

**Charles George Douglas
Roberts**



*The Heart
that Knows*

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CHAPTER I.

WHEN THE SHIP WENT OUT

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An unremitting wind, blowing down the vast and solitary green levels of Tantramar, bowed all one way the deep June grasses over the miles on miles of marsh. A tall girl, standing alone on the crest of the dyke,—the one human figure visible in the wide, bright-coloured emptiness of the morning,—caught its full force and braced herself sturdily against it. It flapped the starched wings of her deep white sunbonnet across her face, twitched out a heavy streamer of her flax-blond hair, and pressed her thin, blue and white calico gown close upon the tenderly rounded lines of her slim young figure. The soft, insistent noise of it, mingled with the sound of the shallow, dancing waves that swept along past the dyke-front, confused her ears and partly numbed her thought. But her eyes, which were large, and of a peculiarly positive porcelain blue, were fixed with anxious strain upon a ship riding at anchor far out across the yellow waves. That ship, a black-hulled barquentine on the yards of whose foremast the white sails were being broken out, was evidently the one thing her eyes took note of in all the spacious scene.

The scene was all space,—all high, light colour, wind-washed brightness, and loneliness. Toward the southeast, where the girl was looking, and in a vast sweep around the southward horizon, spread the tawny, tumbled waters of Fundy, eternally vexed by their terrific tides. Beyond the ship—leagues beyond, and across the yellow water—rose

the low blue hills of Minudie. To eastward outspread the interminable light green levels of the Tantramar marshes, with the dark green spur of Fort Beauséjour thrust out to fence them off from the marshes of the Missaguash. Further around to the left the grassy solitudes were cleft and threaded by the many-winding channel of that most mutable of rivers, the Tantramar, just now at full tide, and pouring its pale, copper-coloured flood into the bay almost before the girl's feet. The windings of the river—which twisted hither and thither as if it had forgotten its way—made bright, reddish yellow slashes and patches over the wide green of the marsh.

Still further to the left, along the foot of the uplands which ran diminishing northward, a far-off group of roofs, with a couple of church spires and a cluster of masts, showed the little town of Sackville on its gently billowing hills. Much nearer, a promontory of wooded upland bore, half-hidden in its front, an old colonial mansion, "Westcock House," with horse-chestnuts and Lombardy poplars ranged majestically before it. Outspread behind the watcher on the dyke lay a mile-breadth of the same light green marshes, traversed by a meandering creek which came to the sea reluctantly, close at the girl's right. It pierced the massive barrier of the dyke by an *aboi d'eaux* (or "Bito," as the country-folk called it), and formed a tiny port for the boats of the shad-fishers, whose high, brown net-reels sentinelled its borders. The broad belt of marsh, secure behind its rampart of dyke, ran off in long curves toward the southwest, and terminated at the rocky, oak-crowned heights of Wood Point. Behind it, trailing out sparsely along

the tilled slope of the upland, and dotted here and there with dark fir-groves, lay the southerly portion of Westcock village, the rest of it hidden from sight behind a shoulder of dark fir-groves.

The marshes, at this season of early summer, were covered with a three-foot growth of timothy and other fine hay-grasses. Here and there, for acres at a time, the grass could not bow and turn blue evenly before the wind, because it was stiff with the blooms and tangled leafage of the great red clover. Here and there, too, instead of the rosy stain of the clover, vast patches of blossoming vetch, entwined with the grass stems, spread a wash of undulating purple over the pale green. For the most part, however, the levels bore no colour but green, vivid and pure when the grass stood up in a rare lull of the wind, but bluish and beryl-pallid as the bending tops revealed the lower surfaces of blade and bloom. Along the twisting banks of the creek, along the inner bases of the dyke, along every deep but narrow drainage ditch, and along both sides of the rutted road of dry mud which led, a rusty streak across the green, from the little haven of the shad-boats to the far-off, sunny uplands, ran wild roses, their leafage of yellowish bronze now thick strewn with golden-hearted blossoms of pale pink. Everywhere, in a riot of summer exuberance, hummed and foraged the great black and gold bumblebees. Brown marsh-hawks winnowed low over the grass-tops, quartering every grass-packed acre for the field-mice which scurried among the grass-roots. And over all this shining world of green earth and yellow sea hung a low-vaulted sky of light, pure blue, the blue of thinned cobalt.

