

CHASE JOSEPHINE

MARJORIE DEAN,
POST-GRADUATE

Chase Josephine
Marjorie Dean, Post-Graduate

«Public Domain»

Josephine C.

Marjorie Dean, Post-Graduate / C. Josephine — «Public Domain»,

Содержание

CHAPTER I. – ON THE SANDS	5
CHAPTER II. – MUSIC AND MOONLIGHT	9
CHAPTER III. – “SOMETHING TO REPORT”	12
CHAPTER IV. – I CAN’T GIVE YOU UP, DEAR	15
CHAPTER V. – A WARM RECEPTION	18
CHAPTER VI. – IN LOVE WITH WORK	21
CHAPTER VII. – SCENTING MYSTERY	24
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	25

Pauline Lester

Marjorie Dean, Post-Graduate

CHAPTER I. – ON THE SANDS

“It’s too perfect a night to stay on shore, girls and boys. Let’s go for a moonlight cruise in the Oriole!” Hal Macy sprang up from the white sands where he had been devotedly lounging at Marjorie Dean’s feet and held out his hands to her.

“Oh, glorious!” Marjorie gaily accepted the proffered hands. She laughed, with the sheer pleasure of youth, as Hal swung her to her feet. “My, what a strong person you are, Hal Macy!” she lightly commented as she freed her hands from Hal’s lingering clasp.

“Glad *you* think so,” emphasized Hal. He could not help wishing Marjorie were not quite so matter-of-fact.

“*I* don’t think so,” promptly disagreed Danny Seabrooke. “Macy is a weakling; a mere muscleless infant compared to me.”

“Oh, see here, Danny Seabrooke, you’ll have to eat that. Think I’ll stand for any such talk? Eat it now, or else prove it,” challenged Hal.

“I can prove it,” Danny waved confidently. “Just watch me lift Geraldine from the shifting sands.”

“Yes, just watch him,” drawled Lawrence Armitage. He took up a guitar, temporarily idle on the sands, and began to strum it lightly. His deep blue eyes rested mirthfully on Danny and Jerry.

“Wait a second,” Danny elaborately braced his feet in the sand. “Now, ready! Heave, heave, ho!”

Jerry suddenly let go of his hands and dropped back on the beach. “No, thank you.” She pretended displeasure. “I don’t care for your wonderful assistance.” She directed a scornful glance at her would-be helper.

“You did that on purpose,” accused Danny. “You are a cruel, cruel girl. Suppose I had lost my balance and dug my nose into the sand?”

“Sorry you didn’t,” was the unfeeling reply.

“Squabbling again,” Laurie reached out a helping hand to Jerry and drew her to her feet. Danny looked sadly on.

“Please forgive me and continue to regard me as your friend. That’s all I ask of you,” he pleaded with stony Jerry.

“You talk like a popular song,” she criticized. She broke into smiles when he knelt on the sand before her and contritely offered her his hand.

“Was that a compliment?” Danny grinned hopefully.

“Why should I throw bouquets at you? Can you think of a reason?” Jerry asked him. “I can’t think of one.”

“Neither can I,” Danny agreed, and the squabblers burst into laughter.

“Isn’t the moon wonderful tonight?” Standing beside Hal on the wide strip of gleaming beach Marjorie worshipped the white night. “Leila recites an old Irish poem about moonlight that must have been written for this night. It goes like this:

“The magic of yon sailing moon
Lures my poor heartstrings out of me;
God’s moonshine whitens the lagoon;
The earth’s a silver mystery.”

Hal listened. His mind was centered on Marjorie rather than on the quaint bit of verse she was reciting. In her white lingerie frock, her vividly beautiful face raised toward the pale glory of the drifting moon, her loveliness filled Hal's boyish heart with worship.

He would have liked to tell her that he thought her far more wonderful than either the silvery moon or the most exquisite bit of Irish verse that had ever been composed. Long friendship with Marjorie warned him against such an avowal. She was so different from most girls about compliments. She did not like to be told that she had done well, while she positively loathed being told she was beautiful. She had a clever way of politely ignoring a compliment, then immediately changing a subject from personal to impersonal which Hal considered maddening.

Since the first week in July when the Deans had arrived at Severn Beach, there to spend a part of the summer, Hal had been trying to decide whether or not he should allow another summer to pass without telling Marjorie of his love for her. On that memorable autumn evening of last year when Constance and Laurie had announced their early approaching marriage Hal had been dejectedly certain that Marjorie had nothing to give him save friendship. He had resolved then never to ask her to marry him unless he should come to believe that she had experienced a change of heart toward him.

Lately, since Marjorie had come to stay at Severn Beach, where the Macys usually spent the summers, Hal had been sorely tempted to break his proud resolution. Constance and Laurie had returned from their winter in Europe and were visiting Hal and Jerry at Cliff House, the apartment hotel in which the Macy family lived. Their perfect happiness made Hal wonder wistfully why it was that Marjorie could not love him even half so fondly as Constance loved Laurie. He had been Marjorie's faithful cavalier for the same number of years that Laurie had been Constance's. Now Laurie had won Connie for his wife, while he and Marjorie were still, as she had often said, "just good friends."

This disheartening thought now flashed through his brain for perhaps the hundredth time that week. The calm friendly glance he forced himself to bend on Marjorie as she finished quoting the verse bore no sign of his disquieting reflections.

"Bully for the Irish!" he exclaimed with deceiving heartiness.

"You're not a bit under the magic spell of the white moonshine," she rebuked with a laughing, upward glance at Hal.

"How do you know I'm not?" His tones were teasing, but into his eyes had leaped a sudden purposeful gleam which told a different story. "Moonlight affects different persons in different ways. Wait till we take to the launch. Then I'll turn moony and sing sentimental songs. I'll give you a fine imitation of a moonstruck nut. I wouldn't dare try it on shore. I might be run in for disturbing the peace."

"Run in for disturbing the peace?" inquired a horrified voice at Marjorie's elbow. Danny Seabrooke peered apprehensively around Marjorie at Hal. "Ah, I understand." He grew apologetic. "You weren't speaking of me. You meant your – well – er – " Danny drew down his freckled face very sorrowfully. "When did it happen, Macy?"

"It hasn't happened yet, but it will soon," Hal promised with cool significance.

"I shan't be here to see it. I'm going to take a walk up the beach with Geraldine." Danny hastily fell behind a few steps and took Jerry by a plump arm. "Come along," he urged. "It's not safe around here."

"It's safe enough for me." Jerry briskly shook off Danny's detaining hand. "I'm going out in the Oriole. Hurry up, you sentimental strollers," she called over one shoulder to Constance and Laurie. They had paused for a moment, hand in hand, and were raptly gazing out to sea. "Come out of lovers' lane and join the crowd."

"Have a little more regard for our married dignity, Jeremiah," Laurie reminded. "Kindly remember that Connie and I came down to the beach this evening solely to look after you four children."

“Much obliged, but Dan-yell is the only one who needs a guardian of this illustrious bunch.” Jerry bowed ironical thanks.

“All right for you, Jurry-miar Macy. I tried to be pleasant with you. I respectfully called you Geraldine. But no more!” Danny shook a displeased finger at Jerry. “I’m going to walk beside Constance.”

“Poor Connie,” groaned Jerry.

“Fortunate Connie, you mean,” corrected Danny with a vast smile. “Do talk to me, Constance. Forget your husband for five seconds. You look so sympathetic. But you’re not.” Danny fixed an accusing glance on laughing Constance. “You’re laughing at me.”

