



SHORT STORIES OF LOVE AND ADVENTURE



Where Crossroads Meet

By Jocella Johnson

PERHAPS the only real pleasure John Devine had, day in, day out, was the too brief interval of hall space between the third and fourth flights of his rooming house. Here in the room directly beneath his own, the door often stood open a few inches, enough to allow a glimpse to a passerby. There was a jolly little stove always gleaming red—frequently crackling gayly. Beside it stood a violin rack. That was all. John never passed the doorway without a longing glance at the stove and a prolonged gaze into the narrow opening. Often he heard a rustle, a delightfully feminine rustle, but he never saw the roomer. Sometimes, if he was not too late in the evening, he heard soft trills of a violin, scarcely

more than whispers. They floated up to him—enough to make him long for more, but ceasing almost as soon as they began. For weeks this room had fascinated him. Why, he could not say. Was it the stove? Was it "the roomer" he never saw? Tonight he passed the door slowly. He saw the same few inches only, and he heard the lightest possible rustle and that was all, but his heart choked him, and he stumbled up to his own room. There he sat on the edge of his lumpy bed, and buried his face in his hands. He wanted to cry. He did not cry. Instead, he thought and thought. Was "the roomer" lonely, too? Was

she young or old? Dare he speak to her? He glanced about his grim four walls which could never be a home to him. His memory of a little gray house in the fields of golden corn, or among the tender Spring shoots, or the whitened stubble, sent hot tears to his eyes. The present box from home had been meagre. "The girls," who took pies and cookies as a matter of fact, and who never knew what it was to be away from home, could not understand. But little Benny, "queer kid," had sent three ears of the prize corn from the farm, and all the popcorn he had raised in his school garden: "Queer kid, Benny," thought the big brother. But the corn looked good to him. It

was the best present he had ever had. Meanwhile something he had not expected was happening from the room below. The strains of the violin floated up to him; bravely, cheerily they began. It was a tune he knew and loved. A voice joined. A young voice, sweet and tender. The voice trembled and ceased in a sob. The chords of the instrument stumbled and ceased. The door banged shut. John leaped to his feet. He hastily selected the three rusty ears of yellow corn from the others and bound them together with their own dried silk, and as hastily removed his heavy boots. Then stealthily he crept down the stairs. Outside the room under his own, he noiselessly fastened the ears

of corn to the door knob and stealthily returned to his room. Up there he hurried "tidying up," whisking his toilet articles into a drawer, kicking his shoes and rubbers under the bed, and stuffing his clothing behind the soiled curtain which served as a closet. Then he snatched up his banjo and strummed the strings. His own voice, untrained, but young and spontaneous, swelled. Singing lustily, John heard sounds other than the strumming and his singing. Was he sure he heard a stifled cry of pleasure? Was he sure he heard a rustle on the stairs? He sang on. The unlatched door swung open and standing there half afraid, half joyous, the ears of corn tightly clasped in

her arms stood a girl, black haired, red lipped, black eyed. Her cheeks glistened with ears of homesteadness and surprise. John was singing the tune. Bobbing, the girl finished the stanza, "and corn and somebody to talk to. You will talk, won't you?" she pleaded. "Tell me all about it. I am so homesick." John grinned at her. "Let's take that," she pointed to Benny's pop-corn, "and pop it. You come down and we'll pop it on my stove." "Have you a popper?" asked the practical John. "Of course not," answered Lois, "but anybody can pop Illinois popcorn in a tea strainer, provided she wants to, chuckled Lois as she jumped up from the bed and ran to the door. "Of course, if you don't want to—" But John was talking, too. "Provided she and he want to," he was saying, emphatically. Lois was tripping down the stairs and laughing gayly, so naturally John laughed, too, and hurried after her. "John Devine," the girl spoke decid-

edly, "I'm so homesick I don't know what to do. And, if you're from Illinois you must be all right. And, if you're one of the Devines from Mineral I've heard about you, so that's all right, too. Now," she entered the room and placidly seated herself on John's lumpy bed, "I've something to say." John grinned at her. "Let's take that," she pointed to Benny's pop-corn, "and pop it. You come down and we'll pop it on my stove." "Have you a popper?" asked the practical John. "Of course not," answered Lois, "but anybody can pop Illinois popcorn in a tea strainer, provided she wants to, chuckled Lois as she jumped up from the bed and ran to the door. "Of course, if you don't want to—" But John was talking, too. "Provided she and he want to," he was saying, emphatically. Lois was tripping down the stairs and laughing gayly, so naturally John laughed, too, and hurried after her. "John Devine," the girl spoke decid-

