to dinner. We have a houseful of guests at present—one of them an old statesman with a massive silver head, and eyes that have looked into people's thoughts so long that you have an uncanny feeling that they can see right through your soul and read motives you dare not avow even to yourself. I was terribly in awe of him at first, but when I got acquainted with him I found him charming. He is not above talking delightful nonsense even to a girl. I sat by him at dinner, and he talked to me—not nonsense, either, this time. He told me of his political contests and diplomatic battles; he was wise and witty and whimsical. I felt as if I were drinking some rare, stimulating mental wine. What a privilege it is to meet such men and take a peep through their wise eyes at the fascinating game of empire-building!

I met another clever man a few evenings ago. A lot of us went for a sail on the harbour. Mrs. Braddon's house party came too. We had three big white boats that skimmed down the moonlit channel like great white sea birds. There was another boat far across the harbour, and the people in it were singing. The music drifted over the water to us, so sad and sweet and beguiling that I could have cried for very pleasure. One of Mrs. Braddon's guests said to me:

"That is the soul of music with all its sense and earthliness refined away."

I hadn't thought about him before—I hadn't even caught his name in the general introduction. He was a tall, slight man, with a worn, sensitive face and iron-grey hair—a quiet man who hadn't laughed or talked. But he began to talk to me then, and I forgot all about the others. I never had listened to anybody in the least like him. He talked of books and music, of art and travel. He had been all over the world, and had seen everything everybody else had seen and everything they hadn't too, I think. I seemed to be looking into an enchanted mirror where all my own dreams and ideals were reflected back to me, but made, oh, so much more beautiful!

On my way home after the Braddon people had left us somebody asked me how I liked Paul Moore! The man I had been talking with was Paul Moore, the great novelist! I was almost glad I hadn't known it while he was talking to me—I should have been too awed and reverential to have really enjoyed his conversation. As it was, I had contradicted him twice, and he had laughed and liked it. But his books will always have a new meaning to me henceforth, through the insight he himself has given me.

It is such meetings as these that give life its sparkle for me. But much of its abiding sweetness comes from my friendship with Margaret Raleigh. You will be weary of my rhapsodies over her. But she is such a rare and wonderful woman; much older then I am, but so young in heart and soul and freshness of feeling! She is to me mother and sister and wise, clear-sighted friend. To her I go with all my perplexities and hopes and triumphs. She has sympathy and understanding for my every mood. I love life so much for giving me such a friendship!

This morning I wakened at dawn and stole away to the shore before anyone else was up. I had a delightful run-away. The long, low-lying meadows between "The Evergreens" and the shore were dewy and fresh in that first light, that was as fine and purely tinted as the heart of one of my white roses. On the beach the water was purring in little blue ripples, and, oh, the sunrise out there beyond the harbour! All the eastern Heaven was abloom with it. And there was a wind that came dancing and whistling up the channel to replace the beautiful silence with a music more beautiful still.

The rest of the folks were just coming downstairs when I got back to breakfast. They were all yawny, and some were grumpy, but I had washed my being in the sunrise and felt as blithesome as the day. Oh, life is so good to live!

Tomorrow Uncle James's new vessel, the *White Lady*, is to be launched. We are going to make a festive occasion of it, and I am to christen her with a bottle of cobwebby old wine.

But I hear the carriage, and Aunt Jane is calling me. I had a great deal more to say—about your letter, your big "round-up" and your tribulations with your Chinese cook—but I've only time now to say goodbye. You wish me a lovely time at the dance and a full programme, don't you?

Yours sincerely,
Sidney Richmond.

Aunt Jane came home presently and carried away her sleeping baby. Sidney said her prayers, went to bed, and slept soundly and serenely.

She mailed her letter the next day, and a month later an answer came. Sidney read it as soon as she left the post office, and walked the rest of the way home as in a nightmare, staring straight ahead of her with wide-open, unseeing brown eyes.