“Why shouldn’t I laugh at you, Danny Seabrooke? You’re so funny and foolish.”

“Funny and foolish.” Danny cocked his head on one side and considered. “Nope, that’s not sympathy. I’ll have to try again. Let me see. Marjorie might appreciate me.”

With a forward dive he caught Marjorie by one arm and began walking her rapidly up the beach and away from Hal. “Good-night, Mr. Macy,” he flung back over one shoulder.

“Not yet,” Hal cleared the widening space between him and Danny almost at a leap. “Now Dan-yell!” He grabbed Danny by the shoulders; spun him round until he faced down the beach. A vigorous push from Hal’s avenging arms sent Danny careering down the beach at a mad gallop.

“Never touched me!” he sent back defiantly to Hal. He gave an agile sideways bounce, barely managing to dodge Jerry, Laurie and Constance in his headlong flight. “Good-bye. I’m never coming back!” he yelled at the trio.

Within the next three minutes Danny had changed his mind. “Fine night for a run,” was his bland venture as he caught up with the three strollers. “Only I’d rather know beforehand that I was going to take a run. Macy is what I should call dangerous. He ought to be caged.”

“Neither Jerry nor Danny will ever grow up,” was Marjorie’s amused remark as Hal returned to her side.

“I don’t think you’ve grown up much, Marjorie,” Hal burst forth with sudden eager wistfulness. “You look just as you did the first time I ever saw you; only you are even prettier than you were then.”

Hal’s stubborn restraint gave way before the uncontrollable impulse to speak his mind to Marjorie. “You were coming out the gate of Sanford High, and I wondered who you were,” Hal went on boyishly. “I described you to Jerry afterward, and asked all about you. She didn’t know you very well then. I made her promise and double promise that she’d never tell you I quizzed her about you.”

“And she never did,” Marjorie gaily assured. “I never even suspected you two of having had a secret understanding about just me. Jerry is a good secret keeper. I’m glad college hasn’t made me staid and serious. I’ve loved the good times I’ve had at Hamilton as much as I’ve loved the work. Now I’m ready to put my whole heart into work there so as to try to make Hamilton mean as much to other students as it has meant to me.”

Marjorie had purposely hurried away from Hal’s very personal admission. He now brought her back to it with an earnest abruptness which raised a brighter color in her face.

“I wish you’d stay in Sanford and make the old town seem as much to me as it used to,” he said. “I have a standing grudge against Hamilton College. Can’t help having one, even though you and Jerry do think it’s the only place on the map.”

“It’s the only place on the map for us until our work is done, Hal,” she defended. “Once I thought I couldn’t leave General and Captain to go back to Hamilton next fall. I found I was hard-hearted enough to do even that for the sake of my work there. I’m having a gorgeous time at the beach! Still I’m almost impatient for next week to come and bring with it my mid-summer trip to Hamilton. You can understand, I’m sure, Hal, how I feel about the building of the dormitory.”

“Work can’t fill your life, Marjorie,” Hal answered with a tender, unconscious deepening of tone. “See how happy Connie and Laurie are! They *love* each other. *That’s* the real meaning of life. Not even music could come between them and love. Could anything be more perfect than their

romance? I've wished always that it would be so with you and me. I've wanted to tell you this for a long time, but I – ”

“I hate to complain of your sister, Macy, but it's necessary.” Danny Seabrooke bounced into the midst of Hal's declaration of love.

“I'll disown you as my brother if you listen to what he says,” Jerry appeared at Danny's elbow.

“Oh, go away off the beach, both of you!” Hal waved the contesting pair away from him. He wished both Danny and Jerry anywhere but close at hand.

“Shan't go a step,” defied Jerry. “Never think, Hal Macy, that you can chase me into the Atlantic Ocean. *You* may walk with Dan-yell, I've had enough of him. Go ahead and untie the Oriole. I'm going to monopolize Marvelous Marjorie for a while.” Jerry tucked an arm in one of Marjorie's.

“Only for about five minutes,” stipulated Hal. He cast a half smiling, half challenging glance at Marjorie. “I want to talk to her myself. Come along, old Seabean,” he motioned Danny.

The two young men ran ahead to untie the motor boat belonging to Hal which was tied up at the Cliff House pier. Marjorie drew a soft little breath of relief. Hal's significant rush of words had taken her unawares. Until now she had never failed to steer him away from anything approaching sentiment. Tonight, however, she had sensed a certain determined quality in his voice which was not to be denied. Hal did not intend to be kept from saying his say much longer.

CHAPTER II. – MUSIC AND MOONLIGHT

“I hear your voice across the years of waiting;
Out of the past it softly calls to me:
True love knows neither ebbing nor abating;
How long, dear heart, must we two parted be?”

sang Constance, a lingering, old-world sadness in her pure perfect tones. For a moment after the last note died out on the white balmy night no one spoke. Only the steady, even purr of the Oriole’s engine broke the potent stillness which had fallen upon the sextette of young folks.

“That was a very sad song, Mrs. Lawrence Constance Armitage,” complained Danny with a subdued gurgle. “It almost made we weep, but not quite. I happened to recall in time that I wasn’t in the same class with dear heart; that I had never been parted from dear heart, or any other old dear. That put a smother on my weeps.”

“Glad something did.” Laurie had accompanied Constance’s song on the guitar. He now sat playing over softly the last few plaintive measures of the song.

“It’s a beautiful song, Connie,” Marjorie said with the true appreciation of the music lover. “I love those last four lines, even if they are awfully hopeless. I never heard you sing it before. What is it called?”

“*Sehnsucht.*’ That means in German ‘longing.’ I found it last winter in a collection of old German love songs. I liked it so much that I tried to put the words into English. It’s the only time I ever attempted to write verse. It turned out better than I had expected.” There was a tiny touch of pride in the answer.

“Connie used to sing it often for an encore last winter. Then she always had to sing it again. People never seemed to get enough of that particular song.” Laurie’s voice expressed his own adoring pride in Constance.

“I don’t wonder. The music is the throbbing, I-can’t-live-without-you kind, same as the words. It gets even me. You all know how sentimental I am – not,” Jerry declared.

“Why, may I ask, does it get you?” briskly began Danny. “Why – ”

“You may ask, but that’s all the good it will do you,” Jerry retorted with finality. “Let me take the wheel awhile, Hal. You may sing a little for the gang. I may not admire some points about you, but I’ll say you can sing, even if you are my brother.”

“Oh, let me sing,” begged Danny. “You never heard me at my best.”

“I hope I never shall.” Jerry did not even trouble to glance at the modest aspirant for vocal glory. “Don’t speak to me, if you can help it. Just hearing you speak might get on my nerves and make me fall overboard.” She rose carefully in her seat in order to change places with Hal.

Hal had taken no part in the discussion which had followed Constance’s song. He was leaning over the wheel, his clean-cut features almost sternly set as he sent the Oriole speeding through a gently rippling sea. His thoughts were moodily centered on Marjorie. Danny’s and Jerry’s untimely interruption upon his impulsive declaration of love was in the nature of a misfortune to him. His first feeling of vexation in the matter had deepened into one of dejection as he listened to Connie’s song. He could not help wondering darkly if that was the way it would be with him. Would it become his lot to long some day for Marjorie, and vainly, across the years? He was sure of his love for her. He was sure it would never ebb nor abate. What about her love for him? Hal had nothing but doubts.