For nearly two hours the girl had waited on the wind-swept dyke, watching the ship. She had been expecting to see a boat put off from the ship's side, and head for the mouth of the creek. The tide had crept in yellow over the red flats, till it brimmed the creek mouth with its broken, white-topped waves and washed foaming along the bases of the dyke below her feet. After half an hour she wondered and grew impatient. Then, at slack of tide, she began to grow angry,—for Jim had asked her to meet him out here on the dyke at high tide that they might talk over certain matters of intimate concern at safe distance from eye and ear of the village gossips. That night, in Westcock church, a great event was to take place, before the sailing of the ship on the morrow's ebb; and Luella felt that on such a day, when she had so much to do, it ill became her lover to be late.

But when, after this long waiting, the girl saw that the ship was beginning to make sail, anger gave way to an anxiety which soon grew to a terrible fear. A child of the fisher and sailor folk of Fundy, she read the signs only too well. The tide was just on the turn. Presently the tremendous ebb would begin and for six hours the vast Chignecto Basin, which forms the head of Fundy, would disgorge its tawny waters toward the ocean, till its level would be lowered by some thirty or forty feet, the tortuous channels of Tantramar and all its tributary creeks would be changed to glistening, red, steep-sided chasms of mud, and league upon league of oozy, red-gold flats would lie uncovered between the water and the dykes. Luella saw that, with wind and tide agreeing, it was a most favourable

time for the *G. G. Goodridge* to set sail, and work her way out from the shoals and mad currents of the upper bay. The *G. G. Goodridge* was what is known as a “barquentine,” a ship of three masts, the foremast carrying yards and square sails,—square-rigged, that is,—and the main and mizzen masts schooner-rigged, with booms and gaffs. When Luella saw the canvas spreading white on the yards of the foremast, she could not long delude herself. She could not see the men at the windlass, heaving the anchor, but her overtense ears hypnotized by the implacable drumming of the wind, seemed to hear the far-off chantey and the rhythmic creaking of the windlass. Soon the ship began to forge slowly ahead, and she knew that the anchor was up. Then a jib was broken out, bellying full; and then up went the great white mainsail, gleaming marvellously in the sun. The *G. G. Goodridge* was now a half-mile from her anchorage, and gathering headway. In a few minutes she was fairly hidden in her cloud of canvas, careening majestically, and passing down the bay with the full favour of wind and tide. Only too well Luella knew how long would be the voyage thus begun before her anguished eyes. She had talked it all over, and over, and over with Jim. The *G. G. Goodridge* was bound for Montevideo with a cargo of fish and deals, there to discharge, and perhaps take freight for around the Horn and up the Pacific Coast to Valparaiso. From some Peruvian port—Luella could not remember whether it was Arequipo or Callao that Jim said—she would load with nitrates for Liverpool, and then, possibly, return to New Brunswick, after an absence of perhaps two years. Luella knew that Jim Calder was aboard the vessel now passing so

swiftly from before her eyes. Three weeks ago that day he had signed his papers as second mate of the *G. G. Goodridge*. For two years he had been Luella's acknowledged lover; and it had been a pledge between them that they should be married when Jim got his papers as mate. The wedding was to have been that night. And Luella was to have sailed with him on the morrow as far as St. John, there to bid him farewell, and return to Westcock to await his home-coming.

When, at last, the whole overwhelming significance of what had happened penetrated her numb brain, Luella sank down into a huddling heap upon the dyke, staring dry-eyed, and clutching unconsciously at the long strings which tied her sunbonnet beneath her chin. In her unheeding grasp the bow came untied. Instantly the wind twitched the sunbonnet from her head, carried it flapping and turning out to sea, and dropped it into the huddle of yellow waves. The great coils of her hair came unpinned, and streamed out, pale flaxen yellow and softly rich, like silk. But Luella did not know that her sunbonnet was gone. She was unconscious even that she had sunk down upon her knees. She only knew that Jim was on that vanishing ship,—that he had gone without a word to her,—that not for two years, at the very best, could she hope to see him again,—that there would be no wedding that night in the little Westcock church,—and that a formless horror of fear and shame and anguish was drawing near to engulf her. Her set lips, slowly turning gray, uttered not a sound, as she stared steadily after the fleeting cloud of canvas. At last, it disappeared around the lofty shoulder of Wood Point. When it had vanished, she sprang