John Lincoln's letter was short, but the pertinent paragraph of it burned itself into Sidney's brain. He wrote:

I am going east for a visit. It is six years since I was home, and it seems like three times six. I shall go by the C.P.R., which passes through Plainfield, and I mean to stop off for a day. You will let me call and see you, won't you? I shall have to take your permission for granted, as I shall be gone before a letter from you can reach the Bar N. I leave for the east in five days, and shall look forward to our meeting with all possible interest and pleasure.

Sidney did not sleep that night, but tossed restlessly about or cried in her pillow. She was so pallid and hollow-eyed the next morning that Aunt Jane noticed it, and asked her what the matter was.

"Nothing," said Sidney sharply. Sidney had never spoken sharply to her aunt before. The good woman shook her head. She was afraid the child was "taking something."

"Don't do much today, Siddy," she said kindly. "Just lie around and take it easy till you get rested up. I'll fix you a dose of quinine."

Sidney refused to lie around and take it easy. She swallowed the quinine meekly enough, but she worked fiercely all day, hunting out superfluous tasks to do. That night she slept the sleep of exhaustion, but her dreams were unenviable and the awakening was terrible.

Any day, any hour, might bring John Lincoln to Plainfield. What should she do? Hide from him? Refuse to see him? But he would find out the truth just the same; she would lose his friendships and respect just as surely. Sidney trod the way of the transgressor, and found that its thorns pierced to bone and marrow. Everything had come to an end—nothing was left to her! In the untried recklessness of twenty

untempered years she wished she could die before John Lincoln came to Plainfield. The eyes of youth could not see how she could possibly live afterward.

Some days later a young man stepped from the C.P.R. train at Plainfield station and found his way to the one small hotel the place boasted. After getting his supper he asked the proprietor if he could direct him to "The Evergreens."

Caleb Williams looked at his guest in bewilderment. "Never heerd o' such a place," he said.

"It is the name of Mr. Conway's estate—Mr. James Conway," explained John Lincoln.

"Oh, Jim Conway's place!" said Caleb. "Didn't know that was what he called it. Sartin I kin tell you whar' to find it. You see that road out thar'? Well, just follow it straight along for a mile and a half till you come to a blacksmith's forge. Jim Conway's house is just this side of it on the right—back from the road a smart piece and no other handy. You can't mistake it."

John Lincoln did not expect to mistake it, once he found it; he knew by heart what it appeared like from Sidney's description: an old stately mansion of mellowed brick, covered with ivy and set back from the highway amid fine ancestral trees, with a pine-grove behind it, a river to the left, and a harbour beyond.

He strode along the road in the warm, ruddy sunshine of early evening. It was not a bad-looking road at all; the farmsteads sprinkled along it were for the most part snug and wholesome enough; yet somehow it was different from what he had expected it to be. And there was no harbour or glimpse of distant sea visible. Had the hotel-keeper made a mistake? Perhaps he had meant some other James Conway.

Presently he found himself before the blacksmith's forge. Beside it was a rickety, unpainted gate opening into a

snake-fenced lane feathered here and there with scrubby little spruces. It ran down a bare hill, crossed a little ravine full of young white-stemmed birches, and up another bare hill to an equally bare crest where a farmhouse was perched—a farmhouse painted a stark, staring yellow and the ugliest thing in farmhouses that John Lincoln had ever seen, even among the log shacks of the west. He knew now that he had been misdirected, but as there seemed to be nobody about the forge he concluded that he had better go to the yellow house and inquire within. He passed down the lane and over the little rustic bridge that spanned the brook. Just beyond was another home-made gate of poles.

Lincoln opened it, or rather he had his hand on the hasp of twisted withes which secured it, when he was suddenly arrested by the apparition of a girl, who flashed around the curve of young birch beyond and stood before him with panting breath and quivering lips.

"I beg your pardon," said John Lincoln courteously, dropping the gate and lifting his hat. "I am looking for the house of Mr. James Conway—'The Evergreens.' Can you direct me to it?"

"That is Mr. James Conway's house," said the girl, with the tragic air and tone of one driven to desperation and an impatient gesture of her hand toward the yellow nightmare above them.

"I don't think he can be the one I mean," said Lincoln perplexedly. "The man I am thinking of has a niece, Miss Richmond."

