

THE COUNTRY ROAD.

The country road climbs up the hills
And ambles down the valleys.
To the left you hear the whip-poor-wills,
To the right the nightingales.
The country road is cool with shade
And calm with rural joys,
Untroubled by the shouts of trade,
Untouched by city noise.

At least that's how it used to be,
This sweet and peaceful land,
But now beneath the maple tree
They've built a hodge-podge stand.
A filling station lifts its head
Above the verdant grass,
And where the spreading chestnuts spread
The air is full of gas.

The roadside of another day
Is now another kind,
For picknickers have passed this way
And left a mess behind.
The roadside that was strewn with flowers
Is strewn with empty cans.
Though Nature made the lovely bowers,
The other marks are man's.

A Sunday paper blows around,
Some cake is drawing flies.
It looks more like a settlement ground,
Where Mother Nature dwells.
And, if I sought some tidy spot
To build me an abode,
I'd seek it up an alley, not
Upon a country road.—Douglas Malloch.

AT 35.

"We may as well die smiling!" partridge-plump little Mrs. Graham said philosophically, with a shrug and a smile.

Eve Guthrie glanced at the clock, a copy of a fine old banjo, with a white church painted on the pendulum glass, and a sign "Bargain" stuck in the frame. It was just two.

"Three hours more of it!" she said, her own shrug and smile not quite so cheerful. For she was gift proprietor of the Gray Goose Gift Shoppe, and this afternoon was to mark the closing of its brief career.

Its narrow, aristocratic show-window, wedged in among all the other frock and jewel and book and perfume shops of the East Fifties, would be denuded tonight of that egg-yellow fringed shawl Eve had so often draped temptingly over chairs and screens, the four yards of Liberty velvet, the boxes of vermilion Japanese lacquer, the crackle-ware bowl from Massachusetts, the four classics in limp red leather—all would be gone. She was sick of them, and sick of the dim, dead little store itself, where she and Mrs. Graham waited and waited for the customers who never came. Mrs. Graham didn't care; she always went down to Asbury Park for the summer anyway, to help her sister with a small hotel. She was merely a paid assistant. And Betty McTavish, who was Eve's partner, didn't care, for she liked to take her two little girls up to Joe McTavish's father's place for the summer school vacation.

But Eve—no, Eve didn't care either. She had had enough of the Gray Goose. It sounded a fascinating adventure, a sure way to fortune, when she and Betty had first discussed it, at a club luncheon, four months ago. But its eleven weeks of life had been enough not only to disenchant both women with the idea of smocks and bridge prizes and vases and shawls, but to sober Eve with the realization that the actual conquest of a business world was a much more serious undertaking than she had ever imagined. Sitting here in the gloom of a wet spring afternoon, waiting for the whole wretched venture to die, she told herself that she hated the Gray Goose for itself, and hated it additionally because its failure seemed to be also the failure of a hundred other vague dreams of achievement. For years now, when she discussed her dwindling finances, she had been saying, "I could do interior decorating—I could open a gift shop—I could shop for my friends—people always love what I buy!" It was daunting to have to refrain from at least one of these harmless boasts.

"I guess you and Mrs. McTavish are a good deal out of pocket over this!" suggested Mrs. Graham. "Not so much," Eve said courageously. "It isn't that. Most of this stuff Betty McTavish had. I didn't put much in. But—but I hate not being—started, at something," Eve finished, as if speaking to herself.

This was what hurt. To be idle, superfluous, drifting about. Waking up in Tom's house, packing her suitcase to go down to the weekend with Edith in Washington, back to Tom's house again—needed by nobody. She had had five years of it; she was thirty-five years old. Some women went on into the fifties and sixties at this sort of thing. Handsomely dressed divorced women, playing cards and making visits, always free for engagements. Eve's soul sickened within her. Eve if one had enough money to do it—and she had not enough—it wasn't much of a life!