to her feet with a cry, caught at her heart, and made a motion as if to throw herself into the water. Death, at the moment, seemed so simple a solution, and the only effective one. But while she had been watching the ship the tide had been ebbing in fierce haste, after the fashion of these tides of Tantramar; and where, the last time she took note of things, the waves had been tumbling at her feet, spread now a dozen rods of mud flat, oozily glistening in the sun. She could reach the water only by wading knee-deep in slime. The picture of what she would have looked like if she had flung herself from the dyke forced itself upon her, and she sat down suddenly, with a hysterical cry. In this the first perilous moment of her despair, she was saved. Then her strong will, and the sanity of those who have lived simply and naturally, came to her aid. She turned her back upon the water, took one desperate look at the far-off uplands and the houses of the village to which she must return, then descended the inner face of the dyke, and ran and threw herself face down in the deep of the grass.

For hours she lay there, hidden from all eyes but those of the marsh-hawk, which now and then winged over her to fly off to one side with a sudden heavy flapping and a shrill piping cry of astonishment. The girl's brain was too numb to think, but it was scorching dry with grief, and amazed injury, and terror of a future of humiliation which she realized only as a monstrous, uncomprehended nightmare. She lay with her eyes shut, and covered by her hands, and tearless, but with her parched lips half-open. Over and over, but with the futility of utter in consequence, her brain clutched at every conceivable or inconceivable explanation of the blow which

had fallen upon her. Over and over, with deadly repetition and never any possible advance, she recalled and dwelt upon and squeezed to dryness every word of her last talk with Jim, only the afternoon before,—when he had been all tenderness and loyal passion, she all trust and forward-looking gladness, in spite of the weary two years of separation which she had braced herself to face for his sake. While her heart and brain were surging with the tumult of her pain, outwardly she was as still as a dead thing. A bright-striped garter-snake, hunting among the grass-stems for mice and crickets, came suddenly upon her, and darted away in frightened writhings. And later, a foraging yellow weasel, hardly less sinuous and soundless than the snake, stole around her with unfriendly eyes for nearly half an hour.

Meanwhile the yellow tide retreated down the glassy flats till the noise of the waves quite died away, and there was no sound on the air but the hum of the bumblebees and the swish of the wind in the bowing grass. The sun rolled slowly across the light blue arc of sky, and sank below the fir-crested ridge of uplands behind Westcock village. The sky grew one transparent orange blaze over the ridge, barred with three long, narrow, horizontal clouds of purest crimson. The crimson died slowly to cold purple, the orange blaze to tenderest lilac and lavender; and the zenith took on the green of a clear sea that washes over white sands. The wind died suddenly. The uplands grew bottle-green, then black, and the wide, unshadowed spaces of the marsh melted through citron and violet into a dusky gray-brown, full of inexplicable warmer lights. At last a few stars glimmered forth, and the marshes fell into an aerial, indeterminate

blackness, with the unending barrier of the dyke a solid black rampart against the hollow sky. Lights gleamed yellow in scattered windows. Then, from far over the hill, came the faint sound of a church-bell, elusive and sweet as a fading memory, the summons of the little Westcock congregation to that evening service at which every one in the village was expecting to see Luella Warden married to Jim Calder. The sound of the bell pierced to the girl's brain. She rose slowly, noticed how drenched her heavy hair was, and re-coiled it punctiliously. In a flash she pictured the amused wonder that would presently grow on the faces of the congregation, the anxiety with which the kind eyes of the rector would keep glancing at the door, expectant. For a moment, as she thought of his loving interest in her marriage, the concern he had shown for the welfare of herself and Jim, and the way he had helped Jim study to pass his examinations, her mouth quivered and her eyes softened. This was but for a second, however. Then, with lips set hard as stone, she took the dim road homeward.

CHAPTER II.

THE BARQUENTINE *G. G. GOODRIDGE*

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The barquentine *G. G. Goodridge* was a new ship, fresh from Purdy's shipyard and the tarred hands of the riggers. She was of four hundred tons register, and owned in Sackville and Westcock. As she started down the Bay of Fundy on her maiden voyage she was held to be sailing under the special favour of Providence, in that she bore in white letters across her stern, as well as on her starboard bow, the name of the well-loved rector of the parish, the Reverend G. G. Goodridge. She owed her very existence, indeed, to the rector's efficient succour at a crucial moment; and among the seafaring folk, who are always superstitious (as becomes men who live with the great mysteries), it was considered that his name would be her passport to the good-will of fate.

