

The Free Press Short Story

"JOY COMETH IN THE MORNING"

ALICE DYAR RUSSELL

The night seemed endless. Mary Alice Paring could not sleep. She turned and twisted under the heavy blankets, breathed in deeply the cold, aromatic mountain air, and stared into the darkness until her eyes ached. Her body ached, too, from the arduous four-mile climb she had taken that afternoon to reach camp; but it was not fatigue that kept her awake. It was her unhappy mind.

Deep below her in the canon was audible the liquid running of the stream. Far, far in the distance, its remoteness lending an eerie quality to the sound, she heard the barking of a fox. With a sighing breath the wind stirred the branches of a giant fir that spread over the cabin. She tried to think of the tranquil beauty of the night, the splendor of the beauty of the starry heavens, the towering majesty of the surrounding mountain peaks, to draw in peace and relaxation. No use! Her sorrowful thoughts pursued their weary round.

Mary Alice was only twenty-two, but it seemed to her that her life was ended. Lover, mother, home, faith—all had been taken from her within the year. What she asked herself in the darkness with tears, had she to live for? To-morrow, perhaps it already was to-day. Easter would dawn. In the little stone chapel perched high on the mountain side, sacred services would be held and joyful voices lifted in hymns of hope and praise; but they would stir no response in the girl's numb heart. Heaven had been cruel. Mary Alice owned no God.

Obviously, she had come to this retreat because she had heard of its beauty and needed a week-end holiday. She felt that she must get away from the emptiness of her life, try the efficacy of exercise and mountain air for a departing heart. If she had cherished a little bit of hope, deep and unacknowledged, that in the voice of Nature she would hear also the voice of God, it closed again. "I was crazy to come," she told herself, sleepless, turning. "There is nothing for me here either. The chapel is just a building. Why did anyone go to herculean labors to build it? What does it stand for more than any other four walls?"

A new sound broke the stillness of the night. Rigid she lay, listening. It grew more distinct, came nearer.

The cabin, half of logs and half of canvas, to which Mary Alice at her own request had been assigned, was at the far end of the camp, nearly a quarter of a mile from the main lodge, situated well above the stream and the rocky trail that ran a tortuous way along its edge. Mary Alice had wanted to be quiet and apart. She was not afraid. She wondered now if she were not too far away. She sat up in bed, clutching a blanket around her shoulders. It had grown too cold. The hour must have been one or two. With a new start of terror Mary Alice sniffed a very faint smell of smoke.

The noise was made by a horse and rider coming hurriedly down the canon; of that she was now sure. She could hear hoofs striking against the stones. They passed, she lay down again, told herself that it meant nothing and tried to compose herself to sleep. If there really had been the smell of smoke, it seemed quite gone; perhaps her imagination was only working overtime. She was more than ever vividly awake, however. Brighter, more lacerating images flashed on her mental screen.

She thought of Donald Reeve, whom she had long ago tried to push from her heart because he was unworthy. She remembered the last time she had seen him standing before her, ashamed head bowed, gray eyes she had believed so honest refusing to meet hers. "I did it for you, Mary Alice," his muffled voice had said. "I wanted you to have everything. Because I loved you so."

"I detest that love. It stames me!" she had flared.

They were to have been married a month from that day. The little alibi heap of white stuff piled in the basket her stricken gaze had rested on and fastened in her memory was part of the trousseau her mother had been fashioning. Dating mother! How staunch, how staunch, how sweet she had been through those dark days, through the humiliation, the pain and the dread of Donald's dismissal, the restitution by his father of his defilement, and his unexplained disappearance. She had cheered and strengthened Mary Alice and helped her to the solitary belief that Donald's wrong deed had been but the single step of his thoughtless youth and that his own true manhood would reassert itself. The girl's peace returning, then, all Mary Alice had left in the world, her mother, had been taken from her by his swift, implacable hand of death. With her had gone light, faith and courage. Mary Alice slipped into black waters.