She had left Frank Guthrie with scant ceremony, forced into the long-anticipated and much dreaded final step by the crowning indignity of a night when Frank and several male friends had brought down a very storm of protests and threats from the other occupants of the apartment house; she had fled—as she had been told by her brother Tom an hour later—from the possibility of invasion of police, of publicity, of horrors of all sorts, and she had demanded neither alimony nor a divorce from Frank. He had been a fine fellow when she had married him, but he had retrograded steadily, finally to sink into a pit of obscurity and unemployment, as far as Eve was concerned. She truthfully could tell sympathetic friends since leaving him, she had heard nothing from him, she had never had a penny of his money.

All very well, while she had had a few pennies of her own. Her grandmother, opportunely dying, had left Eve a comfortable sum, and Eve had gone abroad, to put a few months of Paris between her and the memory of those last scenes with Frank. Bobby Brown had been in Paris. An insignificant name for the supremely handsome and dashing fellow, with the golden voice, the tall, slim, deliciously non-chalant, deliciously English young squire, who had taken Eve to the races and to the Folies and to everything else that meant Paris and fun. Eve had been heartbroken, bewildered, crushed by a hundred painful emotions, and Bobby, with his boyish simplicity and devotion and utter absence of any curiosity or constraint, had cured her. Mabel Brown had presently come down from London, of course, very British and proprietary. But Mabel didn't matter. Eve and Bobby had had their fun in spite of Mabel, and sometimes even because of her. To be sure, in the end Bobby had forgotten the rules of the game, and Eve had been so sorry, so confused and surprised, that she had all but forgotten them, too. There had been one or two scenes with Mabel, and then for months—long after Eve had returned to America—there had been almost daily letters to and from Bob. Of course nothing could come of that. There were the three small Browns, and Mabel; Eve told herself that she had known from the very beginning that nothing could come of that. Yet it had left a sting, that experience; Bob's last letter had been renunciant and heroic and devoted beyond all criticism, and Eve had seen at once that he was right, they were only making themselves and Mabel wretched.

But to this day she wished that that particular letter had come from her.

It had all been years ago; she thought of it now only at intervals, and of the second trip abroad, when Bob had been back in the Surrey cottage, where he belonged, and Paris had been different, much more expensive and much less thrilling. Old Mr. Williams had been paying all the bills then, and paying them magnificently. He had been only too delighted to buy popularity at this comparatively small outlay. He was in his middle sixties, Chauncey Weed Williams, of Buffalo, a compact, twinkling, silver-headed little man who delighted in the society of younger persons; married another millionaire in Paris, engaged open cars for the races, and boxes for the races and tables at Ciro's and the Ritz.

Eve could have had him a hundred times over. Any woman as young and pretty and amusing and decent and sweet could have had Chauncey Weed Williams, of Buffalo, could have sat patiently through his cogitations at the bridge table, could have listened to his political views, could have quipped at his in his heavily furnished, crowded, rich, dark apartment on the Bois where not even a plush cushion could be moved without distressing him.

He had followed her to America—he was that much in earnest this time. He came to see her at Tom's, and took her to dinner.

Eve knew that she could make him the proudest and happiest old man in the world, for one winter, two winters, even five. And then she would be rich.

But to take on this job for a possible fifteen years, twenty years? She would be fifty-five herself in twenty years; Eve was still young enough to feel that life, on the wrong side of fifty-five, was an entirely unimportant matter. Thinking of these things, and many others, in the gloom of the deserted Gray Goose Gift Shoppe, she sighed heavily. Mrs. Graham looked at her and decided that this was one of the times when Eve Guthrie looked positively plain. Of course she always looked interesting, with her dark keen eyes and pale clear skin, and the proud cut of her chin, and the rich thick sweep of her dark hair. But there were days when she seemed to subside, to collapse, to withdraw into herself, somehow, and this was one of them.

At four o'clock Betty McTavish came in, bubbling and chattering as usual. She had sold all this "junk" to the woman in Pawling who ran Ye Copper Candlestick, and was elated. "Eve, you beautiful thing," said Betty, "you look pale, and no wonder, cooped up here all day. When are you coming up to the kids and me in Maine?"