It happened that very late one night, when the barquentine was still on the stocks in Purdy's shipyard, the rector was jogging slowly homeward from the bedside of a sick parishioner in Sackville. It was a moonless night, the blue-black sky sown thick with stars and the Great Bear wheeling low. Purdy's shipyard is on a short but wide-channelled creek emptying into the Tantramar in that portion of Westcock village which lies on the Sackville road, half a mile south of the Frosty Hollow "Bito." The rector's head was sunk in reverie, the reins hung loose on the

horse's neck, and the light "buggy," its top lowered back, jolted at its will over every rut and stone in the rough country road. As he passed Purdy's shipyard, however, the rector raised his eyes, and glanced down at the fine new vessel in which all Westcock was interested. In another week she would be gay with flags; and at high tide, amid the chorus of an enthusiastic throng, she would glide down her greased and smoking "ways" to plunge with an enormous splash into the yellow waters of the creek-basin. The shipyard was a good quarter of a mile from the road, but the great, tarred hull, high on its stocks, was conspicuous against the glimmer of water beyond. But it was not the lofty shadow of the hull that caught the rector's eye and made him sit up, very wide-awake. The next instant he turned the horse's head sharply, drove bumping over the ditch and the roadside hillocks to the fence, sprang out, and threw the reins over a fence stake. Then he vaulted the fence and ran as fast as he could across the fields toward the ship, shouting "Fire! Fire! Fire!" at the top of his great voice.

The flames were just beginning to rise from a heap of rubbish close under the stern, when the rector vaulted the fence. When he reached the ship they were licking high and red upon the fresh-tarred sides. A workman's bucket stood near; and, fortunately for the ship, the tide was at its height, lapping softly almost under the stern-port. The rector was a man of great muscular strength and trained activity. Though his lungs heaved hard from that quarter-mile sprint across the uneven, dusky fields, in a few seconds he had dashed bucket after bucket of water upon the blaze, and upon the

little, incipient flames which were beginning to hiss here and there far up the ship's side. By the time the ship-carpenters came running, half-awake, from the big house far at the other side of the yard, the rector had the fire well in hand, and there was only a smouldering, smoking pile of chips and shavings to show what had happened. The rector was hot, and tired, as well as angry at the carelessness which could leave a lot of such inflammable stuff so close beside the ship. His voice was stern as he addressed the staring foreman.

"Did you *want* the ship to be burned," he inquired, pointing to the heap, "that you left all that stuff there?"

The foreman rubbed his head.

"There wasn't no stuff left nigh to her, not a mite, when we knocked off work at sundown," he declared, positively. "No sir-ee, parson. If any one of the hands done a fool trick like that, he'd git the sack right quick."

As he spoke, the rector stooped and picked up an empty kerosene-can. Without a word he held it aloft. One of the hands had brought a lantern from the house. He swung it up, and the smoky light fell upon the circle of bearded, wondering faces gathered about the rector. As they stared at the kerosene-can, understanding kindled, and an angry growl passed swiftly from throat to throat.

"Yes," said the rector, dropping the can with a tinny clang, "it's the work of an incendiary. And he can't be far away."

"We'll git him!" swore the foreman, with an earnest and ingenious oath which the rector did not seem to hear; and in an instant, as if each man in the crowd had received his

individual orders, they all scattered, and faded away into the dark. The rector, left once more alone, stood for a few seconds pulling at his beard and glancing after them, an amused smile lurking about the corners of his kindly, tolerant mouth. Then he kicked the pile of embers all apart, drenched them with several more buckets of water till not a spark winked through the gloom, threw down the bucket with a deep breath of satisfaction, and betook himself away across the fields to where he had left the horse and buggy. He had no interest in the catching of the rascal who had set the fire,—and, indeed, they never did catch him. But as a result of that night's adventure the name of the barquentine, which was to have been the *Elmira Etter*, was changed at the eleventh hour to the *G. G. Goodridge*, much to the rector's surprise and boyish gratification. He had always wanted to travel, but had never felt free to gratify the desire. And now, his imagination was keenly stirred by the thought of this ship which bore his name visiting the foreign lands and the strange, peacock-hued seas of which he had wistfully dreamed. It lay close to his heart that this ship should have to do with nought but honest and clean trading, with humaneness and with good works. When he learned that Captain Job Britton, of Wood Point, was to be her master, he felt secure, for he knew Job's sturdy honesty, as well as the real kindness of heart that hid itself, not ineffectually, behind his gnarled and grizzled exterior.