Again she heard the clatter of stones along the path. Horse and rider were returning from the direction of the lodge. Footsteps, low voices and a dim, wavering illumination on the canvas walls of her cabin told Mary Alice of the presence of another man carrying a lantern. She listened until all sounds had disappeared up in canon; then, too tired to puzzle

and beautiful dignity. "I—I—" Speech failed her.

The three of them stood in a close group that was to be close forever. Through every channel between, love and understanding flowed. Suddenly, from the chapel above, ineffably sweet, floated down the strains of the Easter hymn, "Christ Is Risen!"

"Oh, listen!" cried Mary Alice, light shining on her face.

He threw her one look. The fierce intensity on his face did not break. He might have been unaware of her identity. "Don't stop me!" he cried. "With a few long strides he began to slide down over the edge of the trail. Mary Alice gazed at him in horror. "Don, what are you doing? You can't get down that way!"

He was already a score of feet below, aiding carefully, holding on to projecting roots and rocks. Grimly he gestured across the chasm. "Look! There! Where the falls go over! I've got to reach her quick!"

Mary Alice looked and saw a gray-ginghamed figure with silvery hair streaming over her shoulders crouched on the edge of the chasm gazing down into the whirling pool of water fifty feet below.

"It's the old lady the ranger saved last night! She's going to throw herself in!" flashed instantly to Mary Alice's brain. Glancing back at Donald, now safely halfway down, the girl caught the gleam of sun on the silver star on the lapel of his jacket. Why, Donald was the ranger. Here in the forest and the mountains he was building up a new life. How careful, how sure he was, but how reckless and how swift! She discerned now that which he meant to do. Once down in the canon he would meet the well-worn path through the gorge. Mr. Mason had built there a short steep way of ascent to the head of the falls, strong rungs of a fitted ladder alternating with steps out of the face of the precipice.

Donald was down now. He ran a short distance along the path, then took the first rungs of the ascent in a mighty leap and was up like a cat. Mary Alice, however, had not stopped to watch the last rapid stage of his course. She was already taking the longer, safer way, running down the path from the chapel.

When she at last came up to them, Donald was drawing the bent little figure back out of the sight of the water to the shelter of a great, moss-grown rock. He was talking to her soothingly. Mary Alice caught the tenderness in his voice.

The expression on that worn, bewildered old face then pierced her heart. So forlorn, so woeful and so weary!

"You'd better let me do it," she was saying to the young man's protests. "I've no home any longer. No place to go, nobody to look after."

Nobody to look after! That was what was hurting her, the darling. "You could look after me," said Mary Alice, venturing near and laying a loving hand on her shoulder. A look flashed between her eyes and Donald's. Her heart began to sting madly.

The faded blue eyes searched her. "You're only sayin' that. You can't mean it."

"But I do," answered Mary Alice gently. "My mother died and my home is so empty. I need some one just like you."

The old woman edged out of Donald's protecting hold. Her shoulders straightened. She put up both hands and brushed back her gray locks. Her eyes never left the girl's face. "I thank you kindly, ma'am," she said, with a pathetic

and beautiful dignity. "I—I—" Speech failed her.

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RECORD CANADIAN MINERAL PRODUCTION

Surpassing all previous records, Canada's mineral production during 1937 reached a value of \$456,793,280 compared with \$381,919,372 in 1936, a gain of \$74,873,908, or 20 per cent. New high output levels were established for gold, copper, nickel, lead, zinc, the platinum metals, and selenium, tellurium, asbestos, salt, sulphur, nepheline, syenite, sodium sulphate, natural gas and crude petroleum.