"Not until late August," Eve said, stacking little luster bowls, lifting platters from shelves as she spoke. "If Tom gets his sabbatical, he and Alice and the children are going to England. I'll have to be caretaker." And it was then that Betty, cheerful and giddy and with her own particular little spoiled air of being important, had said, "Well, don't be too late! For I have a very important engagement with a young gentleman, about the middle of October!"

She had gone off, and Mrs. Graham had been left to give some final instruction to packers, and Eve had taken Daisy Hayward's Chinese scroll and had gone on the bus to Daisy Hayward's, in the East Eighties.

Of course Betty McTavish, to whom taxis and chauffeur and motor-car were commonplaces, couldn't be expected to go on such an errand and deliver a parcel—Betty so complacent over the hope of a son at last! Betty never did anything demeaning—servile.

Not that Eve minded the little compact box under her arm—only it was all so stupid and flat and disappointing. The Gray Goose had been a dreary failure from its first anemic day, and yet, when she wakened tomorrow with no necessity of a prompt rising upon her, she knew she would regret even the unsuccessful gift shop.

Women took regular college courses in domestic science and interior decoration nowadays. Eve reflected that perhaps she could take a summer course of some kind. Dull, to enter oneself humbly as a student, at thirty-five. Mrs. Hayward was not at home; that was a bit of luck, anyway. Eve walked slowly away from the house,

on her way to the bus and the Long Island train. And, so walking, her thoughts troubled and uncertain, the soft dull beauty of the twilight about her, she passed Number Eighty-nine. She and Frank Guthrie had commenced housekeeping in Number Eighty-nine, just thirteen years ago. It was an old brownstone house, divided into as many apartments as it had narrow floors; three-room apartments of a big front room, a big back room, and a connecting neck of bath and kitchen between. Eve, on the third floor, had had a bedroom looking into the green upper branches of a plane-tree, had had a pretty checkered board of back yards shaded by other big trees below her.

Looking up at the windows that once were her living-room windows, she saw the wide sill where she had sat waiting for Frank, many and many a summer afternoon, and her heart winced away from the memory of the sewing she had done there, toward the end of the first year.

The Lexington Avenue car rattled by, that same familiar rattle that had punctuated the dreamy hot mornings when Eve Guthrie had been contriving and managing to happen on forty dollars a week, buying strawberries and bacon for Frank—making onion soup for Frank—squeezing the price of six tulips out of the little budget, for Frank.

How it all came back! Her little self relaxed and loving in Frank's arms, assuring him that she didn't want Europe and frocks and women's clubs, herself jogging along to a hospital, Frank's arm again tightly about her, in a scared dawning, reassuring him again; she was all right—everything was all right—this was just part of it!

"How alive we were!" Eve whispered, alone in the cool spring twilight, looking up at the windows that had once gushed such love and light into the world.

The Eve of those days had been a rather fat, laughing person, often untidy of hair, cheerfully indifferent to the mode. Paris had done much for Eve, and association with business women who kept shoes, gowns, hair and hands in scrupulous trim. To-night, it seemed impossible to her that she was the same woman, the woman who had married a poor man, supposing poverty and hard work to be hers for all her days, who could have thought that suddenly, sensationally, old woolly-headed, unworldly, blundering Frank would blunder into success?

And yet the money had serenely, amazingly continued to pour in. Whatever Frank did in the way of engineering—and it was always a mystery to Eve—had been tremendously in demand. There had been a first patent, and then a second patent, there had been golf and tennis and yachting in the Guthries' scheme of life.

The war came and Frank had prospered through that. His limp—he walked like a big bear—had excused him from actual service, but he had done other things, had rushed back and forth between Washington and New York. And Eve had felt important, had felt that even those astonishing glories had held nothing to the glories and excitement that were to come.

Why—why had everything seemed to slide away from her? After the war ended? Frank had been the same man—or no, perhaps that was the explanation. Frank had changed completely. From a shy, quiet, unpretentious fellow who hated society and was anything but mercenary, he had become a gambler, over the card-table and in the street; he had eaten too much, drunk too much. Eve remembered that time with horror. And of course the nursery once so gay, had been empty then. That had hurt—it hurt her still. They had taken little Junior pretty much for granted, and she and Frank; the young couples who were "comers," who were "getting there," generally had one fine little girl, and they had had Junior. Just a square, hard romped little person with a nurse, in the background. Neither parent took Junior very seriously.