Captain Job was a widower of fifty. When ashore,—which was seldom, as every ship-owner from Dorchester to the Joggins craved his services,—he lived in a snug white cottage just below the Point, with his one, idolized daughter,

Melissa, and Melissa's aunt, a spinster of matured and immitigable acidity. He was rather short, but of an astonishing breadth of shoulder, with short-cut, matted, reddish gray, streaked hair, bushy red and gray beard, and bristling, pale eyebrows over a pair of deep-set, piercing, steel-gray eyes. His massive neck, and all the skin of his face that was not mantled with hair, were mahogany red, and deeply creased with the wrinkles that tell of ceaseless battling with wind and salt and sun.

Melissa, who since babyhood had been well-spoiled, not only by her father, but even by her aunt, was a smallish, thinnish, decidedly pretty blonde of the carrot type, with eyes pale but bright, a skin faintly freckled, and a mouth both full-lipped and firm, which curiously contradicted the softness of the rest of her face. Her voice was a childlike treble, and her whole manner was one of trustful frankness. Nevertheless, for all her softness and trustfulness, no one but her father quite trusted her; and the girls at the Sackville seminary, where she had got her schooling, found that, though she was generous in her way, and anxious to be liked, it was never safe to traverse her purpose in even the most trivial matter. They distrusted her, of course, for her prettiness, among other good reasons; but most of all they distrusted her because, though she seemed so timid, she was not, in reality, afraid of anything, not even of June-bugs and mice, which every nice young lady ought to fear. From all this it would appear that Melissa Britton, behind her small, pale face and under her luxuriant, glossy, light red hair, concealed a personality to be reckoned with. Both she and Luella Warden sang in the parish church choir, her flute-

like soprano and Luella's rich contralto being the rector's chief dependence on those rare occasions, such as Christmas, or Easter, or a visit from the bishop, when there was anthem-music to be rendered. Between the two there was a certain natural rivalry in this matter of voice, though neither of them realized it, thanks to the rector's vigilant tact. Melissa admired Luella's voice, but confidently, though in secret, preferred her own. Luella was inclined, as a rule, to agree with her. While the rector, rather preferring Luella's for its sympathetic breadth and cello-like tenderness, never allowed his preference to be guessed.

CHAPTER III.

THE WEDDING THAT WAS NOT

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Technically, it was a rectory, in that it was the official residence of the rector of the parishes of Westcock and Dorchester; but the old, wide-eaved, brick house where Mr. Goodridge lived was known as Westcock Parsonage. It stood about half-way up the long slope of the hill, presenting its side, with dormer-windowed roof, to the vast, aerial view of the marshes and the bay, while its wide gable-end fronted on the ill-kept road running up and over the ridge. At each end of the house stood a luxuriant thicket of lilacs, and between the lilacs, along below the windows of the view, ran a green terrace studded with pink, yellow, and blue beehives. Below the terrace spread a neat garden of old-fashioned flowers, flanked by old cherry and apple trees; and below that a strip of vegetable garden, showing by its trim prosperity that the rector was a good gardener. Then, a sloping field of upland grass, thick-starred with buttercups and daisies. Then the Wood Point road along the hillside, with its two parallel lines of weather-beaten fence; and below the road a half-mile of fields and rough pasture lots, leading down to the deep-bosomed fertility of the marsh-level. From those high, narrow dormer-windows on the roof, looking southeastward over the solitudes of green, and tawny gold, and blue, all the pageants of the hours and the seasons could be seen radiantly unfolding. Behind the house, to shield it from the fierce north winds, towered

groves of ancient, sombre, dark green spruce and fir, their high, serried tops populous with crows. Across the front end of the parsonage ran a low veranda, and about ten paces before the veranda steps stood a lofty, spire-like, blue-green hackmatack-tree, whose feathery and delicate needles sighed to every air. In a circle around the hackmatack ran the red earth driveway, then straight on for about forty paces to the white front gate, leading to the road over the hill. Some fifty or sixty paces below the parsonage gate this road crossed the Wood Point road at right angles, and led away down between pastures on the right and the high fences and trees of Westcock House on the left, till it petered out to a mere cart-track, passed under a set of high bars, and wound away over the marshes toward the creek-mouth and the dyke.