WELL, of all the mean intentions, and Scotty sighed heavily. "Preliminary only, Scotty, old boy; wait until the big day, then you will say this was easy," and Dick Ramsey laughed heartily, for on every line of Scotty's features was written "misery." Ted Scott, nicknamed "Scotty" by his friends, was what the boys described as being "pleasingly plump" and very good-natured. Scotty was to be initiated into the "Rab-Rab-Jah" Society, and probably because of the old saying that "plump" folks generally as a rule are good-natured, or because they knew Scotty was almost super-sensitive about certain things, they voted that he should board a street car, the 7:15, which is usually crowded, and even though a nice young lady or ladies were to smile on him very sweetly, he was to "sit tight" and look into that particular young lady's face and smile sweetly, and then get off at

Allston Corner, that they would be there waiting for him. "Scotty" knew he would be watched every moment, and it was with some fearful misgivings that he boarded the 7:15. The car was crowded in a short time, but "Scotty" managed to get a seat. Was it his luck, or what? but at that moment a young girl about 19 entered the car and stood beside "Scotty." He felt himself weakening, but immediately he encountered a pair of eyes from across the way that warned him to "sit tight." The young girl after riding some distance looked down on "Scotty" as she held on to the strap, but there was a suspicion of a smile lurking around the corners of her mouth, and did "Scotty" imagine it? but he felt sure there was a mischievous twinkle in her eyes as she looked at him. Again "Scotty" was about to give up his seat, and again he encountered that warning glance across the way. "Oh!" thought Scotty "I am miser-

able whatever will she think of me," and it was then that Scotty's gaze shifted, and it was then that he met a far different gaze than the young girl's. It was the gaze of an elderly woman, tall and stout. She fairly glared at "Scotty." She was seated, but she was indignant because Scotty did not offer his seat to the young girl. The perspiration started to rain down poor Scotty's cheeks. He was "miserable" personified. "Allston Corner," shouted the conductor, and Scotty made a grand rush for the door and for a breath of fresh air. The young lady also got off at Allston Corner. "Heavens," came from Scotty: "I'm

willing to bet almost anything that she knows me," and his head dropped almost to his feet with shame. Al Gordon, who was responsible for those "warning glances" in the car, jumped off also. "Here he is, boys, and, say, he carried it out to perfection," and the boys one by one cheered him, but "Scotty" broke away and went home to picture what that nice young girl must think of him. "Scotty" was in town the following day, and returned home on the 7:15 again, never dreaming he would meet the young girl, and in the excitement of last evening he forgot that it was the 7:15 he boarded. Every seat was

occupied, and this time "Scotty" hung on to a strap. Directly in front of him sat the young girl of last evening. Their eyes met, and soon she jumped up with an amused twinkle in her eye and said, "Allow me," and walked to the other end of the car to a seat which was just vacated. "Scotty" stared at the seat vacated by her, and it then dawned on him that she was making him feel the humiliation that probably she went through last evening. A titter went around the car, and "Scotty" could see that the passengers thought it a huge joke. He could only stare at the vacant seat and wish with all his heart that the car would fairly

fly to Allston Corner. Finally his wish was realized, and he alighted with alacrity. He was hurrying along but stopped as someone called his name. "Mr. Scott, please let me apologize for the humiliation I caused you this evening, but it was my initiation also. I didn't feel half so bad as you did last evening; to me it was highly amusing, the idea of me offering my seat to a young man, but I did feel sorry that it happened to be you, and I hope you will forgive me," and Beth Sawyer smiled sweetly. "Forgive me; why the idea! I should ask your forgiveness for my apparent rudeness last evening in the car. You see—"