Yet the whole world had changed after the tragedy that took Junior away, after that hideous wire, screaming like a mad star across the casual polo meet at Newport, splitting Eve's very brain for a few seconds; "Junior hurt by car, come at once."

Eve had collapsed during the days that followed. She remembered lying dully on her bed in orchid-and-blue room, and wondering why she hadn't seen more of her boy. So often, when she had promised the child to come up-stairs at bedtime, a rubber would suddenly elongate itself.

Afterward she and Frank had closed the house, and moved into the city, and the gambling and drinking and boasting had recommenced on an even larger scale. It was no use. It was no use. Eve couldn't keep that up. Frank didn't love her any more, and she all but loathed him; there was no dignity in their keeping up the pretense of marriage, and no necessity for it. She had pleaded and upbraided and coaxed and raged herself almost ill.

And then had come that last fearful night, and her flight, and the soothing weeks with Alice and Tom and the children, and Paris, and Bobby Brown, and months—years, indeed—of peace.

But now what was she to do? Stay in Tom's empty house all summer, coming into town every hot day to study interior decoration? Eve laughed forlornly, began to find herself fretted—fretted to belong somewhere, to do something, to work her way into the human comedy once more.

Tonight it was dusk when she arrived at Tom's house, that artful green and white two-story building that was far more colonial than anything genuinely colonial could be. There were hooked rugs and high-backed chairs, spinning-wheels and warming-pans in the actual drawing room, where no colonial housewife would have countenanced them; there were pewter bowls and spoons in rows along the wainscot; and the

children's samplers, once decently relegated to the children's rooms, were brazenly displayed, as treasures, in the very heart of the house.

Alice was in her colonial bedroom, sitting in a quilted wing-chair, beside a pineapple four-poster, matching socks. Eve, seeing her door open, went in to chat with her before dinner.

"My dear, I've rented this place, bag and baggage!" Alice announced instantly.

"Rented it. I didn't know you even thought of renting it." Eve's first thought was for herself; where was she to stay with Tom's house rented?

"Well, I didn't," said Alice, with no reflection of the other woman's misgivings in her triumphant voice. "But Bates and Bates telephoned this morning to know if there was any chance for a very rich man, with one delicate little girl, and five servants! She," said Alice, in heartless satisfaction, of the child, "won't break much. And for a year, Eve, for two hundred and fifty!"

"Two hundred and fifty!" Eve echoed, impressed. This was conclusive. "Well, that's that," she said.

"That's that. And Tom Morehead will be out of his senses!" Alice exclaimed. "You—you'll spend part of the summer with Betty?" she added, in sudden faint concern. "That gift shop won't stay open all summer."

Eve had told her brother and his wife nothing of the gift shop's lingering decline. There always had been a chance of a rally, a chance that the absurd venture would succeed, as such ventures did, in the backs of magazines.

She did not feel inclined toward confidence now; she merely said, "Do not think about me at all; it's too glorious to have this place taken off your hands!"

"There's just one thing I wish you would do this summer," Alice began resolutely. "The other woman winced; she knew that Tom would feel very differently from Tom about it," said Alice. "I know how miserable you are, Eve, and it seems to me—"

"I'm not miserable!" Eve said, but without much spirit and with a thickening in her voice.

"Oh, you are," Alice insisted firmly. "You try one thing and then another; you go abroad and come back and money is seeping away, you're neither one thing nor the other—"

"How do you mean I'm neither one thing nor the other?" Eve asked in mild, unresentful curiosity, as Alice paused.

"Well, you're not married and you are not divorced, and I think you ought to see Frank Guthrie, and settle it, and get free!" Alice said boldly. "You can't consider any other marriage—any other plan, really, until you do!" Alice, encouraged to believe she was making an impression, went on.

"I haven't seen the person I want to marry," Eve submitted.