It was up this road that Luella came in the dusk, with the faint sound of the church-bell pulsing intermittently on her ears. She passed the bars without knowing whether she had let them down or climbed over. Mounting the slope, she was poignantly conscious of a sudden waft of perfume from a deep thicket of blossoming lilacs in the back field of Westcock House. The soft, melting, passionate fragrance stabbed her like a knife-thrust. It was memory made palpable, of one wonderful night when she and Jim had sat for hours amid the scented dark of those trees, listening to the soft roar of the ebb down the channels of Tantramar. Her face twisted, and she half-stumbled. Then she pressed on resolutely up the hill.

At the crossroads she halted. To reach her own home, she must turn to the right along the Wood Point road, pass the

black groves of Westcock House, with their haunted deeps of silence, skirt the mysterious gully of the Back Lot, descend the water-worn track of Lawrence's Hill, and so along past Purdy's shipyard to the corner store of her uncle, old Abner Baisley, on the bank of the Frosty Hollow "Bito." She did not want to go home. In the dining-room window of the parsonage she saw a light. To her that house stood for every loving-kindness, and understanding, and succour. She wanted to feel the rector's hand, warm and strong, clasp hers for a moment. She wanted Mrs. Goodridge to give her a kiss and a vigorous hug, and murmur at the same time, rather abstractedly, "Well, dear!" Through all the numbness of her despair she was absurdly conscious of the sudden, disconcerting way in which the lady would then take notice, and exclaim—"But where's your sunbonnet, Luella? You'll catch your death of cold, out at night without a thing on your head, and the dew falling!" These things went through her brain, however, like something she had read of long ago, concerning people who perhaps had never existed at all. She knew that the rector and Mrs. Goodridge were both away at church. That pitiless, faint throbbing of the bell had stopped a few moments before,—and the rector was now beginning, "Dearly beloved brethren, the Scripture moveth us in sundry places—" Mrs. Goodridge was in the square, green-lined rectory pew, close under the pulpit, and even now turning to scan the back pews with her bright but near-sighted blue eyes and to wonder what could be keeping Luella and Jim so late. No, there was no help at the parsonage. And if her friends, dear and trusted as they were, *had* been at home, Luella knew that she would not,

could not, have let out her cry of anguish even to them. She would have shut her teeth fast, just as she was doing now, till her jaws hurt.

She realized now that she had gone up to the big white gate of the parsonage, and was staring through it, her forehead pressed against the top bar. What her purpose was, or her desire, she did not even try to think. There was nothing to be done, but just wait, wait, wait, every hour an eternity, yet all bearing her with fierce, insidious haste toward a calamity from which there was no escape. With her eyes fixed upon the dim shape of the parsonage veranda, yet seeing nothing, she stood there motionless, she knew not how long. Suddenly she was startled by the sound of footsteps close at her side, and, turning swiftly, she found herself face to face with Mary Dugan, the maid of all work at the parsonage.

Mary Dugan threw up her hands in amazement.

“Well, I never!” she cried. “Be this you. Luella Warden, or your ghost?”

“It’s me, Mary!” answered Luella, in a strained, flat voice.

“But, land’s sakes alive, why ain’t you down to the church, gittin’ married this very minute?” went on Mary, hopelessly bewildered.

“I ain’t going to get married,” muttered Luella, dully, leaning her forehead once more against the top bar. Her hair had come down again, and seemed to make a pale light in the rich summer gloom.

“You, not git married? What d’you mean? What’s happened? Where’s Jim?” queried Mary, breathlessly.

“We had a falling out. He’s gone!” responded Luella, in an even voice, as if it was all no great matter.

Mary Dugan was silent for a moment. She felt herself in the presence of a tragedy, and her simple heart was moved. She had seen a ship go out that afternoon, but had not dreamed it was the *G. G. Goodridge*. She came up close, and threw an arm over Luella’s shoulder.