"There is no other James Conway in Plainfield," said the girl. "This is his place—nobody calls it 'The Evergreens' but myself. I am Sidney Richmond."

For a moment they looked at each other across the gate, sheer amazement and bewilderment holding John Lincoln

mute. Sidney, burning with shame, saw that this stranger was exceedingly good to look upon—tall, clean-limbed, broad-shouldered, with clear-cut bronzed features and a chin and eyes that would have done honour to any man. John Lincoln, among all his confused sensations, was aware that this slim, agitated young creature before him was the loveliest thing he ever had seen, so lithe was her figure, so glossy and dark and silken her bare, wind-ruffled hair, so big and brown and appealing her eyes, so delicately oval her flushed cheeks. He felt that she was frightened and in trouble, and he wanted to comfort and reassure her. But how could she be Sidney Richmond?

"I don't understand," he said perplexedly.

"Oh!" Sidney threw out her hands in a burst of passionate protest. "No, and you never will understand—I can't make you understand."

"I don't understand," said John Lincoln again. "Can you be Sidney Richmond—the Sidney Richmond who has written to me for four years?"

"I am."

"Then, those letters—"

"Were all lies," said Sidney bluntly and desperately. "There was nothing true in them—nothing at all. This is my home. We are poor. Everything I told you about it and my life was just imagination."

"Then why did you write them?" he asked blankly. "Why did you deceive me?"

"Oh, I didn't mean to deceive you! I never thought of such a thing. When you asked me to write to you I wanted to, but I didn't know what to write about to a stranger. I just couldn't write you about my life here, not because it was hard, but it was so ugly and empty. So I wrote instead of the

life I wanted to live—the life I did live in imagination. And when once I had begun, I had to keep it up. I found it so fascinating, too! Those letters made that other life seem real to me. I never expected to meet you. These last four days since your letter came have been dreadful to me. Oh, please go away and forgive me if you can! I know I can never make you understand how it came about."

Sidney turned away and hid her burning face against the cool white bark of the birch tree behind her. It was worse than she had even thought it would be. He was so handsome, so manly, so earnest-eyed! Oh, what a friend to lose!

John Lincoln opened the gate and went up to her. There was a great tenderness in his face, mingled with a little kindly, friendly amusement.

"Please don't distress yourself so, Sidney," he said, unconsciously using her Christian name. "I think I do understand. I'm not such a dull fellow as you take me for. After all, those letters were true—or, rather, there was truth in them. You revealed yourself more faithfully in them than if you had written truly about your narrow outward life."

Sidney turned her flushed face and wet eyes slowly toward him, a little smile struggling out amid the clouds of woe. This young man was certainly good at understanding. "You—you'll forgive me then?" she stammered.

"Yes, if there is anything to forgive. And for my own part, I am glad you are not what I have always thought you were. If I had come here and found you what I expected, living in such a home as I expected, I never could have told you or even thought of telling you what you have come to mean to me in these lonely years during which your letters have been the things most eagerly looked forward to. I should have come this evening and spent an hour or so with you,

and then have gone away on the train tomorrow morning, and that would have been all.

"But I find instead just a dreamy romantic little girl, much like my sisters at home, except that she is a great deal cleverer. And as a result I mean to stay a week at Plainfield and come to see you every day, if you will let me. And on my way back to the Bar N I mean to stop off at Plainfield again for another week, and then I shall tell you something more—something it would be a little too bold to say now, perhaps, although I could say it just as well and truly. All this if I may. May I, Sidney?"

He bent forward and looked earnestly into her face. Sidney felt a new, curious, inexplicable thrill at her heart. "Oh, yes.—I suppose so," she said shyly.

"Now, take me up to the house and introduce me to your Aunt Jane," said John Lincoln in satisfied tone.

An Adventure on Island RockToC

"Who was the man I saw talking to you in the hayfield?" asked Aunt Kate, as Uncle Richard came to dinner.

"Bob Marks," said Uncle Richard briefly. "I've sold Laddie to him."

