THE GREAT MOMENTS IN A WOMAN'S LIFE

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BY

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THE FIRST

SIXTEEN AND IN LOVE

ONCE within the memory of my glowing yesterdays I stood enthralled at the light and joy of life. I looked from the window of my little white bedroom and saw that the flowers in Mother's rose garden nodded in a living fragrance of understanding.

I wondered suddenly if I had changed. Swiftly I went to the mirror and peered at the young face gazing back at me. No, there seemed to be no change even though this great thing had come to me. The same long-lashed eyes looked out from beneath the auburn curls; the same red lips curved in smiles.

At the sound of the luncheon bell I wondered if Rob were eating his noonday meal. The warm color crept up into my cheeks. I could not imagine my knight sitting in prosaic attitude before a table.

As I went down the broad staircase of my father's home Rob's words, with their faint accent of caress, chanted themselves in my happy mind:

"I like you, little girl. Do you like me?"

In pink confusion I had nodded, unable to meet his eyes, my fingers lying content within his hardened palm.

Mother smiled fondly at me as I slipped into my place at the table, and she asked no questions. Perhaps she remembered when sixteen summers claimed her lightly and Romance stirred her soul with its soft murmurings.

But Big Brother grasped the situation with ruthless hands. He gazed mischievously at me for a moment, then burst forth with his cruel inquiry:

"In love, Sis?" he asked.

Even now I can feel the warmth of the crimson tide that surged over my face and neck at his

question. I looked appealingly at Mother, for I could not answer with the usual aptitude of a sister who all her life has possessed a big brother. I prayed fervently that my tormentor would not mention Rob.

"Harry, don't tease Beth," Mother expostulated.

"Oh, I know the signs," the boy relentlessly pursued.

"I should think you ought to," Mother answered, her eyes meeting his roguishly.

For Mother never failed me; and, at her words, Harry with dampened ardor was silent. Once more busy with my thoughts, I nibbled delicately at my cake. That I should shortly meet Rob again filled me with a trembling delight. I wondered if Mother would let me wear my pretty blue lawn dress, but I knew that it would be useless to ask, for while Mother was kind, she never forgot; and she had told me that the dress must be reserved for state occasions, such as Sunday wear and parties.

When I was starting for school I kissed Mother lightly. (Now the thought of that listless kiss fills my eyes with tears.) As I left her a vagrant