Last fall he had reluctantly come to the conclusion that Marjorie did not care in the least for him, other than in the way of friendship. It was only since she had come to Severn Beach that he had begun to take heart again. He had been her devoted companion, as of old, on all of the pleasure sails, drives and jaunts which the sextette of Sanford young folks had enjoyed. It had sometimes seemed to Hal that Marjorie was a trifle more gracious to him than of yore. He felt that she was fond of him in a

comradely way. He could not recall an occasion since he had known Marjorie when she had accepted the attentions of another Sanford boy. That was one thing he might be glad of.

The white glory of the night, the tender beauty of the girl he adored, her avowed enthusiastic preference for work above all else in life had crystallized Hal's troubled resolve to ask Marjorie the momentous question which, somehow, he had never before found the right opportunity for asking. And Jerry and Danny had "butted in" and spoiled it! This was his rueful reflection as he silently allowed Jerry to replace him at the wheel.

"I won't be stingy with the wheel," he soberly assured his sister, "but you'd better ask Danny to sing."

"Never. I have too much consideration for the rest of the gang," Jerry retorted.

"And I have myself to consider," flung back Danny. "I wouldn't sing if Jerry-miar dropped to her knees on the sand and begged me to. Understand, every one of you, I can sing, warble, carol, chant or trill. There is no limit to my vocal powers. There was a time when I might possibly have been persuaded to sing. That time is past."

"Thank you, Jerry," Laurie said very solemnly.

"You're welcome," chuckled Jerry. "Glad I could be so useful."

"O, don't be too ready to laugh. I may sing just for spite," Danny warned. "To sing, or not to sing? That is the question."

"Take time to think it over, Danny," laughed Marjorie. "While you are thinking Connie will sing the song of Brahms I like so much. Please, Connie, sing 'The Summer Fields,'" she urged. "Then you'll sing, won't you, Hal?" She turned coaxingly to Hal who had seated himself beside her on one of the built-in benches of the motor boat.

"Maybe," Hal made half reluctant promise. He was wishing he dared take Marjorie's slim hands, lying tranquilly in her lap, and imprison them in his own.

Glancing frankly up at him Marjorie glimpsed in his eyes a bright intent look which hardly pleased her. It was an expression which was quite new to his face. She thought, or rather, feared she understood its meaning. "He'll go on with what he started to say to me the very first chance he has," was her dismayed reflection. "Oh, dear; I wish he wouldn't."

Laurie had already begun a soft prelude to "The Summer Fields." Marjorie had immediately looked away from Hal and out on the moonlit sea. She had the impression that Hal's eyes were still upon her. She felt the hot blood rise afresh to her cheeks. For a brief instant she was visited by a flash of resentment. Why, oh, why, must Hal spoil their long, sincere friendship by trying to turn it into a love affair?

Again Constance's golden tones rose and fell, adding to the enchantment of the night. Marjorie's instant of resentment took swift wing as she listened to the wistful German words for which the great composer had found such a perfect setting. She was glad she loved music and moonlight and poetry and all the beautiful bits of life. She did not wish life to mean the kind of romance Hal meant. Her idea of romance meant the glory of work and the stir of noble deeds.

"Now it's your turn, Hal. It's not fair to make me do all the singing. Jerry claims she can't sing, and she won't let Danny sing. Laurie makes me do his share of it. Marjorie can sing, but she thinks she can't. That leaves only you, and you haven't a ghost of an excuse. Go ahead now. Be nice and sing the Boat Song." Constance ended coaxingly.

"All right, Connie. Instruct your husband to play a few bars of it strictly in tune and I'll see what I can do." Hal straightened up suddenly on the bench with an air of pretended importance.

"See to it that your singing's strictly in tune," Laurie advised. "I can be trusted to do the rest." Already his musician's fingers were finding the rhythmic introduction to Tosti's "Boat Song."

"The night wind sighs,
Our vessel flies,
Across the dark lagoon."

Hal took up the swinging measures of the song in his clear, sweet tenor and sent it ringing across the water. Tonight he came into a new and sombre understanding of the song. Never before had he realized the undercurrent of doubt it contained. Perhaps Tosti had composed the song out of his own lover's hopes and fears. Unconsciously Hal's weight of troubled doubt went into an impassioned rendering.

Laurie and Constance understood perfectly his unintentional betrayal of his feelings. Danny, razor keen of perception, also grasped the situation. This time he had nothing to say.

“And here am I,
To live or die;
As you prove hard or kind;
Prove hard or kind.”

Jerry sat looking unduly solemn as Hal tunefully voiced the sentimental, worshipping lines and took up the echoing refrain. When the song ended an odd silence fell which no one of them seemed willing to shatter. Connie and Laurie were frankly holding hands, their young faces touched with a romance born of music and moonlight. Danny was staring intently at Jerry as though absorbed in her management of the wheel.

Marjorie sat bathed in moonlight, looking unutterably lovely and trying her utmost not to appear self-conscious. She was under the blind impression that she alone understood what lay behind Hal's song. In reality she understood less concerning the strength of his love and devotion for her than did those who had been their intimate girl and boyhood friends. She did, however, detect a certain melancholy tinge to his singing which gave her a peculiar conscience-stricken feeling.

“No, I don't care to sing any more tonight,” he said, when Laurie came out of his dream and asked him to sing an old Spanish serenade. “I'm not in a singing humor.”

“Poor old Hal,” Jerry was thinking as she gave the wheel an impatient turn by way of showing her disapproval. “He does love her so! Marjorie's the sweetest girl ever, but she's hard, not kind, when it comes to love. She's a regular stony heart.”

CHAPTER III. – “SOMETHING TO REPORT”

“Tomorrow? Let me think.” Marjorie’s dark brows drew thoughtfully together. “Why, I’m not going anywhere, Hal.” Marjorie made an effort to be casual which was only half successful. “I’m going to be busy packing. I shall have to take an early train for Hamilton on Thursday morning so as not to reach there late at night. I won’t have a minute’s spare time Thursday morning. I’ll have to be ready as ready can be on Wednesday night.”

The boating party had left the Oriole once more tied to the pier and had strolled back along the sands to Cliff House. To her surprised relief, Hal had not attempted to renew the subject she dreaded to discuss. In fact he had had very little to say. Responsive to this new mood of his she had walked beside him almost in silence, smiling at the animated discussion Jerry and Danny kept up all the way to the hotel. Laurie and Connie were as mute as she and Hal. Such understanding silences were characteristic of them, however.

As ardently as he had courted an opportunity to tell Marjorie he loved her Hal now upbraided himself for having been so stupid as to blurt out his feelings “when the gang were around.” He would finish telling her what he had begun to say when Danny and Jerry had interrupted. He was resolved on that point. He was also determined that she should hear him out before she left Severn Beach on her mid-summer trip to Hamilton.

“Can’t you find time to go out in the Oriole with me tomorrow afternoon, Marjorie?” There lurked a trace of stubborn purpose in Hal’s question. “It will be our last sea voyage in the good ship, Oriole, this summer, you know. I suppose you will go from Hamilton back to Sanford.” Hal eyed her almost gloomily.

Marjorie nodded. The two had reached the main entrance of the hotel a trifle ahead of their chums. They now stood waiting at the foot of the wide, ornamental flight of steps which led up to the central veranda of the enormous white stone hotel.

“I’ll try to go for a part of the afternoon, Hal,” she promised, careful to keep reluctance out of her voice. Pinned down to answer directly she had not the stony-heartedness with which Jerry had ticketed her. She could not flatly refuse the invitation of her boy friend of long standing.