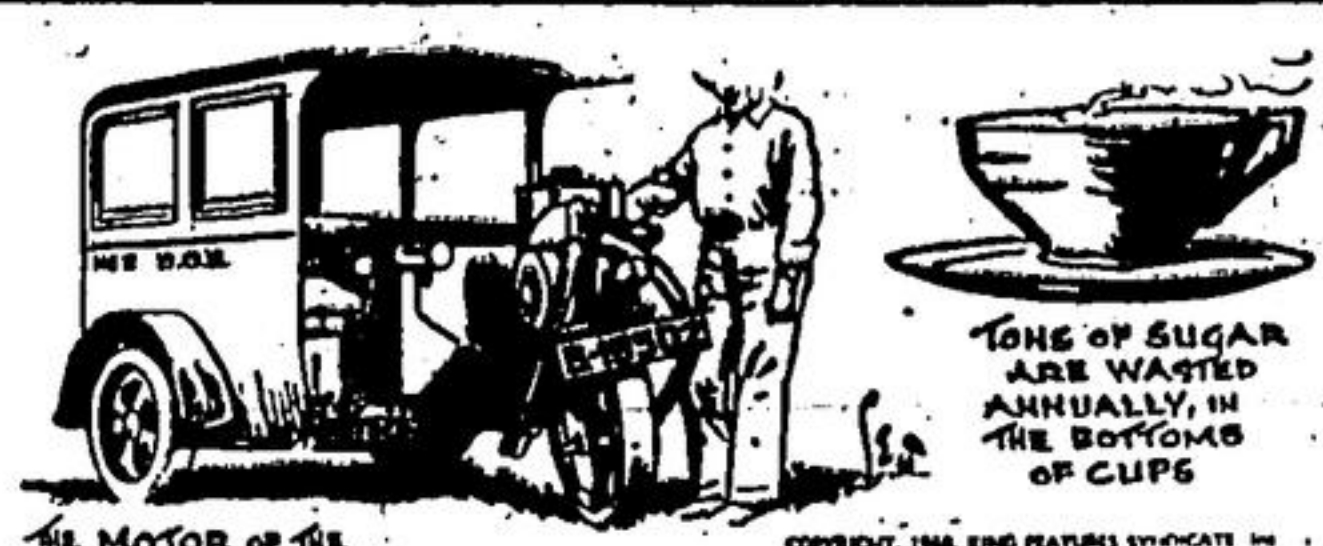
Gold led the mineral parade in 1937, with a production of 6,025,872 fine ounces valued at \$143,314,561 compared with 3,748,028 fine ounces worth \$121,293,421 in 1936. Ontario accounted for 63 per cent. of last year's output, and was followed by Quebec with 17.6 per cent., British Columbia with 12.3 per cent., and Manitoba and Saskatchewan with 5.6 per cent. Several gold mines came into production during the year and development work and mill construction are being pushed ahead rapidly on other properties in the gold-bearing areas of the Dominion. It is interesting to note that between 16 and 20 per cent. of the 1937 gold production was contributed by mines which are primarily base metal producers.

Copper production totalling 531,041,878 pounds valued at \$60,049,734 was a record, representing an increase of 26 per cent. in quantity and 75 per cent. in value. Nickel production valued at \$59,507,170 was 32 per cent. higher than in 1936, while lead and zinc at \$21,013,404 and \$18,157,894 respectively, were higher than ever before. Silver production totalled 22,683,032 fine ounces, valued at \$10,180,371, a gain of 23.7 per cent. in quantity and 23 per cent. in value. The output of platinum metals was worth \$9,933,799 compared with \$7,803,806 in 1936.

Coal production stood at 15,775,432 tons compared with 15,229,182, output of crude petroleum at 2,978,268 barrels was double that of 1936, while natural gas production was 29,599,198,000 cubic feet, a gain of 5.3 per cent.

The production of non-metallic minerals, other than fuels, had a value of \$22,482,620 in 1937, an increase of 34 per cent. Asbestos production totalled 410,026 tons compared with 301,287, while the output of gypsum amounted to 1,042,329 tons, an increase of 25 per cent. Salt totalled 450,027 tons against 391,316 tons in 1936. Other important industrial minerals included feldspar, nepheline syenite, graphite, mica, magnesite-dolomite, sodium sulphate, iron oxides, lithium minerals, talc and soapstone, rock wool, sulphur, quartz, diatomite, and silica brick.

Reflecting the improvement in the construction industry, the production of structural materials such as brick, lime, cement and stone had a value of \$36,461,669 compared with \$25,770,741 in 1936.



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