Ernest Hughes, the twelve-year-old orphan boy whom Uncle "boarded and kept" for the chores he did, suddenly stopped eating.

"Oh, Mr. Lawson, you're not going to sell Laddie?" he cried chokily.

Uncle Richard stared at him. Never before, in the five years that Ernest had lived with him, had the quiet little fellow spoken without being spoken to, much less ventured to protest against anything Uncle Richard might do.

"Certainly I am," answered the latter curtly. "Bob offered me twenty dollars for the dog, and he's coming after him next week."

"Oh, Mr. Lawson," said Ernest, rising to his feet, his small, freckled face crimson. "Oh, don't sell Laddie! *Please*, Mr. Lawson, don't sell him!"

"What nonsense is this?" said Uncle Richard sharply. He was a man who brooked no opposition from anybody, and who never changed his mind when it was once made up.

"Don't sell Laddie!" pleaded Ernest miserably. "He is the only friend I've got. I can't live if Laddie goes away. Oh, don't sell him, Mr. Lawson!"

"Sit down and hold your tongue," said Uncle Richard sternly. "The dog is mine, and I shall do with him as I think

fit. He is sold, and that is all there is about it. Go on with your dinner."

But Ernest for the first time did not obey. He snatched his cap from the back of his chair, dashed it down over his eyes, and ran from the kitchen with a sob choking his breath. Uncle Richard looked angry, but Aunt Kate hastened to soothe him.

"Don't be vexed with the boy, Richard," she said. "You know he is very fond of Laddie. He's had to do with him ever since he was a pup, and no doubt he feels badly at the thought of losing him. I'm rather sorry myself that you have sold the dog."

"Well, he *is* sold and there's an end of it. I don't say but that the dog is a good dog. But he is of no use to us, and twenty dollars will come in mighty handy just now. He's worth that to Bob, for he is a good watch dog, so we've both made a fair bargain."

Nothing more was said about Ernest or Laddie. I had taken no part in the discussion, for I felt no great interest in the matter. Laddie was a nice dog; Ernest was a quiet, inoffensive little fellow, five years younger than myself; that was all I thought about either of them.

I was spending my vacation at Uncle Richard's farm on the Nova Scotian Bay of Fundy shore. I was a great favourite with Uncle Richard, partly because he had been much attached to my mother, his only sister, partly because of my strong resemblance to his only son, who had died several years before. Uncle Richard was a stern, undemonstrative man, but I knew that he entertained a deep and real affection for me, and I always enjoyed my vacation sojourns at his place.

"What are you going to do this afternoon, Ned?" he asked, after the disturbance caused by Ernest's outbreak had

quieted down.

"I think I'll row out to Island Rock," I replied. "I want to take some views of the shore from it."

Uncle Richard nodded. He was much interested in my new camera.

"If you're on it about four o'clock, you'll get a fine view of the 'Hole in the Wall' when the sun begins to shine on the water through it," he said. "I've often thought it would make a handsome picture."

"After I've finished taking the pictures, I think I'll go down shore to Uncle Adam's and stay all night," I said. "Jim's dark room is more convenient than mine, and he has some pictures he is going to develop tonight, too."

I started for the shore about two o'clock. Ernest was sitting on the woodpile as I passed through the yard, with his arms about Laddie's neck and his face buried in Laddie's curly hair. Laddie was a handsome and intelligent black-and-white Newfoundland, with a magnificent coat. He and Ernest were great chums. I felt sorry for the boy who was to lose his pet.

"Don't take it so hard, Ern," I said, trying to comfort him. "Uncle will likely get another pup."

"I don't want any other pup!" Ernest blurted out. "Oh, Ned, won't you try and coax your uncle not to sell him? Perhaps he'd listen to you."

I shook my head. I knew Uncle Richard too well to hope that.

"Not in this case, Ern," I said. "He would say it did not concern me, and you know nothing moves him when he determines on a thing. You'll have to reconcile yourself to losing Laddie, I'm afraid."