“Good work! Which part?” Hal instantly brightened. “Let us settle that point before you have time to change your mind and back out,” he said boyishly.

“The very idea! You only say that, Hal Macy,” Marjorie retorted with playful emphasis. “I’m not a mind changer, nor a backer-out, either.”

“Beg your pardon, and double beg it.” Hal allowed a teasing note to creep into the answer. Already he was feeling less dejected. He had been half afraid that Marjorie might refuse to go for a last ride in the Oriole.

The swift unbidden reflection that Marjorie might not be quite so indifferent to him as he had thought brought a sudden flush to his cheeks and an odd new sense of hope to his sore heart. She could hardly have failed to understand the import of what he had begun to tell her on the way to the boat. Yet she had not refused to go for a ride with him on the morrow. She must surely have guessed the hidden reason for his invitation to her.

“Say, what time, Marjorie,” Hal again urged. “All afternoon would suit me best,” he added boldly.

“You can’t have all afternoon.” Marjorie lightly objected. “I’ll have to hurry like mad in order to squeeze the ride into tomorrow’s program. I’ll be ready to go as soon as luncheon’s over. I must be back at my packing by not a minute later than three o’clock. You and Jerry had better come to our table for luncheon. Is Jerry going with us?” Marjorie made a last attempt to ward off what appeared to be inevitable.

“No, she isn’t. I haven’t asked her,” was the pointed reply. “Thank you, but I won’t be at the hotel until I come up for you. I’m going to Carver’s Island early in the morning to see a crowd of fellows I know who have a bungalow there. You usually have luncheon at one, don’t you? I’ll meet you in the Dresden lounge at half past one. Then we won’t lose any of your precious time,” Hal concluded almost grimly.

“All right,” Marjorie assented. She was glad Hal had used a mildly peremptory tone. She had always admired his courteous, but positive, manner of settling a matter.

“Why in such a hurry?” Laurie questioned indolently as he and Constance now mounted the steps. “You two walked ahead of us as though you were on a training hike. Is that the way to appreciate a heavenly night like this?”

“It is when it’s after ten o’clock and one has to be up and doing by seven tomorrow morning,” flung back Marjorie. “You forget, Mr. Laurie Armitage, that *I’m going away, day after tomorrow.*” She emphasized each word with a vigorous bob of the head.

“No; none of us have forgotten that, Marjorie,” Laurie bent a sudden warm friendly smile on her.

“We’re going to miss you dreadfully, Lieutenant.” Constance put an arm around Marjorie. The two stood and swayed back and forth schoolgirl fashion.

“Not half so much as I shall,” Hal voiced frank regret. “Marjorie is a real pal. I’m going to miss her at every turn and corner. I’m going to annex myself to the Armitage family and become a pest after Marjorie goes.”

“Go as far as you like, old man,” Laurie invited. “Connie and I will do our best to amuse and cherish you.”

“Cherish! Ah-h-h!” gurgled Danny who had just come up with Jerry. “Such a sweet word! Did anybody ever hear Jurry-miar say it to me?” He rolled his eyes and clasped his hands. “Silence? What? Don’t all speak at once. No? I thought not.”

“No one ever *will* hear me say it to you,” Jerry told him in a tired tone.

“How ought I to receive such a remark?” Danny eyed her dubiously. “Answer me, Jurry-miar.” He leaned far forward and stared fixedly at Jerry.

Her stolid expression deserted her. She had to laugh at the ludicrous set of Danny’s freckled features. “Oh, never mind,” she conceded. “Let’s be amiable to each other for ten minutes. I’ll hold the stop watch.”

“U-h-h-h!” Danny simulated collapse. “This is so unexpected. Hurry up, gang. Let’s go to the palm grotto for ices. If we hustle, Jur – I mean, Geraldine and I can sit at the same table without snapping at each other. Come, boys,” he beckoned grandly to Hal and Laurie. “Gentlemen will be treated to ices as well as ladies. Think of that!” He smirked patronizingly at the two young men.

“I oughtn’t linger longer,” gaily demurred Marjorie. “Truly, Danny, I – ”

She went to the palm grotto, however, marched there between Hal and Danny. During the enjoyable half hour the young people spent over the ices Hal was his usual jolly, light-hearted self. Marjorie welcomed the change in him from sombre seriousness to his old care-free manner. When she left him with a friendly good night at the door of the Dean’s apartment she could have almost believed him to be the Hal of her high school days, had not the memory of his earnest words flashed across her brain. She could still hear him saying: “I’ve wished always that it would be so with you and me,” in the eager, impassioned fashion which awoke no responsive echo in her heart.

She stepped into the living room her usually bright face so pre-occupied that it at once caught Mrs. Dean’s attention as she smilingly glanced up from the magazine she held.

“I won’t qualify for the early bird class in the morning, I’m afraid,” Marjorie said with the merest suspicion of a smile. “Never mind; I’m going to get up early even if I do lose some sleep.”

“Was that what made you look so sober as you came in, Lieutenant?” Mrs. Dean asked, amused surprise in the question.

“Did I look very sober?” Marjorie quickly countered.

“*Very*,” emphasized her mother.

“Well,” Marjorie paused, “I felt sober. Where’s General, Captain?” She glanced questioningly toward the next room.

“He and Mr. Macy motored down to Logan Beach this evening to see a game of chess between two expert players, both friends of Mr. Macy’s. He’ll hardly be home before midnight.” Mrs. Dean continued affectionately to watch Marjorie.

“Oh-h-h.” Marjorie dropped down on a low chair. For a moment she sat plaiting little folds in the soft white evening scarf, now fallen into careless disarrangement across one shoulder. “Oh,” she said again. “Er-oh, dear! I’ve something to report, Captain. I wish I hadn’t. I couldn’t report it to General as I can to you. It’s about Hal. He’s going to ask me to marry him. I *wish* he *wouldn’t*.”

The vehemence with which Marjorie voiced the disquieting report brought a shadowy flash of concern to her mother’s face. It faded instantly into a distinctly humorous expression.

“How do you know Hal is going to ask you to marry him?” she quizzed, her eyes twinkling. “You’ve heard the old sad tale of Miss Betty Baxter who refused Captain Jones before he axed her.”

“Oh-h, Captain!” Marjorie made a laughing open-armed rush at her mother. “Stop making fun of me. My case isn’t a bit like silly Miss Betty Baxter’s. What an idiotic person she must have been! You see, dearest,” she slid an arm about her mother’s neck. “Why – Hal – ” Her color mounted to her white forehead – “began to ask me down on the beach tonight. Then Danny and Jerry came up to us. *They* didn’t know what he was saying to me, of course. He surprised me, too.”

Hesitatingly, Marjorie went on to tell her captain of her talk with Hal on the beach which had led up to his impulsive declaration of love. It was not easy to repeat, even to her mother. She had taken a stand behind her mother’s low-backed chair, arms dropped forward. One hand patted a light tattoo on her mother’s shoulder as she talked. Presently her voice trailed off into silence. Her head went down against her mother’s neck.

“Bring over the low stool, Lieutenant,” Mrs. Dean ordered in her briskest “army” tone.

“Yes, Captain.” Quick as a flash Marjorie’s arms dropped from her captain’s shoulders. She left a light kiss on her mother’s soft brown hair, then marched across the room for the stool. She set it down at her captain’s feet, saluted and stood at rigid attention.