"Please don't bother to explain, Mr. Scott; it is all right. Brother Al was mightily scared you wouldn't have an opportunity to be mortified, so he placed the right in front of you, and I was greatly amused but felt sorry for you, and you see I understood it was your initiation." And again she smiled. "Al Gordon's sister!" fairly shouted "Scotty." "Just you wait 'till I—" "Well, Mr. Scott, I'm a sympathizer, so come up to the house with me this evening and we will fix that big brother of mine." And Beth laughed heartily. "Do—do you mean it?" And "Scotty's" eyes fairly shone with pleasure. "Allow me," and Beth led the way.

Aboard the Seven-Fifteen

By Phil Moore

Four Weeks From Tomorrow

By Algia Frances Brooks.

FLORENCE WILSON was seated in the middle of a group of girls on the steps of the college dormitory. "I'll bet you all a big box of candy apiece," here she stopped until the commotion subsided; "you needn't think it's so funny, you won't get it," she added. "But Florida, that scheme of yours is absurd. Just because you live in Arizona isn't a sign you have to hire out as a maid for the Summer. You know very well we would love to have you visit us."

"Thank you, Beatrice, but I have fully made up my mind to answer Mrs. Rawson's ad. And if I keep my job all Summer you all get that box of candy." The next day Florence dressed as simply as she knew how and set off to secure the situation as a maid in the palatial residence of the wealthy Mrs. Rawson. Timidly she rang the bell, to be admitted by a trim maid in black and white. Florence gave her a friendly glance and sat down in the library to await her turn for an interview. Finally she heard a sharp "Miss Wilson," and slowly she arose from the chair. Upon entering she found Mrs. Rawson quite the opposite from what she had expected to see. The lady was little and white-haired, in fact, with quite a motherly air. Florence gave a

little gasp as she entered the room, thinking of her own little mother away off in faraway Arizona. After a few friendly questions she was told to report the next day. Florence ran all the way back to the college with the good news, only to be scolded and lectured by her school-mates. "The idea of you, with your social standing, to think of doing this," one girl exclaimed. "Ida Longworth, you ought to be ashamed of yourself. It is good, honest work, and it won't hurt me one bit. I might just as well work as spend the whole Summer running around visiting my friends."

The next day Florence left her friends at the railroad station, not to see them again until their return to school in the Fall. As she turned her steps toward her new quarters she could think of nothing but her new duties, and two hours later found her in her uniform awaiting orders. Everything went along smoothly and Florence was congratulating herself on her ability as a maid. At last one day Mrs. Rawson called her into her own private sitting room. The minute Florence entered her eyes fell upon a photograph on her dressing table. Mrs. Rawson evidently saw the glance and volunteered the information that it was her son, expected

home from college in three days. Florence felt her heart leap up, but continued on in a discreet silence. The three days passed quickly, and with them came a young athletic fellow two years her senior. On their first meeting, young Tom Rawson's eyes followed the new maid around the room. It was not until he had been home five days that he had the good fortune of catching her alone in the room. At last that day came, and he awkwardly asked her if she liked her work. "Oh, yes, indeed," Florence answered, "One has to do something to earn a living."

Tom looked at her a little dubiously. "You don't look as if you have worked for yours very long," he remarked. Florence felt as if she might be suspected so she deftly turned the conversation. Many times he tried to make her answer catch questions, but each time she evaded the subject. One day, however, he asked her to go for a ride in his car, and as Mrs. Rawson was away for the week-end, she accepted the offer and went. After they had got fairly started, Tom turned to the girl and said: "What are you doing this for, Florence Wilson? I know who you are, so don't try to fool me." Florence tried to smile, but it changed into a look of anxiety. "You won't tell anybody and make me change my plans, will you?" she pleaded earnestly. "On one condition, fair lady, and that is you let me take you out when the coast is clear. Florence readily consented, and after that the Summer flew by all too

quick. At last came the end of August, and Florence gave her notice in a very business-like way. Tom was right on hand when she gave it, and broke the uncomfortable silence by asking his mother if she would give her references. "Yes, indeed, she is the best little girl I have ever had in my employ, in fact she seems like one of the family." "Perhaps she will be, some day, mother." "Tom." Of course explanations had to follow, but the result was that Florence went back to her friends with a wonderful ring on her left hand. "I'll tell you what I will do, girls," she said, after she had told them the good news. "Instead of that box of candy, you can all come to my house—warning and we'll have a big spread." Just as she was leaving them to return to their studies, she called over her shoulder, "Girls, that will be four weeks from tomorrow."