Ernest's tow-coloured head went down on Laddie's neck again, and I, deciding that there was no use in saying anything more, proceeded towards the shore, which was about a mile from Uncle Richard's house. The beach along his farm and for several farms along shore was a lonely, untenanted one, for the fisher-folk all lived two miles further down, at Rowley's Cove. About three hundred yards from the shore was the peculiar formation known as Island Rock. This was a large rock that stood abruptly up out of the water. Below, about the usual water-line, it was seamed and fissured, but its summit rose up in a narrow, flat-topped peak. At low tide twenty feet of it was above water, but at high tide it was six feet and often more under water.

I pushed Uncle Richard's small flat down the rough path and rowed out to Island Rock. Arriving there, I thrust the painter deep into a narrow cleft. This was the usual way of mooring it, and no doubt of its safety occurred to me.

I scrambled up the rock and around to the eastern end, where there was a broader space for standing and from which some capital views could be obtained. The sea about the rock was calm, but there was quite a swell on and an off-shore breeze was blowing. There were no boats visible. The tide was low, leaving bare the curious caves and headlands along shore, and I secured a number of excellent snapshots. It was now three o'clock. I must wait another hour yet before I could get the best view of the "Hole in the Wall"—a huge, arch-like opening through a jutting headland to the west of me. I went around to look at it, when I saw a sight that made me stop short in dismay. This was nothing less than the flat, drifting outward around the point. The swell and suction of the water around the rock must have pulled her loose—and I was a prisoner! At first my only feeling was one of annoyance. Then a thought flashed into my mind that made me dizzy with fear. The tide would be

high that night. If I could not escape from Island Rock I would inevitably be drowned.

I sat down limply on a ledge and tried to look matters fairly in the face. I could not swim; calls for help could not reach anybody; my only hope lay in the chance of somebody passing down the shore or of some boat appearing.

I looked at my watch. It was a quarter past three. The tide would begin to turn about five, but it would be at least ten before the rock would be covered. I had, then, little more than six hours to live unless rescued.

The flat was by this time out of sight around the point. I hoped that the sight of an empty flat drifting down shore might attract someone's attention and lead to investigation. That seemed to be my only hope. No alarm would be felt at Uncle Richard's because of my non-appearance. They would suppose I had gone to Uncle Adam's.

I have heard of time seeming long to a person in my predicament, but to me it seemed fairly to fly, for every moment decreased my chance of rescue. I determined I would not give way to cowardly fear, so, with a murmured prayer for help, I set myself to the task of waiting for death as bravely as possible. At intervals I shouted as loudly as I could and, when the sun came to the proper angle for the best view of the "Hole in the Wall," I took the picture. It afterwards turned out to be a great success, but I have never been able to look at it without a shudder.

At five the tide began to come in. Very, very slowly the water rose around Island Rock. Up, up, up it came, while I watched it with fascinated eyes, feeling like a rat in a trap. The sun fell lower and lower; at eight o'clock the moon rose large and bright; at nine it was a lovely night, dear, calm, bright as day, and the water was swishing over the highest

ledge of the rock. With some difficulty I climbed to the top and sat there to await the end. I had no longer any hope of rescue but, by a great effort, I preserved self-control. If I had to die, I would at least face death staunchly. But when I thought of my mother at home, it tasked all my energies to keep from breaking down utterly.

Suddenly I heard a whistle. Never was sound so sweet. I stood up and peered eagerly shoreward. Coming around the "Hole in the Wall" headland, on top of the cliffs, I saw a boy and a dog. I sent a wild halloo ringing shoreward.

The boy started, stopped and looked out towards Island Rock. The next moment he hailed me. It was Ernest's voice, and it was Laddie who was barking beside him.

"Ernest," I shouted wildly, "run for help—quick! quick! The tide will be over the rock in half an hour! Hurry, or you will be too late!"

Instead of starting off at full speed, as I expected him to do, Ernest stood still for a moment, and then began to pick his steps down a narrow path over the cliff, followed by Laddie.

"Ernest," I shouted frantically, "what are you doing? Why don't you go for help?"

Ernest had by this time reached a narrow ledge of rock just above the water-line. I noticed that he was carrying something over his arm.