“Break ranks. Discipline seems to be still alive in the army,” Mrs. Dean observed with a smile.

“It is.” Marjorie settled herself on the cushioned stool and leaned her elbows on her mother’s knees. She looked up inquiringly, face between hands. “What is it, Captain? You haven’t said *one* word of what you think about – about Hal and me.”

“I’m thinking for a moment of what I had best say.” Mrs. Dean looked fondly down at the lovely colorful face raised to her own.

For an instant neither spoke. Then Mrs. Dean said with kindly deliberation: “If you loved Hal in the same whole-hearted way in which I believe he loves you, General and I should be glad of your engagement to him. General thinks Hal a man among young men. You know how much that means. We have occasionally discussed your long friendship with Hal and his entire devotion to you. We know that you do not love him. We are sorry that you cannot return his great affection for you.” One hand strayed caressingly over Marjorie’s curls. There followed another brief interval, then: “We wish you to be true to yourself, Lieutenant. That is the order of the day.”

“Dearest and best,” Marjorie reached for her mother’s hands, took them in her own and fondled them; “why, oh, why didn’t I fall in love with Hal as Connie did with Laurie? I don’t know why. I’ll have to tell him so tomorrow and it will hurt me almost as much to say it as it will hurt him to hear it. He’s been such a splendid comfy friend. I can’t bear to say ‘no’ to him, and I can’t say ‘yes.’ It’s a hard detail, Captain, but I must face it as a true soldier should. All I can do is tell Hal frankly, but in the best way I can, that I don’t love him and never shall.”

CHAPTER IV. – I CAN'T GIVE YOU UP, DEAR

“Let me conduct your marvelous majesty to a seat beside the wheel.” Hal offered his hands with a motion of exaggerated gallantry. He caught Marjorie’s hands in his own and half swung her down from the little pier and into the motor boat.

“Thank you, gallant and distinguished skipper,” was Marjorie’s blithe response as she sat down on the small cushioned bench nearest the wheel, guided by Hal’s devoted arm.

“I had no idea you appreciated me so highly.” He managed to keep up the light, bantering tone he had first used. It was not easy. What he longed to say to her as she turned her vivid, sparkling face toward him was: “I love you. I love you.”

“Why shouldn’t I appreciate you?” Marjorie merrily insisted. She was relieved at Hal’s apparently light mood. She hoped it would continue for at least the greater part of the ride. She preferred to ward off the dreaded talk as long as she could. She had agreed with her captain that Hal had the right to be heard; that it was not fair to him to evade longer an understanding with him.

“I don’t know. Why should you?” countered Hal.

“For two splendid reasons. You’re taking me for a ride in the Oriole. Besides, you called me ‘marvelous majesty,’ which is a most flattering title. Oh, Hal Macy!” Marjorie exclaimed with animated irrelevancy; “isn’t this the most heavenly blue and white and gold day? Blue sea, blue sky, white clouds and golden sun!”

“It’s a peach of a day,” he tersely agreed. Marjorie’s declared appreciation of himself brought a half ironical smile to his lips. As usual, it was like that of a child, grateful for benefits. “What port?” he inquired briefly of her as he started the Oriole away from the pier.

“No port,” was Marjorie’s prompt choice; “just a little run out to sea.”

“Right-o.” Hal obediently headed the Oriole seaward. “Look at the crowd!” He indicated with a sweep of an arm the flock of white-winged sail boats and motor launches which thickly dotted the dimpling water. “Every fellow at the beach who owns a boat seems to be out with it today.”

“It’s an ideal day for boating,” Marjorie found herself tritely echoing Hal’s opinion of the weather. Still she could not on the instant think of anything else to say. Her usual fund of gay, amusing conversation had deserted her. She was too honest of spirit to pretend that which she did not feel.

“There’s no danger of a sudden squall, either.” Hal’s interest in the weather appeared to deepen. “This day is what I’d call an old reliable. Storms hardly ever blow up out of such honest-to-goodness blue skies as these.”

“That’s true.” Marjorie inwardly derided herself for being such an utter stupid. She tried to make herself believe that it was only Hal, her boy chum, with whom she was out boating. She could not. The young man at the wheel whose familiar handsome features were touched with an intensity of purpose quite foreign to them was all but a stranger to her. In the past she had had only rare, disquieting glimpses of the intense side Hal was showing today.

A flat, uncomfortable silence suddenly drifted down upon them. Hal’s courteous attempt to talk trivialities, simple because he knew that was what Marjorie preferred him to do was a failure. He had come to the place where he could no longer continue to hide his heart from her.

The silence between them continued; deepened. Both had begun to feel the tensivity of the situation. Both had tried to talk pleasantries and both had failed. Hal occupied himself with sending the Oriole scudding cleverly in and out among the numerous pleasure craft, large and small which dotted the course he was steadily taking toward quieter more aloof waters.

Now and again they were briskly hailed by the occupants of other passing boats. Hal lightened momentarily as he answered the merry salutations, then relapsed into somber gravity.

“What a lot of people you know at Severn Beach, Hal.” Marjorie was glad to find her voice again. Hal was waving an acknowledgment to a noisy, rollicking crew of young men in a passing power launch who had sent out a ringing hail to him.

“I only know a bunch of yachtsmen and a few other fellows.” Hal disclaimed popularity with a shrug of his broad shoulders. “The Clipper, my racing sailboat, is better known along this coast than I am. Oh, but she’s a winner!” Hal brightened with pride of ownership. “She won every race I entered her for last summer. She’s won two this season, and she’s entered in a spiffy race the yacht club is going to pull off in a couple of weeks. You’d better stay at the beach and see it. I’ll take you aboard for the race, if you’ll stay.” Half laughingly, half pleadingly he offered this bribe.

“That would be glorious; to be in a real race!” Marjorie looked her regret. “You’re always so good to me, Hal; always planning some perfectly dandy stunt just to please me. But you know how it is about Hamilton. I feel it truly a sacred obligation; my work there, I mean. I couldn’t allow personal pleasure to come before it.”

“No; nor love, either,” Hal burst forth with a hurt vehemence which brought the hot blood to Marjorie’s cheeks. “I beg your pardon, Marjorie,” he said almost immediately afterward. “I spoke on impulse. Still, that’s the way I feel about your going back to Hamilton next fall when I love you so dearly and want you to marry me. I wish you cared even half as much for me as you do for your work at Hamilton. But you don’t care at all.”

“I do care for you, Hal, as one of the best friends I have,” Marjorie protested, raising her brown eyes sorrowfully to Hal’s clouded face.

“I know,” Hal rejoined a shade less forcefully. “I value your friendship, Marjorie, more highly than I can say. But friendship’s not what I want from you, dear girl. I love you, truly and forever. I’ve loved you since first you came to Sanford to live. I’d have told you so long ago but you never gave me an opportunity.” Hal paused. He regarded Marjorie wistfully; questioningly.

“I – I know it, Hal,” she admitted reluctantly, but with her usual honesty. “I – I haven’t wished you to talk of love to me. There were times last winter” – she stopped in confusion – “when I thought you cared – a little. I – I wasn’t sure.”

“Be very sure of it, now.” Hal’s reply was a mixture of tenderness and dejection.

“I don’t want you to love me, Hal,” Marjorie cried out almost sharply in her desire to be emphatic. “Last night, after what you said to me on the beach, I couldn’t help but be sure. I – I told Captain of it. I always tell her everything. Captain is sorry I don’t love you. She and General are fond of you. They’d be happy if we were – if we were – to become engaged.” Marjorie spoke the last words hesitatingly.