"Well, but you might. I wish," Alice said, emboldened, "I wish you'd go West, get your divorce, and come to us, in England, and then look about you. You wrote me that there were hundreds of attractive men drifting about Paris."

"And thousands of attractive divorced women trying to bag them!" Eve said, with a rueful little laugh.

"Well, nobody's bagging Mr. Williams."

"Dear old Chauncey!" Eve laughed again, but without much mirth. "No, Nobody's bagging him," she conceded soberly.

"Eve, it would be an out," Alice suggested.

"Oh, yes, it would be an out," Eve agreed again, in a hard tone.

"I mean, it isn't young romance and all that," the practical sister-in-law pursued eagerly, "but it does mean comfort and position and security, and that's much better than some crazy second marriage with a man who hadn't any of those things, but happened to be thirty-six! Every one likes old Mr. Williams, and you'd be settled, Eve."

"I'd be settled," Eve echoed briefly, as Alice fell silent. "But at thirty-five," she added dreamily, as if half asleep, "I'm not so sure that one wants to be settled."

"Thirty-six in September, both of us! Tempus fugit."

"Yes, that's true, too. But Nevada and divorces cost so much money," Eve offered half-heartedly.

Alice got up. "Eve, I don't want to influence you. I told Tom I wanted to have this talk with you, and he said he would let you alone. But if you really make up your mind to get a divorce, then certainly you'll have to let Tom and me help you out."

"I should have thought of this when I—had money," Eve observed somberly.

"You mean you will really consider old Mr. Williams?" Alice almost sang as Eve rose and trailed slowly to her own room. "Because he really is a gentleman," said Alice, following. "And he's a most interesting man—he is telling me of the clubs he belongs to the other night, and really—"

"What did you say?"

"I said, 'he would,'" Eve said. "Oh, I know, Eve, he's fussy, but goodness gracious, how many young persons are fussy! And of course," finished Alice, who had never had enough money, already on her way down-stairs, "of course, you'd be rich."

"I'd be a bird in a gilded cage!" Eve said airily, unsatisfactorily, closing the door.

She wanted to be alone. It was a relief, later, to hear that Tom and Alice were going out to dinner. The boys went early up-stairs for lessons and bed; Eve had the house to herself.

The spring night had turned cold, she sat before a wood fire, under a low lamp, dreaming. And for the first time she said to herself that Alice was right, that Alice had been right from the very beginning, with her delicate hints and suggestions of being off with the old ties before one could with any propriety assume the new.

"That's what's the matter with me, really," she thought. "For five years now I've been dabbling in this and dabbling in that; I've not planned

enough—I've not settled to anything. I've got to get free first, and then decide about Chauncey Williams, or—if it isn't to be Chauncey—what is it to be?"

Mrs. Chauncey Weed Williams, whose husband was a member of the firm of Gordon and Company. Young Mrs. Gordon Duke would give her a luncheon at the Plymouth Rock Club, and her home newspaper—far away beside seal rocks and fogs and the Pacific—would run a complacent headline, "San Francisco Matron Weds Millionaire in Paris."

She would live in Chauncey's terrible apartment, dark and heavy and rich and expensive—exactly everything that one didn't associate with the idea of Paris! He would call her Evelyn, proudly and fussily, and she would call him "Dearest." All the pretty young wives of elderly millionaires called them "Dearest," and pretended to care that their newspapers and eggs and steamer rugs and tea were exactly right.

Now, unmarried to Chauncey, regarding him merely as an eagerly hospitable and admiring beau, Eve felt that one ought to be willing to be patient at least in the matter of the rugs, tea, eggs and newspapers of the man who made one rich. But once married to him, she knew she would begin to loathe his little mannerisms regarding these things, she knew she would begin to loathe him too, the dapper, alert, intelligent little old man with the money.

Not that Chauncey was deceived; she had to give him credit for that. He had talked to her quite frankly about the point when he would approach the service, here in New York. "You're not in love with me," he had said, "but you like me, and I admire you very much. We'd get along. You've had one disillusioning experience under the name of love. I don't promise you delicious happiness, but I do promise you courteous treatment and comfort, my dear, and I believe we could not only be contented, but that we could attract to our home the interesting and worth

while—"

It had been a nice, dignified, impressive speech, and she had listened to it with her lovely head on one side and a whimsical expression on her face, an expression partly sympathetic, partly doubtful, and beyond doubt partly that of one who wants to smile.