"It would take too long," he shouted. "By the time I got to the Cove and a boat could row back here, you'd be drowned. Laddie and I will save you. Is there anything there you can tie a rope to? I've a coil of rope here that I think will be long enough to reach you. I've been down to the Cove and Alec Martin sent it up to your uncle."

I looked about me; a smooth, round hole had been worn clean through a thin part of the apex of the rock.

"I could fasten the rope if I had it!" I called. "But how can you get it to me?"

For answer Ernest tied a bit of driftwood to the rope and put it into Laddie's mouth. The next minute the dog was swimming out to me. As soon as he came close I caught the rope. It was just long enough to stretch from shore to rock, allowing for a couple of hitches which Ernest gave around a small boulder on the ledge. I tied my camera case on my head by means of some string I found in my pocket, then I slipped into the water and, holding to the rope, went hand over hand to the shore with Laddie swimming beside me. Ernest held on to the shoreward end of the rope like grim death, a task that was no light one for his small arms. When I finally scrambled up beside him, his face was dripping with perspiration and he trembled like a leaf.

"Ern, you are a brick!" I exclaimed. "You've saved my life!"

"No, it was Laddie," said Ernest, refusing to take any credit at all.

We hurried home and arrived at Uncle Richard's about ten, just as they were going to bed. When Uncle Richard heard what had happened, he turned very pale, and murmured, "Thank God!" Aunt Kate got me out of my wet clothes as quickly as possible, put me away to bed in hot blankets and dosed me with ginger tea. I slept like a top and felt none the worse for my experience the next morning.

At the breakfast table Uncle Richard scarcely spoke. But, just as we finished, he said abruptly to Ernest, "I'm not going to sell Laddie. You and the dog saved Ned's life between you, and no dog who helped do that is ever going to be sold by me. Henceforth he belongs to you. I give him to you for your very own."

"Oh, Mr. Lawson!" said Ernest, with shining eyes.

I never saw a boy look so happy. As for Laddie, who was sitting beside him with his shaggy head on Ernest's knee, I really believe the dog understood, too. The look in his eyes was almost human. Uncle Richard leaned over and patted him.

"Good dog!" he said. "Good dog!"

At Five O'Clock in the MorningToC

Fate, in the guise of Mrs. Emory dropping a milk-can on the platform under his open window, awakened Murray that morning. Had not Mrs. Emory dropped that can, he would have slumbered peacefully until his usual hour for rising—a late one, be it admitted, for of all the boarders at Sweetbriar Cottage Murray was the most irregular in his habits.

"When a young man," Mrs. Emory was wont to remark sagely and a trifle severely, "prowls about that pond half of the night, a-chasing of things what he calls 'moonlight effecks,' it ain't to be wondered at that he's sleepy in the morning. And it ain't the convenientest thing, nuther and noways, to keep the breakfast table set till the farm folks are thinking of dinner. But them artist men are not like other people, say what you will, and allowance has to be made for them. And I must say that I likes him real well and approves of him every other way."

If Murray had slept late that morning—well, he shudders yet over that "if." But aforesaid Fate saw to it that he woke when the hour of destiny and the milk-can struck, and having awakened he found he could not go to sleep again. It suddenly occurred to him that he had never seen a sunrise on the pond. Doubtless it would be very lovely down there in those dewy meadows at such a primitive hour; he decided to get up and see what the world looked like in the young daylight.

He scowled at a letter lying on his dressing table and thrust it into his pocket that it might be out of sight. He had written it the night before and the writing of it was going to cost him several things—a prospective million among

others. So it is hardly to be wondered at if the sight of it did not reconcile him to the joys of early rising.

"Dear life and heart!" exclaimed Mrs. Emory, pausing in the act of scalding a milk-can when Murray emerged from a side door. "What on earth is the matter, Mr. Murray? You ain't sick now, surely? I told you them pond fogs was p'isen after night! If you've gone and got—"

"Nothing is the matter, dear lady," interrupted Murray, "and I haven't gone and got anything except an acute attack of early rising which is not in the least likely to become chronic. But at what hour of the night do you get up, you wonderful woman? Or rather do you ever go to bed at all? Here is the sun only beginning to rise and—positively yes, you have all your cows milked."