“That wa’n’t the *Goodridge* I seen goin’ out this afternoon!” she said.

“It was!” replied Luella.

“Poor dear! Poor dear!” whispered Mary, awed by the situation, which her experienced heart was quick to apprehend. “I’d never have thought it of Jim Calder. Of all the Westcock boys, he’s the last one I’d ‘a’ thought it of!”

The infinite pity in her voice smote Luella’s slumbering pride to life. She shook off the compassionate arm, and turned upon Mary with eyes that flamed in the dark.

“I did it myself!” she cried, thickly. Her words would hardly form themselves, and her tongue tripped. “Jim ain’t to blame. It’s every mite my fault. I did it myself!” Thrusting Mary aside, she flung off fiercely down the hill, and turned the corner for home. In her outraged pride she had spoken words which sowed an ill seed of doubt in even the kindly mind of Mary Dugan. For the time, however, Mary had no thought save of compassion for the girl, and of indignation against Jim Calder.

“Poor babe!” she muttered to herself, looking with pity after the dim figure flitting along against the black background of the Westcock House firs. “I’m afeard she’s been an’ gone an’ bit off her nose to spite her face! Lor’,

how Westcock'll talk! Tss! Tss! I wisht I knowed *jest* what'd happened!" Speculating on this theme Mary let herself through the gate, and strolled contemplatively up the drive between the two rows of little, pointed spruce bushes which the rector had just planted. At the veranda steps she paused, sniffed with deep satisfaction the rich and soft night air, and muttered—"Lor', how sweet them laylocks does smell!" Then, remembering that the front door was locked, she went around to the kitchen and let herself in with the big, back door key.

Meanwhile Luella was speeding on past the haunted groves, and down over Lawrence's Hill. In her sick rage at the pity in Mary Dugan's voice, she quite forgot that she might be cruelly misinterpreted if she took the blame upon herself. All she thought of was that she could not and would not endure to be pitied. She felt that she would strangle with her bare hands any one who should say she had been jilted. At the foot of the hill she paused, and stared for several minutes along the road to her right, where a light gleamed through an apple-tree some three or four hundred yards away. That light came from the window of Mrs. Rebecca Calder, Jim's mother; and Luella said to herself: "She's glad of it. I know she is!" Having muttered this over several times, she seemed to feel Mrs. Calder's uncompromising and inescapable eyes upon her, and grew suddenly aware once more that her hair was down about her shoulders. Hurriedly she coiled it up again, then turned her steps resolutely homeward, with the rush of the ebb tide, as the creek emptied itself tempestuously into the Tantramar, filling the night with soft, indeterminate sound.

When she had come opposite Purdy's shipyard, holding her eyes aloof from the spot where still stood the skeleton poles and scaffoldings, empty as her life, it suddenly occurred to her that by this time church must be coming out. The thought galvanized her into activity. She must not meet any one who had been there, any one who had joined in the buzz of wondering talk in the porch after service. Above all, she could not face her Uncle Abner on his return. He would be furious, and insulted. She could see him stalking back, stiff in his long black broadcloth coat, his raw, high-featured, narrow face both hard and weak, and his thin, grayish-reddish side-whiskers bristling forward. She realized what his petty, intolerable questioning would be, and how his close-set little eyes would be red around the lids as they gimleted into her soul. She must, oh, she *must* be home, and safely locked into her own room over the side porch, before he arrived. She broke into a run, now; and only steadied down again to a swift walk when two "hands" from the shipyard approached. They gave her "Good evenin'," cordially and respectfully, and turned to stare after her in amazement as she went by them with only an inarticulate sound in response to their salutation. Her lips and mouth and throat were as dry as wood. To her infinite relief she reached the "Bito" without passing any more wayfarers. Two teams were hitched to the fence beside the store, and half a dozen men and boys were loitering around outside, waiting for Mr. Baisley to return from service and open up shop again. Not looking at any of them, and merely muttering a collective reply to their various greetings, Luella sped past to the little garden gate, up the narrow path, and in through

the tiny lattice-work porch at the end of the house, which was the private entrance, and served to keep the living-rooms apart from the traffic of the store. Not pausing to light the lamp, she ran up the narrow, crooked, tilted stairs, gained her slant-roofed sanctuary under the eaves, and locked herself in. Till the morrow, at least, she was safe from all torture of tongues.

CHAPTER IV.