“I’m glad you told your mother. You know how fine I think both General and Captain are.” Hal fought back the hurt look that threatened to invade his face. He gripped the wheel until his knuckles stood out whitely against the sun-tanned brown of his hands.

Marjorie caught a glimpse of the unhappiness which sprang straight from her old comrade’s sore heart and into his eyes.

“There; I’ve hurt you, Hal! Truly I never meant to!” she exclaimed in quick contrition.

“Never mind me.” Hal made a gesture of self-depreciation. “It isn’t your fault because you can’t find it in your heart to love me.” He forced a smile, proudly trying to conceal his own desolation of spirit.

Her eyes remorsefully fixed on him the smile did not deceive Marjorie. Hal’s tenseness of feature informed her of the weight of the blow she had just dealt him.

“Please, please, Hal, forgive me!” she begged with a sudden excess of pained humility.

“Forgive you? For what?” Hal bent a fond questioning glance on Marjorie’s troubled face.

“For – for – not loving you,” she faltered. “It hurts me dreadfully to know that I must be the one to make you unhappy. Forgive me for seeming to be so hard and unsympathetic about love. I’ve never thought of it for myself. It has always seemed vague and far away; like something not a part

of my life. I know the love between Connie and Laurie is wonderful. I can appreciate their devotion to each other. I have the greatest impersonal reverence for love and lovers. But for me life means endeavor and the glory of achievement.”

The voice of ambitious, inspirited youth sang in her tones, half appealing though they were. Came an embarrassed stillness between them. Hal’s face, strong, even stern in its self-repression was turned partly away from her. The bleakness of his suffering young soul peered forth from his deep blue eyes as he stared steadily across the dimpling sun-touched waves.

“Nothing matters in life but love. To love and to be loved in return,” he said slowly, but with a kind of fatalistic decision. “You’ll love someone, someday, even though you can’t love me.” The shadow on Marjorie’s face deepened as she listened. It was almost as though in a flash of second sight Hal were telling her a fortune she did not care to hear. “When love truly comes to you, then you’ll understand what you can’t understand now,” he ended.

“I don’t want love to come to me. I don’t wish to understand it,” Marjorie made sad protest. “Since it isn’t in my heart to love you, I should never wish to love any one else. You’re the finest, gentlest, truest boy *I’ve* ever known, Hal, or ever expect to know.”

Hal’s half averted face was suddenly turned toward Marjorie. Across it flashed a rare sweet smile which lived long afterward in her memory. “It’s as I told you last night, Marjorie Dean. You haven’t grown up.” Tender amusement had mercifully broken into and lightened his gloom. “You only think you have,” he said. Marjorie’s naive avowal had brought with it a faint stirring of new hope.

“Yes, Hal, I’ve grown up,” Marjorie began seriously. “It’s not – ”

“You’ll never really grow up until love finds the way to your heart,” Hal interrupted with gentle positiveness. “I hope when it does it will be love for me. I can’t give you up, dear. I’m going to call you ‘dear’ this once. I’d rather have your friendship than the love of any other girl in the world. I’m going to wait for you to grow up.”

CHAPTER V. – A WARM RECEPTION

“Hamilton! Hamilton!” Marjorie Dean smiled to herself. Her expressive brown eyes grew brighter as the lusty call echoed through the car. One hand tightened about the leather handle of her traveling bag with the impatience of one who was longing to be free of the limited confines of the car. She peered alertly out of the open window at the familiar railway platform which lay deserted in the warm glory of a mid-summer sun. How strange it seemed to see the good old platform so bare and empty!

“Not a sign of Robin,” was her disappointed reflection. “What’s happened to her, I wonder? I’m evidently first here after all. She can’t have arrived yet or she would surely be out on the platform watching for me.”

The three or four persons, whose destination was also Hamilton were now moving down the aisle toward the car’s upper door. Marjorie did not follow the orderly little line of passengers. She turned and hurried to the opposite end of the car impatient to be out of the train. She was glad to be the only one to leave the car from that end.

“Oh-h-h.” She drew a half sighing breath of sheer loneliness. “What a dismal old place!”

She ran lightly down the car steps, eluding the brakeman’s helping hand, and came to an abrupt stop on the deserted platform. She stood still, casting a faintly disconsolate glance about her. It was hard, indeed, to believe that this empty space with the warm friendly sunshine streaming down upon it was Hamilton station, endeared to her by the memory of many happy meetings and cheerful goodbyes on the part of student friends.

“What had I better do?” was her next thought. “What a goose I was not to tear Jeremiah from the beach and bring her with me. Robin’s missing from the picture. That means I’ll have to be on the watch for her. How I’d like to walk in on Miss Remson at Wayland Hall this afternoon! Wouldn’t she be surprised, though?”

Marjorie cast a meditative glance toward the staid drowsy town of Hamilton. Robina Page, her classmate and partner of the good little firm of “Page and Dean,” as their chums liked to call them, had written that she would meet Marjorie at the station. From her handbag Marjorie extracted Robin’s latest letter to her. She glanced it over hurriedly. Yes; it read: “Friday afternoon, July 25th. I’ll be at the station to meet the three-twenty train. Don’t dare disappoint me.”

“It looks as though I’d be the one to meet the trains,” she murmured under her breath. Always quick to decide she made the choice between waiting patiently in the station building for the next train Robin could arrive on, or seeking the grateful coolness of the Ivy, in favor of the dainty tea shop. The train Robin might be on would not arrive until five-thirty.

Picking up her traveling bag which she had momentarily deposited on the platform Marjorie moved briskly toward the flight of worn stone steps leading to the station yard.

“If Robin shouldn’t be on the five-thirty train I suppose I’d best go to the Congress Hotel and stay there until tomorrow. If I should go on to the campus alone, I’d miss seeing her; that is, if she should arrive tonight. I’ll fairly absorb time tables and meet all the trains tonight except the very late ones,” was Marjorie’s energetic resolve as she swung buoyantly along the smooth wide stone walk. The brief moment of depression which she had felt at sight of the empty station platform had now vanished. She was again her sunny self, animated and bubbling over with the desire for action.

She was so intent upon her own affairs she quite failed to see three laughing faces frame themselves suddenly in a screened window of the station. Almost instantaneous with their appearance they were withdrawn. Their owners made a noiseless, speedy exit from the waiting room and flitted through the open doorway which led to a square of green lawn behind the building bounded by cinder drives.

Giggling softly as they ran the stealthy trio gathered in a compact little group at a rear corner of the building which Marjorie must pass on her way across the yard to the street.

“I’ll relieve you of that bag, lady,” croaked a harsh, menacing voice. The bag was snatched from Marjorie’s hand in a twinkling.

“Hands up!” ordered a second voice, only a shade less menacing than that of the first bandit.

“Boo, boo-oo, woo-oo-oo!” roared a third outlaw. The final “oo” ended in a sound suspiciously like a chuckle.

Completely surrounded by an apparently merciless and lawless three Marjorie had not attempted to retrieve the traveling bag. Instead she had pounced upon the smallest of the bandits with a gurgle of surprised delight.

“Vera Mason, you perfect darling! Where did you come from, Midget, dear?” Marjorie laughingly quoted as she warmly kissed tiny Vera.

“Out of the everywhere into the here,” Vera carelessly waved an indefinite hand and smiled up at Marjorie in her charming, warm-hearted fashion.