Mrs. Emory purred with delight.

"Folks as has fourteen cows to milk has to rise betimes," she answered with proud humility. "Laws, I don't complain—I've lots of help with the milking. How Mrs. Palmer manages, I really cannot comperhend—or rather, how she has managed. I suppose she'll be all right now since her niece came last night. I saw her posting to the pond pasture not ten minutes ago. She'll have to milk all them seven cows herself. But dear life and heart! Here I be palavering away and not a bite of breakfast ready for you!"

"I don't want any breakfast until the regular time for it," assured Murray. "I'm going down to the pond to see the sun rise."

"Now don't you go and get caught in the ma'sh," anxiously called Mrs. Emory, as she never failed to do when she saw him starting for the pond. Nobody ever had got caught in the marsh, but Mrs. Emory lived in a chronic state of fear lest someone should.

"And if you once got stuck in that black mud you'd be sucked right down and never seen or heard tell of again till the day of judgment, like Adam Palmer's cow," she was wont to warn her boarders.

Murray sought his favourite spot for pond dreaming—a bloomy corner of the pasture that ran down into the blue water, with a dump of leafy maples on the left. He was very glad he had risen early. A miracle was being worked before his very eyes. The world was in a flush and tremor of maiden loveliness, instinct with all the marvellous fleeting charm of girlhood and spring and young morning. Overhead the sky was a vast high-sprung arch of unstained crystal. Down over the sand dunes, where the pond ran out into the sea, was a great arc of primrose smitten through with auroral crimsonings. Beneath it the pond waters shimmered with a hundred fairy hues, but just before him they were clear as a flawless mirror. The fields around him glistened with dews, and a little wandering wind, blowing lightly from some bourne in the hills, strayed down over the slopes, bringing with it an unimaginable odour and freshness, and fluttered over the pond, leaving a little path of dancing silver ripples across the mirror-glory of the water. Birds were singing in the beech woods over on Orchard Knob Farm, answering to each other from shore to shore, until the very air was tremulous with the elfin music of this wonderful midsummer dawn.

"I will get up at sunrise every morning of my life hereafter," exclaimed Murray rapturously, not meaning a syllable of it, but devoutly believing he did.

Just as the fiery disc of the sun peered over the sand dunes Murray heard music that was not of the birds. It was a girl's voice singing beyond the maples to his left—a clear sweet voice, blithely trilling out the old-fashioned song, "Five O'Clock in the Morning."

"Mrs. Palmer's niece!"

Murray sprang to his feet and tiptoed cautiously through the maples. He had heard so much from Mrs. Palmer about her niece that he felt reasonably well acquainted with her. Moreover, Mrs. Palmer had assured him that Mollie was a very pretty girl. Now a pretty girl milking cows at sunrise in the meadows sounded well.

Mrs. Palmer had not over-rated her niece's beauty. Murray said so to himself with a little whistle of amazement as he leaned unseen on the pasture fence and looked at the girl who was milking a placid Jersey less than ten yards away from him. Murray's artistic instinct responded to the whole scene with a thrill of satisfaction.

He could see only her profile, but that was perfect, and the colouring of the oval cheek and the beautiful curve of the chin were something to adore. Her hair, ruffled into lovable little ringlets by the morning wind, was coiled in glistening chestnut masses high on her bare head, and her arms, bare to the elbow, were as white as marble. Presently she began to sing again, and this time Murray joined in. She half rose from her milking stool and cast a startled glance at the maples. Then she dropped back again and began to milk determinedly, but Murray could have sworn that he saw a demure smile hovering about her lips. That, and the revelation of her full face, decided him. He sprang over the fence and sauntered across the intervening space of lush clover blossoms.

"Good morning," he said coolly. He had forgotten her other name, and it did not matter; at five o'clock in the morning people who met in dewy clover fields might disregard the conventionalities. "Isn't it rather a large contract for you to be milking seven cows all alone? May I help you?"