It always amiable, always ready to listen to his stories, and fall in with his plans, and give up her engagements cheerfully when he had a headache, and carry his on bravely when she had. And she supposed that she could listen to his stories again, listen to them a hundred or a million times, if it were expedient.

But what a waste! What a waste to oneself young and strong, full of potential service and achievements, ready to learn and to act, to make friends, to experiment and to dare, and to be settled quietly for the rest of one's life with this kindly old man—never to know adventure or risk or failure or success any more.

At forty-five one would have quite a different feeling about it, of course, and at forty-five one would have determined an actual complacency over the thought of those unfailing dividends—dividends—dividends pouring in.

An by this time everyone would have forgotten, and she most of all, those vital passionate years with Frank Guthrie. And Junior—

"Junior—my little son," said Eve, aloud. Junior would be ten years old. "If I had him," she thought, "I certainly wouldn't want anyone else. But then Frank would never have given him up, so that everything would have been different anyway. It was partly grief for Junior that made Frank act so terribly—children do keep men and women together, of course."

But now, at thirty-five, pretty and intelligent and eager, she was somehow crowded out of life, was somehow offered as an alternative to work she neither knew how to do, nor liked to do, a marriage with a dry, gallant, kind little old man who happened to be rich.

Every fiber of her being revolted. She wouldn't—she couldn't—marry Chauncey Williams! Tears came to her eyes and ran down her cheeks, even thinking about it, and about the desolate loneliness of her situation. She shook herself, morally, mentally and physically. There must be a thousand things a woman of her age and age to make a comfortable and interesting life for herself.

But the drawback was that there were so many thousands of drifting women nowadays, hunting for just those positions. Tom and Alice returned upon her still musing, and Alice saw the glister of tears on Eve's smooth cheek, and pressed Tom's foot significantly with her own when he became jocular over Eve's solitude and thoughtfulness. The Moreheads were in great spirit tonight. Their first real holiday lay ahead of them, after nearly twelve years of housekeeping, and school-keeping, and baby-raising; they would be on the big liner in a few weeks.

Eve's problem interested them only vaguely, sentimentally. Eve wasn't a child after all; she had been managing her own affairs decisively and assuredly for something like twelve years. She had done her best with an unsuccessful marriage, had dissolved that relationship only when matters became, in the accurate language of the day, "impossible," and now was trying a gift shop, and had the opportunity for a conspicuously good marriage.

Alice had told Tom tonight, driving home, that the less said to Eve about plans, the better. So Tom was rather less sympathetic tonight than was usual, with Eve's perplexities, and the night that followed the Gray Goose's demise found her wakeful, further from any moorings than ever.

In the next three days everyone was extremely active in the interests of Eve Guthrie. Betty telephoned every morning with some ridiculous suggestion for Eve's employment.

The Bently School needed a new German teacher. Eve said that she did not speak one word of German, but Betty was blithe and optimistic, none the less.

"Oh, Eve, do go see them," she said, "you're so wonderful! They'll want you anyway." Betty had met the proprietor of an immense department store, at a dinner, and he wanted to see Eve. Betty had met Arline Arthur, who thought her friend sounded wonderful for the movies. Betty wondered if there wouldn't be something in a newspaper column; just society chit-chat, day by day.

Alice was full of suggestions, too. It was maddening, humiliating, embarrassing and infuriating, to have them all so anxious to place her, to pause in their own full and necessary lives to shed a little enlightenment upon her lonely path. It was maddening and embarrassing and humiliating to realize that her bank-account was steadily lowering; a thousand dollars only a few weeks ago, now less than seven hundred, soon to dwindle away to nothing.

But the crowning blow came from Tom, her brother, smiling his nice academic smile through his professional spectacles, kind and assured and just a hint superior.