“And you, Leila Greatheart! So you’ve turned highwayman! I am pretty sure that I am the first victim. Very likely you planned with your partners in crime to practice on me. Give me my bag, you old villain.” Marjorie shook a playful fist at Leila.

The widely smiling Irish girl merely reached out her strong arms, gleaming whitely against her dark blue gown, and gathered Marjorie into them. She kissed her on both cheeks, then placed a finger under Marjorie’s chin and gazed admiringly at her.

“Beauty is Beauty, at home or abroad,” she declared lightly. “And it’s myself that has longed for a sight of you, little, beautiful lieutenant.”

“Don’t monopolize the victim,” protested an aggrieved voice. Robin Page now made an attempt to pry Marjorie free from Leila’s close embrace.

“Robin Page, you wicked girl! So this is the way you meet me at the station!” Marjorie hugged and kissed Robin with fresh enthusiasm.

“You will kindly blame these two rascals here for the hold-up,” laughed Robin. “This pair, Lawless Leila and Vera, the Midge, are quite capable of dark deeds. Aren’t those names I made up for them dandy? I’m going to write a play this year, a real melodrama, and have them play the leads under those very names. That’s an inspiration born of this hold-up,” she added in her bright fashion.

“And to think I was ever sad a minute over you three blessed geese!” Marjorie looked from one to another of her chums, her eyes bright with affection. “I thought of you all as I was leaving the train and was so sorry that you were, as I supposed, so far away. And all the time you were hanging around a corner fairly aching to hold me up. Oh, I’m so glad to see you! I’ve been looking forward to seeing Robin, but I never dreamed such good fortune as this was in store for me.”

“She means us.” Vera gave Leila a significant nudge.

“She does that,” Leila purposely lapsed into a brogue. “And it’s something grand I’ll be saying to her yet, but not till I know myself what I’m going to say.”

“Oh, never mind the blarney. Just tell me how you happen to be here,” begged Marjorie, tucking an arm into Robin’s. “Not one letter have I had from either of you since the Dean family went down to Severn Beach, and only one apiece since college closed. I may not be a prompt correspondent, but – ”

“Tell me nothing.” Leila put up a defensive hand. She was laughing behind it. “Isn’t it I who know my own failings?”

“You ought to know by this time that you are a flivver as a correspondent,” Marjorie condemned with pretended severity. “I thought, when I did not hear from you, that you and Midget had really gone to Ireland for the summer. You know you talked of taking the trip last spring. I supposed – ”

“I was busy pointing out the Blarney Stone to Midget and capturing banshees and leprechauns for her to play with,” interposed Leila. “No, Beauty; not this summer. Truth is truth. We did talk about a visit to the Emerald Isle during the summer, but Commencement morning changed all that.

Midget and I planned then to come to Hamilton instead and give you a mid-summer welcome. Why, Midget and I said to each other, should we go gallivanting about old Ireland when the good little firm of Page and Dean would be working their dear heads off at Hamilton?”

“Why, indeed?” echoed Vera. “We’re here to stay as long as you and Robin stay.”

“We’ve been at Wayland Hall for a week waiting for you two promoters to appear. We didn’t know the exact date of your appearance, or which one of you would appear first,” Leila informed Marjorie.

“You talk as though Robin and I were a couple of rare elusive comets,” Marjorie joked.

“You’re a couple of rare, elusive P. G.s whose present mission is to lighten and gladden Leila’s and my declining years,” retorted Vera. “That’s the real reason you came to Hamilton this July, though you may not have suspected it. Of course, while you’re here, and we’re here, we won’t object to your doing a few kindly little stunts for our Alma Mater.” Vera endeavored to appear extremely condescending. Instead she looked so utterly happy that Marjorie wrapped her arms about the dainty little girl and embraced her all over again.

“I reached here just one train ahead of you, Marjorie,” Robin now said. “I was held up, too, and forced into a conspiracy against you. It happened to be more convenient for me to take an earlier train. I intended to meet yours anyway – you know the rest.” Robin gestured eloquently toward Leila and Vera.

“Yes, I know the rest,” Marjorie repeated fondly. “I also know something else. I was bound for the Ivy when three footpads waylaid me. Just to show you what a forgiving spirit I have I will invite those three footpads to a feast at the Ivy. I’ve had nothing to eat since early this morning and I’m famished. There was no dining car on the train.”

“Ah, let me be the Irish lady to give the feast,” wheedled Leila. “My gold burns in my pocket when it’s too long there. Midget has far more money than she ought to have. All week we have led a cat and dog life, grumbling and sputtering about which of us should treat.”

“All right. You’re so smooth. I can’t resist you, this once. I hereby invite you all to dinner at Baretti’s tonight,” stipulated Marjorie. “I’ve gold of my own to spend. Just as General put me on the train this morning he put an envelope in my hand. I opened it after the train had started. In it were two fifty dollar notes and a funny short letter from him telling me to call the money the Marjorie Dean Entertainment Fund. He ordered me to spend it just for good times. I must obey my general, you know. When I come back to Hamilton next – ”

A sudden jubilant clamor from her chums drowned her voice.

“Aha!” Leila paused in the middle of the walk and waved a triumphant arm. “What do I hear?”

“Uh-h-h; but that’s good news!” Robin made a show of collapsing from sheer relief.

“Is it really settled. Marvelous Manager?” Vera cried with some anxiety.

“Now you may tell me, Beauty, what I said last June you would say.” Leila was radiant at the good news.

Marjorie laughed. “You are a soothsayer, Leila Greatheart,” she said, obeying Leila’s joyful command. “Yes; it has all been settled.” Her own features reflected the good cheer of her friends. “I’m coming back to the campus in the fall.”

CHAPTER VI. – IN LOVE WITH WORK

“To the boldest bandit belongs the spoils.” Leila lifted Marjorie’s traveling bag from the walk, took hold of her arm and began steering her across the grassy station yard to where a smart grey car stood on the drive.

“I’ll let you tug it along to punish you for being a desperado. It’s a heavy old thing. Fifteen minutes ago I didn’t know where it and I would stop for the night. Now, thank goodness, and you girls, we can all go to Wayland Hall.” Marjorie smiled over her shoulder at Robin and Vera who were walking behind them.

“What a love of a car!” she exclaimed as they neared the trim gray roadster. “I’ll make a guess. It’s Vera’s. Somehow it suggests her.”

“Yes, it’s Vera’s. Have you noticed? My eyes are turning green with envy of Midget,” Leila declared darkly, then showed her strong white teeth in a roguish smile. “Her father sent her this dream of a car from Paris. He’s been painting at his Paris studio since early last spring. The roadster came the week after we left Hamilton. I was with Vera in their New York house. We were trying to decide what we should do to amuse ourselves until time for our trip here. Then the car came. We were so proud of it! We wanted the world to see it and us in it. We went on a motor trip to the Adirondacks. We stayed for two weeks with Vera’s aunt at her camp. She was horrified because we came in the car without a chaperon. And I must tell you the truth! Neither of us remembered there was any such person to be considered when we started out with the car.” Leila threw back her head and laughed.

“We didn’t have one going back, either.” Vera had caught what Leila was saying. “Luckily for us, my father thinks Leila and I can be trusted to take care of ourselves. We motored back to New York City and from there to Hamilton.”

“So we did. And it’s here we are stopping again, like a set of statues in the sun, when we might be on our way to the Ivy.” By common consent the four had again grouped themselves on the walk opposite the roadster. “Come with me. Don’t be dawdling here when there’s news to be told and news to be heard,” Leila rallied. She motioned Marjorie to the car and ceremoniously opened a rear door for her.