As It Was Intended

By Elsie Endicott

IT was the first evening that Ann Macnair was at my home that she poured from her grieved heart how she had met and married Phillip Macnair five years before. I had not seen Ann for 19 years, and when I heard of the fatal accident to her husband I immediately wrote for her to bring Mildred and join me in my Southern home until she recovered somewhat from the shock. At least it would be a change of surroundings and furnish her rest. Ann's mind seemed reminiscent as we sat in the room after dinner. We had been college chums, had entertained our first "beaux" together. I married Conrad, but Elwin Abbott had merely tampered with Ann's love, and for years afterwards she confessed the affair had left her an aching heart and created in her a distrustful attitude. I was interested in Ann, and was not only pleased to learn about her meeting Phillip, but also to see her enjoying—If I may use the term—living over

again in memory her unique courtship. "You know, Bernice, I was always interested in what I called the psychology of love—" "And what I called nonsense," I broke in. "Pardon me." "For five years I just lived on, meaninglessly, loving only my work and my pupils, ever trying to conceal the fact that I was harboring that natural passion to love and to be loved. I thought of Ann as a college girl, and recalled how it would hurt her if any of the girls seemed to neglect her or failed to show their fondness for her. Ann was likeable, lovable, and we were all devoted to her. "I became the official chaperone for the boys and girls in the high school where I taught. Their love affairs interested me, and often I recalled Elwin and longed once more to love and be loved. Love was my gospel, I lived it, taught it. I longed for that which I didn't have." "Why, Ann, wasn't there anyone for

you? To be a chaperone doesn't eliminate one's own suitors." "Elwin, I thought them all alike," the poor woman added with a sigh. "Then one day I passed a billboard. 'What has that to do with your meeting Phil?' "I had not noticed a man standing near me, who seemed equally obli-

"It was an ice-cream advertisement. Two curly haired children, about Mildred's age—a boy and a girl—were embracing. 'Love at first sight' is what it meant. I stood still and gazed at the picture. Something seemed to whisper to me, 'as God intended it—Love.' There it was, the psychological appeal, innocent love, divine love. Then Elwin—" She didn't finish, but I knew her thoughts. She and Elwin had been engaged; but he was never worthy of Ann; Conrad often said that. To help her to continue, I asked: "What has that to do with your meeting Phil?" "I had not noticed a man standing near me, who seemed equally obli-

ous to his surroundings. I turned to go, and the man said half aloud without taking his eyes from the advertisement, 'as God intended it—Love.' In spite of my sympathy, I couldn't check a smile. Ann noticed it, and again I had to question her before she would continue. "It was a common appeal striking home to two equally hungry, equally disappointed persons. There was no forwardness on his part nor on mine. We just stood there and talked. He knowing that I was concealing the real reason of the appeal of the two children, and I knowing that he was. We went our ways, but day after day we seemed to meet at that billboard, and as we passed we always spoke."

"And you secretly thought or began to think that he was interested in you, and that you might learn to love him." "I should have known better. Ann looked hurt, and covered her eyes with her handkerchief. "I believe you told me that you finally met him when one of your pupils met with an accident in school, and Phil was called to attend him." "Yes, Phil had just been appointed medical attendant at the school." "I realized that either on account of my unwise remarks or Ann's fatigue that she no longer showed eagerness to tell her story. "And soon you married him." "Yes, and soon he died." With that Ann seemed to think her

story ended. Her tears affected me, and the conversation lagged. Finally I added: "Well, Ann, there were five years in which you lived your ideal, and Mildred will soon be four. Life for you has not been void, and look what Mildred means to you." Ann would say no more. "Ever answer any of those coal-saving advertisements?" "Answer 'em all, I guess. But I only got one recipe that had any merit." "What was that?" "It read: 'Coal may be made to last longer by keeping it away from stoves and furnaces.'"