"Look here, Eve dear. Alice and I have been talking it over, and we can't go off on our holiday knowing that you may be on the rocks any minute. Now, I'm going to deposit the checks of that rent money, so

that day Eve went in to Mrs. Brussels, and Mrs. Brussels looked over her lists and asked if there was any chance in the world that Mrs. Guthrie's "friend" would lecture for a certain patent medicine? No, she would not do that. Well, would she consider traveling with a very rich girl who was a "trifle" insane? No, she could not do that. This friend was a lady, was she. Oh, yes, indisputably a lady. Look anything like Mrs. Guthrie? Yes, she did, it happened; she was very much Mrs. Guthrie's type. "Because you know, my dear," said Mrs. Brussels, all of whose dealings were strictly confidential, "a lady who looked like you could make big money just sitting in the front of gentlemen's cars, while they did a little—delivering."

Eve laughed forlornly. Her friend, she was sure, wouldn't care for that. Well, then, there was just one more possibility. Would she consider a job in the Canadian northwest, a big electricity plant, where there was a main social building, and where they needed a socially capable woman to direct the dancing, card-playing, dining-room, the community life generally?

Mrs. Brussels was under the impression that it was "the country God forgot," and that the people were enough to put a permanent wave in your hair," but the pay was good, and everything was "found"—board, laundry, light, transportation, dwelling—such as they were." And how soon could Mrs. Guthrie's candidate leave?

Eve drew off her right glove, dropped the dimmy pence of her "friend," took out her fountain pen. "Tomorrow!" she answered.

"I'll be dead and buried," she said, to herself grimly, in the train rattling northward, on the following afternoon. "Dead and buried. But I don't care! I'll not be listening to Alice's suggestions every breakfast, I'll not be married to Chauncey Williams!"

She was still breathing unevenly; she seemed not to have caught her breath since leaving Mrs. Brussels, twenty-four hours ago. She had gone from the confidential agency to see a Mr. Mason, and Mr. Mason had been only too flatteringly sure that Mrs. Guthrie was the very woman for the place. She'd find it rough and lonely, first, but they were lovely people to work for, Mr. Mason assured her. Her walking boots packed against Shakespeare in three slim volumes, her pen, her heavy coat, candy and magazines from Betty—tooth-paste and soap from Tom—kisses and farewells—and she was off. Off to Booker's Canyon, and titled "resident social director" of the Community Club.

Montreal tomorrow; then three days—four days—it didn't matter, and then Booker's Canyon, and the hazard of new fortunes. She probably would regret it, she rather thought she was regretting it already, but at least it was entirely her own affair.

Her eye, as the observation-car in which she was sitting moved past the cities and small villages that hurtled by, idly rested upon the lean form of a man close beside her, reading a newspaper. She could see his grayed, thin temples over the top of the sheet, and she noted the long, rather that rested upon the arm of his chair. Her glance remained fixed, when it reached the hand, upon the black sealing he wore. Eve knew that ring; she had given it to Frank Guthrie upon the first anniversary of their marriage. She knew that inside it there was what she had called a posy, the words: "Frank from Eve. Time flies; love remains."

Eve leaned forward and touched the hand that wore the ring, and the man roused himself, lowered the news sheet, looked at her, smiled, and turned his chair about to face her. Frank—not quite forty, yet looking older, somehow, graver, more dignified and reserved than she remembered his ever seeming before. Nor had she remembered his being so well groomed, so correctly and yet inconspicuously well dressed.

They had not talked to each other for almost five years. Now they spoke as strangers. Frank was going to Montreal, to a consultation of engineers, he said quietly.

It sounded important, impressive. Eve mentioned in return that the McTavishes had a Maine camp, and d loved to have her there. She let him suppose that she was elegantly bound for that luxurious destination.

They had not fallen in love instantly, those long years ago; theirs had been a slowly ripening affair, following a school-days' friendship.

But Eve knew what was happening to her now. She knew that Frank Guthrie, middle-aged and lean and quiet, well groomed and serious and slightly grizzled as to close-cropped hair, was looking at her with a suggestion for Eve's employment.