HER LOVER AND HIS MOTHER

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A prim, uncompromising house of two stories, shingled all over, and weather-beaten to a soft, dark gray, was the dwelling of Jim Calder and his mother. In spite of itself, as it were, it had a homey, comfortable air. Big apple-trees, with one white birch and one Lombardy poplar, stood at either end of it. Hop-vines and scarlet-runner beans grew all over its fences; and the little plot between the stoop and the front gate, on either side of the shell-bordered path, was bright with pink and purple sweet peas, orange nasturtiums, scarlet geraniums, pansies, and other old-fashioned blooms. Everything connected with it was aggressively clean. When Luella, standing for that brief moment at the foot of Lawrence's Hill, stared in numb despair at the far-off light in the back window of Mrs. Calder's house, she little guessed that Mrs. Calder was sitting by that light, her austere, faded face bitter with resentment, as she read and re-read an incoherent note of farewell from Jim. The mother, lonely but self-possessed, had expected to hold her son to her heart once again that night, before yielding him up to a wife whom she hated, and before bidding him good-bye for two long years. Now that her boy had left her thus inexplicably, without a kiss, the mother, in her aching and angry heart, laid all the blame upon the girl, whose very existence she had always resented. Over and over, as she sat there by the little oil lamp, rocking fiercely, the open letter in her lap, she

told herself that her boy would never have gone off in that mad, cruel fashion, unless he had found out something bad about Luella Warden. She knew Jim's love for the girl, little as she sympathized with it. And now, forgiving Jim's treatment of herself, she turned all her bitterness against the unhappy Luella. Hour after hour she sat rocking beside the lamp, holding the letter clutched in her worn, big-knuckled fingers, listening to the moaning rush of the ebb as it fled seaward within a furlong of her doors, and picturing to herself the flight of the *G. G. Goodridge* under the starlit night. When the first of the dawn, spreading over Tantramar, began to pale the little yellow flame of her lamp, she got up briskly, pressed out the crumpled paper with care, folded it away under some lace kerchiefs and Sunday bows in her top bureau drawer, turned out the light, and muttered inaudibly a harsh imprecation upon the girl. Then, methodically removing her neckerchief, her stout shoes, and the stiff black silk dress which she had put on in Jim's honour, she threw herself down on the bed without undressing. Such an irregularity was, for her, a mark of the gravest emotional disturbance. So bitter was her heart in its loneliness and resentment that if she could have seen Luella at that hour, white-lipped and dry-eyed with anguish, lying with her face to the wall in the little room overlooking the "Bito," she would have exulted in every fibre over the girl's voiceless despair.

It was just two years ago that very night that Jim Calder, then a sturdy and tan-faced stripling of eighteen, lately home from a voyage to the West Indies, had brought Luella to his mother in a glow of triumph and announced their

betrothal. Never till that moment had Mrs. Calder had aught but good-will for Luella. She knew her to be modest, well-mannered, self-respecting, and of good countryside stock, her father having been owner and captain of a two-topmast schooner which traded profitably between the Fundy ports and Boston. Now, however, she saw in this seventeen-year-old girl, with her tall, straight, vigorous form, her mane of burnished flax, like cool, pale gold, her steady, grave, porcelain-blue eyes under deep brows, her broad forehead and clean-cut features of a fairness which all the marsh-winds and unshadowed suns could but touch to cream, her somewhat large and very red mouth under whose childishness was already beginning to show a suggestion of womanly strength, tenderness, and passion,—in this girl she saw a crafty woman, who had succeeded in ensnaring her boy. She looked slowly from Luella to Jim. She studied his frank, young face, with its wholesome, ruddy tan, the mouth ardent and positive, the eyes of light hazel, honest, fearless, kind,—the hair a dark warm brown, thick, elastic, half-curling, and short. She eyed his straight figure, broad in the shoulder, narrow in the hips, of middle stature, and suggesting both strength and alertness. A hot flush of resentment went over her, at the thought that another woman should supersede her, by ever so little, in the heart of her beautiful son. She thought, however, that this emotion was only a proper anger against a designing woman, who had taken advantage of a boy's ignorance. She looked Luella straight in the eyes, and said, coldly:

“I reckon Jim's a leetle young to be thinking about a wife. He's a leetle mite young, too, maybe, to be knowing his own