Cause and Effect

By Parke Whitney

PHILIP RANDALL was very proud of his wife, Alice. They had been married a year and three days and were supremely happy. Alice was dainty and very much alive and interested in things both inside and outside her home. Phillip liked to have his wife "in things" and encouraged her many activities, including sewing circles and a social tea now and then. Alice did not let the home suffer, however, and it was always as neat as wax and very tastefully arranged. Things were running very smoothly for the Randalls, in fact, until— One day Phillip came home at noon

and found the house vacant. He was hungry and cross. "Why couldn't Alice have lunch ready on time?" he'd like to know. "What was a wife for, anyway, if not to have meals ready on time and make things pleasant for her husband?" Viciously he chewed his cigar and was just about ready to leave the house and get his lunch elsewhere when he heard the chug of Alice's roadster, his first wedding anniversary gift to her three short days before. "Surely he had done his best to make her happy!" Alice breezed into the house, looking

very pretty and youthful in a silk sport suit. "Hello, honey-love!" she greeted him as she kissed him soundly, quite ignoring his disgruntled manner. Phillip mumbled something peevishly about a "tired business man having to wait for his meals." Immediately he was sorry that he had said it, but determined not to show it. Alice flushed, but playfully assured the "blessed grouch" that lunch would be ready in a jiffy. "In a jiffy!" ejaculated Phillip. "I have to be at the office in 45 minutes, unless you want me to lose my job." His heart smote him as he saw the

happy light die out of his wife's eyes; but somehow this noon he could not help saying things which he had never allowed himself to say in the past. While Alice busied herself in the kitchen he sat in his big easy chair in the living room and smoked. He was sitting where he could see Alice moving about preparing the belated meal. Moodily he watched her, then suddenly sat erect. "Could it be possible, his Alice, always so bright and cheery, crying?" But yes, he saw her wipe her eyes and distinctly heard a faint sniff. Phillip's poeve left him in a flash and

a great remorse took possession of him. "Oh, why didn't I keep my mouth shut. Never spoke a cross word to the poor little girl, of course she doesn't know how to take it. And now he was in a fine mess and he supposed lunch that noon would be about the dearest meal he had ever eaten." Furtively he glanced into the kitchen again and sure enough, Alice was not only wiping her eyes, but sitting down actually making a business of crying. Phillip adged, whistled a bit, and tried to hum a tune, but his tongue was hot and dry and clung miserably to the roof of his mouth.

"Brute" he accused himself, "crank," echoed his conscience. To have hurt the dearest wife a man ever had was indeed unbearable. Clumsily he made his way into the kitchen, stumbling over a couple of chairs in his haste. Alice took no notice of him, but continued to dig a pathetic little wad of moist linen into first one eye and then the other. Then she smiled wanly through her tears, and Phillip, unable to resist any longer, gathered her into his arms and begged to be forgiven. "Don't cry, dear, I didn't mean it, sweetheart, I'm sorry and—" He got no further. Was Alice laughing at him? What had come over his dependable little wife, who never had hysterics or any of the other purely feminine afflictions. "Oh," gasped Alice. "Oh, Phil," and she fairly shrieked with merriment. "Oh, you blessed old

peach, did you think I was crying because you were a bit impatient?" "Well, weren't you?" demanded the astonished husband. "I—I was peeling onions," gasped Alice between peals of laughter. Phillip joined her quite relievedly and shamefacedly. "You know dear," he said a few minutes later, "steak and onions never tasted so good before, especially the onions." Applied Hydraulics. Mite—A friend of mine fell asleep in the bathtub with the water running. Trixie—Did the tub overflow. Mite—Nope, luckily he sleeps with his mouth open. Her Style. Mrs. Jones—I am economical and never use nutmeg in my flavoring. Mrs. Tomz—That must be grate sayy ins.