“Right-o!” Robin exclaimed, preparing to take the front seat of the roadster beside Vera. “I’m simply perishing for a real opportunity to talk. It seems ages and ages since college closed. Yet it is only a month. I have scads of things to tell you girls. Phil wanted to come with me. We had the trip all planned and her trunk was partly packed. Then three girl cousins descended upon the Moores for a visit. Poor Phil had to stay home and help entertain them. I’ll tell you more about her when we are at the Ivy.” Robin turned in the seat to say this much as Vera started the car.

As the roadster sped away from the station drive and swung into Herndon Avenue, Hamilton’s main thoroughfare, Marjorie glanced slowly from one side of the street to the other. A happy little smile played upon her lips. Next to Sanford, her home town, she loved the staid college town of Hamilton. She loved it for its wide ornamental streets and stately green-lawned residences. Like all else which bore the name of Hamilton it seemed in some strange elusive way to partake of the fine character of its founder, Brooke Hamilton.

Presently she reached up and removed the white straw hat she wore. She gave a satisfied little intake of breath as the cool afternoon breeze blew gently in her face, lifting the thick clustering curls which framed it and blowing them back from her forehead. Her lovely features wore the untroubled, child-like expression which had ever made them so beautiful. Behind that beautiful untroubled face, however, was the resolute, indomitable spirit of a pioneer. It was that very spirit of endeavor which had made her a force for good at Hamilton College since her enrollment as a student of that institution.

After four years at Sanford High School, Marjorie Dean and four of her intimate girl friends had chosen Hamilton College as their Alma Mater. What happened to them as students at Sanford

High School has been recorded in the “Marjorie Dean High School Series,” comprising: “Marjorie Dean, High School Freshman,” “Marjorie Dean, High School Sophomore,” “Marjorie Dean, High School Junior” and “Marjorie Dean, High School Senior.”

The account of their doings at Hamilton College may be found in the “Marjorie Dean College Series,” comprising: “Marjorie Dean, College Freshman,” “Marjorie Dean, College Sophomore,” “Marjorie Dean, College Junior,” “Marjorie Dean, College Senior.”

During Marjorie’s senior year at Hamilton College she and her particular friends became interested in a plan to provide Hamilton students in less fortunate financial circumstances than themselves with suitable quarters in which to live. The fact that such students were making great personal sacrifices in order to obtain a college education had aroused the sympathy of Marjorie and her associates.

What began as the raising of a fund by which to make the way easier for the strugglers gradually led to a more ambitious plan on the part of Marjorie and her allies. They dreamed of a free dormitory for needy students which they determined by steady conscientious effort should some day be realized.

With the coming of Commencement which had seen Marjorie and her loyal supporters graduated from Hamilton College had come also the unexpected gift of a valuable piece of property as a site for the new dormitory. The donor, Miss Susanna Hamilton, was the great-niece of the founder of Hamilton College, Brooke Hamilton. While the eccentric old lady had been prejudiced for many years against the college board, she was, on the other hand, a warm friend of Marjorie Dean. During Marjorie’s sophomore year she and Miss Susanna had met by accident. Later, Miss Hamilton had learned to love the sunny, gracious lieutenant. As a result of that love had come Miss Susanna’s amazing concession.

During their senior year in college Marjorie and Robin had turned their attention to the giving of plays, concerts and other pleasing entertainments. These amusements had been welcomed by the Hamilton students and the two successful promoters had reaped a goodly sum of money for the dormitory project. The Nineteen Travelers, a confidential little band which included Marjorie and Robin, had also contributed several hundred dollars to the dormitory fund by the curtailing of personal expenses, elimination of all but a few luxuries and the practicing of self-denial in the matter of dinners and spreads.

The presentation by Miss Susanna Hamilton of the site for the dormitory had made the way clear for the erection of the building in the not far distant future.

At the time of her graduation Marjorie had been fully aware that hers and Robin’s beloved enterprise would require their presence on the campus the following autumn. The real work of their project was yet to come. Robin was free to return to Hamilton. Marjorie had not been certain that her general and her captain would be willing that she should remain away from home another winter. She had left college for Sanford unable to assure her classmates who were to return the next autumn as post graduates that she would be then among them.

“So my prophetic Celtic bones did not lie,” Leila said with teasing good humor. “Ah, Beauty, but was not Leila the wise Irish woman? Did I not prophesy that your general and your captain would be sending you back to college?”

“Of course you did. Your prophetic Celtic bones told you how utterly unselfish they were,” Marjorie returned warmly. “We didn’t exchange a word about my coming back as a P. G. while they were on the campus during Commencement week. One evening soon after we were home Jerry and Lucy came over and General said he had very important orders for the Army. He read us a ridiculous notice, ordering us to report at Hamilton College for post graduate duty, not later than October first, by order of General and Captain Dean. Jerry and Lucy made such a racket over it that General threatened to lock them in the guard house for boisterous conduct.”

Leila listened, immensely tickled by Mr. Dean’s army tactics. Marjorie continued to tell her of Jerry and her doings. She said nothing, however, of Jerry’s brother. Entirely fancy free, Marjorie had

never spoken confidentially of Hal to any girl save Constance. Jerry would not have ventured to ask Marjorie a personal question concerning him, intimate as the two girls were.

“Why, Leila,” Marjorie said presently, going back to her superior officers, “after the girls went home that night I had a long talk with General and Captain. I found they considered it my first duty to come back to college. General pretended to be very threatening. He dared me to try to stay at home and see what would happen. I don’t like to be away from them, Leila, but I love my work. And it’s only begun on the campus. It will take us a long time to pay for the dormitory. I may be old as the hills by the time it is paid for,” was her jocular prediction. “If I’m a tottering last leaf when that happens, at least I will have grown old in a good cause.”

CHAPTER VII. – SCENTING MYSTERY

Vera was now bringing the roadster to a stop before the Ivy.

“Hello, old stand-by!” Marjorie raised a cheerful hand of greeting toward the familiar, one-story white stucco building. Its ornamental bungalow effect was made even more attractive by the traits of English ivy which wandered across the front of the shop and were trained above the door and the narrow-paned windows.

“Not another car parked here; glorious! This is a positive streak of luck!” congratulated Vera.

“The Ivy is popular with tourists this summer,” Leila informed Marjorie and Robin as the girls sauntered up the wide white stone walk four abreast. “This is the first time since we came back that we have been able to park in front of the shop.”

Entering the tea room they steered a straight course for one of four alcove tables. During the college year these tables were difficult to secure unless engaged beforehand. All four stood empty now. A brief lull in the mid-afternoon business of the Ivy had found the prosperous shop temporarily deserted.

“Who ever before saw an alcove table at the Ivy empty?” commented Robin as the chums seated themselves.

“It’s almost as still here today as in chapel after Prexy has read out an amazing notice,” declared Vera lightly.

“Observe how soon that chapel-like atmosphere will depart. We are here,” Leila reminded.

“No; this beatific state of sweet silence is due to be shattered this very minute,” Robin agreed.

“Right you are, Robin. It’s a grand palaver we’re about to have. Let us order the luncheon before the gabble party begins,” proposed Leila. “Consomme, chicken à la king, potato straws, cucumber salad and whatever your sweet tooth demands for dessert? Yes?” She turned inquiring eyes on her friends. “And a pot of tea, of course?”

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.